

Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Northern Ireland

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Mainstreaming Gender Equality – in Public Policy Development

- **What** is the Statutory Equality Duty?
- How does it **support (gender) mainstreaming**?
- What **lessons have been learnt** along the way?
 - Examples – **progress and challenges**

The Statutory Equality Duty

The Statutory Equality Duty

- Public authorities need to consider equality in all aspects
 - “from how they plan and deliver a service; to policies on employing people; enforcing the law; buying services; approving budgets...”
- more than anti-discrimination.
 - proactive action to promote equality.
- equality considerations mainstreamed
 - built into the policy development process from the beginning,

Section 75: Northern Ireland Act (1998)

- **Duty on public authorities (PA)**
- **i) “due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of:**
 - different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
 - **men and women generally**
 - persons with a disability and persons without
 - persons with dependants and persons without”

Implementation of Duties – Equality Schemes

- PA required to submit an **equality scheme** to the Equality Commission.
 - a plan – **how they will promote equality** in all areas.
 - Must meet **content requirements** and be **consulted** upon
 - **Subject to approval** by Equality Commission
- Once approved, PA **required to comply** with its equality scheme

Equality Scheme Contents

- Must set out arrangements for:
 - **Equality Impact assessment** of policies.
 - **Consulting**
 - **Monitoring and Review**

- Recommended to include a commitment to:
 - Undertake **audit of inequalities**
 - Develop **action plans** / measures.

**How does duty
support gender
mainstreaming?**

Operational Mainstreaming

- **Impact Assess**
- **Consultation**
- **Monitoring**
- **Review**

Section 75

Equality

Impact

Assessment

Equality Impact assessment.

- **Assess potential equality impacts**
 - Use **data/evidence**
- Consider **mitigating measures** or how **alternate policy** might lessen impact?
- **Consult** on impacts / proposals
 - assess views.
- **Report**
 - on **Policy Decision & Equality Impact** assessment

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Monitor and

Review

Monitor and Review

- **Collect and analyse data** across equality grounds
- **Monitor for adverse impacts** of policy
- **Review progress** – and opportunities to further advance equality
- **Report on implementation** of equality scheme,
 - including progress on delivery of action plans

Strategic Mainstreaming

- **Audit of Inequalities**
- **Equality Action Plans**

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Audit of

Inequalities

Undertake audit of inequalities

- **Strategic** picture, aligned to remit
 - inequalities that could be influenced.
 - Parallel to corporate / strategic planning
- How?
 - **evaluate data** by equality ground
 - Identify and **address gaps / weaknesses** in data
 - **Identify Priorities** (impacts and outcomes)
 - **Consult**

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Action Plans

/ Measures

Develop action plans / measures.

- **Implementation**, aligned to remit
 - **Actions** – tailored to functions, duties, objectives, and policies.
- SMART Format
 - Clarity on **actions & outputs**, clearly linked to **outcomes and impacts**
- Actions **focussed** on Key Inequalities

Lessons learnt: Progress & challenges

2008 – Review of Section 75

- Examined Effectiveness of Statutory Equality Duty
 - Positive impact on **policy development** – more **evidence based**
 - Some evidence of **cultural change** in public sector
 - **Consultation** = Greater **inclusion of people**
 - Greater **credibility and transparency** in process

- BUT
 - Less evidence of impact on **policy implementation or outcomes**
 - Need to **extend focus** from ‘**process**’ to ‘**outcome**’
- Changes made to Guidance
 - **NEW: Audits of inequalities** and linked **action plans** now recommended

Lessons:

Examples

Example: Gender Representation on Boards

- Audit of Inequalities 2011
 - “Women continue to be **under-represented across** [Department’s] NDPBs, internal and external **decision making boards, committees and management teams.**”
 - “**Action** is needed to **encourage female interest and participation** in areas currently under-represented and to work to **eliminate those barriers** that may hinder or limit their involvement.”

Action Plan (2011–2016)

- **Improve representation by women on NDPBs**
 - An increase of 25% in **expressions of interest** by women in public appointments by 2013.
 - An increase of 25% in the number of **successful applications** received from women by 2014 across all NDPB's and associated bodies
 - To increase the gender balance to take **representation** to 50%. [by 2016]
- **Improve representation by women on internal decision making teams**
 - **Fair representation (50:50) by women** and men on all key internal decision-making groups [by 2016]

Results

- **Impacts:** Slight increase year on year in the number of females on NDPBs
 - *“Female representation on boards continues to be low, and **we are committed to working proactively** to address this issue.”*
- **Outputs:** Diversity Training, Info Packs, Targeted Outreach
- **Process:** Annual progress reporting / mainstreaming could be improved
 - *“**Review initiated** on under-representation of women... will report on specific actions, goals and timetables”*

Example: Childcare Policy & Economic Independence

- Dec 2012 “Towards a Childcare strategy” published by Gov.
 - Focus on “accessible, affordable childcare”
 - Little / no consideration of potential for childcare to improve **economic participation / independence of parents or women** and/or need to tackle gender stereotypes
- 2013 – Consultation process
 - Opportunity to
 - Raise economic participation
 - Remind of s75 Statutory Equality Duty

Childcare Policy & Economic Independence

- 2013 – Speech by Junior Ministers (Office of the First and Deputy First Minister)
 - **“For women in particular, affordable, reliable, quality childcare is essential if they wish to join the workforce, or to train or study for work...**
 - The availability of affordable, quality childcare is vital and **will enable women to participate in re-growing the economy** as employees or business owners... It will enable them to **take their place within the workforce...** and to **progress their careers...** ”
- 2015 – Still awaiting consultation on a draft childcare strategy for NI..

Conclusion

Statutory Equality Duty

- Contribution to Gender Mainstreaming?
 - A Positive, Mainstreaming, Equality Duty
 - Framework, Guidance and Training Important
 - Provides a context to lever sound policy development practice / processes
 - Must ensure focus beyond process
 - outcomes << actions << analysis << evidence

Overview & Guidance on Section 75

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