



The Royal College of
Midwives

Response

Response to the call for evidence on Public Sector Equality Duty

April 2013

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The Royal College of Midwives' response to the call for evidence on the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) is the trade union and professional organisation that represents the vast majority of practising midwives in the UK. It is the only such organisation run by midwives for midwives. The RCM is the voice of midwifery, providing excellence in representation, professional leadership, education and influence for and on behalf of midwives. We actively support and campaign for improvements to maternity services and provide professional leadership for one of the most established clinical disciplines.

The RCM welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and our answers to the consultation topics are set out below.

The Royal College of Midwives
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General Comments

The RCM welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence on the public sector equality duty. It is our view that the public sector equality duty is important and invaluable in ensuring that public sector employees are treated fairly and equitably and those who access public services are treated fairly and equitably.

The RCM is the trade union and professional body that represents the vast majority of practicing midwives in the UK. The RCM is a member of the Equality and Diversity Group which was set up in 2005 by the NHS Staff Council. Its membership includes representatives of NHS employing organisations in England, the health departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and staff side representatives on the NHS Staff Council. It also includes representatives from the Job Evaluation Group and the Knowledge and Skills Framework Group. Membership of this group offers the RCM valuable awareness and greater understanding of key current issues around Equality and Diversity. The Equality and Diversity Group is responsible for ensuring that the Agenda for Change Handbook (which covers the terms and conditions for the majority of NHS staff, including midwives) is kept up to date in respect of equality, case law and good practice.

In September 2011 there were 25,316 midwives employed by the NHS in England and 99.6% were women¹. According to a parliamentary answer² in 2010 57.2% of midwives worked part time and this has been increasing over the past ten years.

The RCM is absolutely committed to the public sector equality duty and it is our view that the benefits of the duty far outweigh any costs. The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to harmonise and simplify existing equality legislation in order to provide individuals, employers, service providers and public bodies with a more straightforward legal approach to addressing equality and extended for the first time rights and responsibilities for employers and individuals.

In our view, the Equality Act has simplified matters and ensures that employers, employees and service users are aware of their rights and obligations.

Moreover, we believe that the duty is invaluable in ensuring that public sector employees are treated fairly and equitably and those who access public services are treated fairly and equitably. The duty ensures equality of opportunity is monitored and regard is paid to eliminating discrimination which has many benefits.

¹ NHS Information Centre

² <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110426/text/110426w0004.htm#11042736002068>

In the report 'The NHS Staff Management and Health Service Quality' by the Lancaster University Management School, the Work Foundation and Aston Business School found that developing climates and cultures that nurture strong staff engagement brings a range of positive outcomes and is achieved promoting a healthy, safe work environment, ensuring every role counts, delivering supportive management and leadership, enabling the growth and development of staff ensuring their involvement in decision making. The report found that when staff felt they were able to contribute to improvements at work; when they recommend the trust as a place to work or receive treatment; and when they feel motivated and engaged with their work, patient satisfaction, patient mortality and trust financial performance were better.

The RCM is so committed to the public sector equality duty that, despite not being a public sector body, we have implemented the duty.

In conclusion, it is our view that the public sector equality duty is important and invaluable in ensuring that public sector employees are treated fairly and equitably and those who access public services are treated fairly and equitably.