Equalities in Budget Process

Healthcare Improvement Scotland is a special health body and our purpose is to support healthcare providers in Scotland to deliver high quality, evidence-based, safe, effective and person centred care; and to scrutinise those services to provide quality assurance about the quality and safety of that care.

As Healthcare Improvement Scotland does not deliver direct healthcare services to patients and the public, we have found it difficult to answer some of your specific questions, and have instead sought to demonstrate how the promotion of equality is reflected in our budget and planning processes and our work with NHS Boards and independent healthcare providers.

Equality in Planning and Budgetary Processes

In terms of our budgeting processes, in 2011-12 we strengthened our governance arrangements to ensure that work being proposed to or considered by our Board and governance committees included information about the equality impact assessment process and outcomes. Having audited the impact of this on our governance processes, we will be implementing further improvements during 2012-13 to ensure that the outcomes of equality impact assessment are effectively reported and acted upon and can be evidenced.

For example, our work providing advice, support and quality assurance to NHS Boards on patient and public involvement when carrying out major service changes through the Scottish Health Council, has included working in partnership with NHS Health Scotland to support Boards to conduct Health Inequalities Impact Assessments in relation to major change processes and proposals.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland's policy is to undertake equality impact assessments for all new work we are asked to undertake and any issues identified specifically relating to equalities are factored into the budgeting for the programmes of work. This allows us to demonstrate how we are fulfilling our equality duty.

Equalities in Mainstream Services

This is not directly applicable to Healthcare Improvement Scotland but we have been commissioned by the Scottish government to develop a maternity services safety programme and we will be working with all territorial health boards in Scotland to implement this programme from later in 2012. As part of the programme we have specifically included proposals to refer mothers who smoke in pregnancy to local smoking cessation services to maximise their opportunity to give up smoking to improve their own health and that of their unborn child.

Service Provision for Equalities Groups

A number of our programmes of work across the organisation have elements that target particular equalities groups. These are usually undertaken as a result of
commissions from Scottish government. For example in our recently launched mental health safety programme we are working with health boards to tackle the physical health of those with severe and enduring mental health problems as this is known to be poorer than in the mainstream population.

Mainstreaming Equalities

All of our programmes have an element of equalities within them but they mostly support territorial health boards deliver on the quality strategy ambitions or other policy initiatives. We make sure we engage relevant equalities groups in developing these programmes of work.

Future Work

Healthcare Improvement Scotland is committed to continuing to assess the impact of its own work on equality and health inequalities and improve the quality of that assessment. We welcome the Parliamentary Equal Opportunities Committee’s interest in this important area and look forward to any comments the Committee may have.

Frances Elliot
Chief Executive
Healthcare Improvement Scotland
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