

Equalities Mainstream Report

Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is fully committed to delivering services that are fair for all and uphold our responsibilities as detailed in the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. We take these responsibilities seriously and over the next three years will seek to identify and deliver improvements in our integrated services to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between different groups of people and work in a way that fosters good relations within the communities of Inverclyde. There are nine protected characteristic groups namely;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership status

We will develop a set of specific outcomes for protected characteristic groups, with an appreciation that added investment in targeted areas will bring positive change to patients and carers at greatest risk of poorer health and social care outcomes. However, to be truly inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the people of Inverclyde, we need to ensure equality and diversity considerations are woven into the fabric of everyday health and social care planning within the HSCP.

This Strategic Plan reflects this mainstreaming aspiration, setting out not only our key delivery areas, but also the organisational culture required to achieve them. An informed workforce that understands that inequality sits at the heart of poorer health and social care outcomes will improve lives by making Inverclyde a safe, secure and healthy place for all.

The HSCP will evolve as an inequalities-sensitive public body by ensuring that the right mechanisms are in place to ensure this is everyday business.

Unlike many other public bodies in Scotland, the HSCP has limited responsibility in terms of the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Requirements of the Specific Duties relating to the publishing of gender pay gap information, publishing statements on equal pay, gathering and using employee information and considerations relating to public procurement remain the responsibility of either Inverclyde Council or NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board. The two source organisations continue as employers of HSCP staff and their respective policies and protocols governing how goods and services are purchased are also retained.

The HSCP is directly accountable for developing a set of measurable equality outcomes related to the nine protected characteristics noted at 1.5.1 above. We also need to develop associated performance reports, ensuring all new policies and practices are reviewed in the context of mainstreaming the Equality Act. Our Equality Outcomes will need to evidence that the HSCP:

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advances equality of opportunity between different groups;
- Fosters good relations between different groups.

Leadership and Accountability

The HSCP Chief Officer is ultimately accountable for ensuring equality legislation is upheld and services are designed and delivered in a way that meets the general duty and those specific duties that have become the responsibility of the HSCP. This responsibility is delegated in part to the HSCP Senior Management Team (SMT) who will collectively ensure that service planning and delivery evidences compliance with legislation. The SMT will approve equality outcomes, and ensure that the annual performance monitoring reports to the IJB include specific reference to our progress in delivering the outcomes. The lead officer for equality and diversity within the SMT is the Head of Service for, Planning, Health Improvement and Commissioning.

Listening to Service Users

Inverclyde HSCP has a strong public engagement record and will build on this to ensure we are inclusive of diverse groups of people in our processes. Listening to seldom heard groups and acting on what we hear will help shape services that understand the breadth and possible complexity of service user needs.

The HSCP commissions Your Voice/Inverclyde Community Care Forum to undertake its main public engagement role through the People Involvement Network. The network involves a cross-section of people from our communities and will be subject to review to ensure both the removal of potential barriers to participation, and the inclusion of all groups representative of the protected characteristics (1.5.1). Members will participate in an ongoing learning programme covering each of these protected characteristics and wider inequality issues to ensure advisory and network business is inclusive of equality and diversity needs.

While the HSCP has responsibility for evidencing that local voices are listened to and acted upon, the HSCP will also benefit from engagement undertaken by its health and social care partners and gain insight into the needs of groups that may not be prominent or accessible within Inverclyde. For instance NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has undertaken significant engagement with asylum seeker and refugee groups and this valuable intelligence can be used locally to help shape appropriate service responses.

Wherever possible, the HSCP will enlist the support of service users to identify service barriers 'on the ground'. For example, enlisting the help and support of Inverclyde Council on Disability (ICOD) will deliver formal accessibility audits across a range of HSCP services and identify any reasonable adjustments to be made.

We appreciate that being pro-active in public engagement is the key to delivering services that are fit for purpose and fit for all, and in response to consultation comments on this plan, we are committed to developing a Communication and Engagement Strategy that captures the comments, suggestions and insights of local people.

However, at times services users may feel their needs have not been fully met and would like to tell us about experiences. The HSCP will ensure fair and equitable access to our HSCP complaints process and will review all complaints to determine if the cause was in any way related to barriers associated with a protected characteristic. We recognise that complaints provide us with valuable intelligence that supports continuous improvement.

Fair Service Delivery

Ease of access to HSCP services will be dependent on a number of factors including communication support needs, physical access needs, understanding of how the HSCP operates and the complexity of the health and social care issues experienced. Inverclyde HSCP will adopt a range of policies to help in the provision of services that are effective, equitable and continuously improving to meet the changing demands of our service users.

HSCP staff will be guided in this through an understanding and use of a number of policies and resources, for example:

- Accessible Information Policy
- Interpreting Procedure

Where the HSCP issues new policies or makes changes to the way services are delivered that might impact on service users care we will conduct an equality impact assessment (EQIA) to identify any associated risks to groups of service users. From those assessments we will take appropriate mitigating action. Inverclyde HSCP will use a tested EQIA tool with an integrated quality assurance process to ensure assessments are of the highest possible standard. Part of this process will include engaging with service users to better understand potential impacts across a range of protected characteristic groups.