



Public Health
England

Our equality objectives from April 2013

About Public Health England

Public Health England's mission is to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities through working with national and local government, the NHS, industry and the voluntary and community sector. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

Public Health England
133-155 Waterloo Road
Wellington House
London SE1 8UG
Tel: 020 7654 8000
www.gov.uk/phe
Twitter: @PHE_uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland

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Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| About Public Health England | 2 |
| Executive summary | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Our equality objectives | 9 |
| Governance | 14 |
| Next steps | 14 |

Executive summary

This documents sets out Public Health England's quality objectives from April 2013, how we developed them, and why. Our equality objectives are:

Equality objective 1: Public Health England will ensure that the public sector Equality Duty is embedded and reflected in our corporate priorities and is an integral part of any future priority setting for our organisation.

Equality objective 2: We will build and develop our relationships with stakeholders and the public, including those that represent groups with protected characteristics, to improve our functions and services, and consult with them about our priorities.

Equality objective 3: We will ensure that our advice (including to local authorities, NHS England and government) includes dimensions of health equity and equality and diversity in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Equality objective 4: As an expert organisation, we will build on our strengths in knowledge and intelligence, improve the information we hold and collect from our system partners and lead the way on expanding the knowledge and intelligence evidence base on people with protected characteristics.

Equality objective 5: We will improve accessibility and ease of understanding of the information and advice we produce. We will seek to improve the accessibility of the information that we provide to the public and stakeholders.

Equality objective 6: We will improve our internal business processes so that equality and diversity is an integral part of everything we do. Our drive to increase value, efficiency and productivity will always consider the needs of people with protected characteristics, internally in Public Health England and in our externally facing functions.

Equality objective 7: We will ensure we have a motivated and engaged workforce who live our behaviours of respect for each other.

Introduction

Public Health England's role as an expert public health agency

Public Health England works transparently, proactively providing government, local government, the NHS, MPs, industry, public health professionals and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and advice.

We ensure there are effective arrangements in place nationally and locally for preparing, planning and responding to health protection concerns and emergencies, including the future impact of climate change. We provide specialist health protection, epidemiology and microbiology services across England.

Improvement in the public's health has to be led from within communities, rather than directed centrally. This is why every upper tier and unitary local authority now has a legal duty to improve the public's health. Local health and wellbeing boards bring together key local partners (including NHS clinical commissioning groups who have a duty to address health inequalities) to agree local priorities.

We will support local authorities, and through them clinical commissioning groups, by providing evidence and knowledge on local health needs, alongside practical and professional advice on what to do to improve health, and by taking action nationally where it makes sense to do so. Public Health England in turn is the public health adviser to NHS England.

We are working in partnership with the Chief Medical Officer for England and with colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to protect and improve the public's health, as well as internationally through a wide-ranging global health programme.

What is the Equality Duty?

The Equality Duty is a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.¹

The Equality Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies such as Public Health England to have due regard to the need to:

¹ See also Government Equality Office: Equality Act 2010: Public sector equality duty. What do I need to know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. April 2011.

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 (see definitions below);
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Under the Equality Act, people are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. There is also protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or where they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

- Discrimination means treating one person worse than another because of a protected characteristic (known as direct discrimination); or putting in place a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified (known as indirect discrimination).
- Harassment includes unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone with a protected characteristic.
- Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so.

The principles of equality and diversity are fundamental to Public Health England's vision and values. As a new and emerging organisation we are committed to building an explicit commitment to equality and diversity into everything we do – whether this is

delivery of services, producing guidance and advice for our partners in the NHS or local government, and as an employer of almost 5,300 staff (as per December 2013).

Why do we need to set equality objectives?

The Equality Duty is supported by two **specific duties**² which require public bodies such as Public Health England to:

- publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty annually; and
- set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years

This document sets out Public Health England's equality objectives from April 2013. Alongside this document, we also publish information regarding our compliance with the Equality Duty during our first nine months of operation from April to December 2013.

How we have developed our equality objectives

In setting our equality objectives, we have taken into account evidence of equality issues across our functions, considered issues affecting people sharing protected characteristics, and thought about the three aims of the Equality Duty. We considered:

- as a knowledge led organisation, the evidence available or potentially missing to inform our work, and whether evidence indicates that equality performance needs to improve in any part of our organisation;
- what types of equality issues are raised by our staff, external partners and service users;
- our priorities for 2013/14 for the organisation³;
- what objectives could be set to stretch our organisation to help improve equality and diversity issues in key areas;
- equality objectives of our system partners such as NHS England and the Department of Health to ensure that we deliver with and for them;
- the people and organisations we want to talk to in the process of improving our services and equality objectives;
- how we will know whether we are making progress against our objectives; and
- that much of our work is also delivered through other public organisations and we will need work with and alongside them to achieve our aims

² See also Government Equality Office: Equality Act 2010: Specific duties to support the equality duty. What do I need to know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. October 2011.

³ Public Health England: Our priorities for 2013/14, April 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-englands-priorities-for-2013-to-2014>

We have also consulted on our equality objectives with those responsible within our organisation for delivering our priorities including for health equity, and sought input and advice from our Equality Forum, further described under equality objective 2 below. Our objectives were amended to take into account their comments.

A workshop was hosted by the Equality Forum on 24 January 2014, which was a day-long event designed to collect feedback on our draft equality objectives. We also considered comments provided by Forum members who could not attend. Their proposals for the future and continued development of the objectives will be included in our business planning for 2014/15.

How does this fit with Public Health England's work in 2014/15 and beyond?

Our equality objectives describe Public Health England's approach to articulating this important agenda in the first nine months since our establishment on 1 April 2013; and they will contribute to, and be integrated into, the development of our corporate and business plans for 2014/15 and beyond.

This factsheet sets out our equality objectives and rationale behind them. Our business plan for 2014/15 will be the vehicle for setting out the actions we will undertake to meet them in the year to come.

Our behaviours at Public Health England

Our effectiveness as an organisation depends on how we behave towards each other, our system partners and the public. We are committed to:

- consistently spend our time on what we say we care about
- work together, not undermine each other
- speak well of each other, in public and in private
- behave well, especially when things go wrong
- keep our promises, small and large
- speak with candour and courage

Our equality objectives

Our priorities

Equality Objective 1: Public Health England will ensure that the public sector Equality Duty is embedded and reflected in our corporate priorities and is an integral part of any future priority setting for our organisation.

In April 2013 we published our priorities for 2013/14. The publication described how we were committed to making important progress during our first year by focusing on key actions, embedded into seven corporate programmes, with the greatest potential to make a difference to health and wellbeing in England. The consideration of equality and diversity issues, reduction of health inequalities and the benefits these will bring is integral to how we take forward this work.

A review of our corporate programmes will be the starting point to the development of the annual business plan for 2014/15. Alongside this, work will also start on the development of a longer term plan for demonstrable improvements in the public's health and in making our organisation efficient and effective in our operations. As we go forward, our equality objectives will be reviewed and embedded within both the longer term and annual plans.

Our partners

Equality objective 2: We will build and develop our relationships with stakeholders and the public, including those that represent groups with protected characteristics, to improve our functions and services, and consult with them about our priorities.

Public involvement is important to Public Health England's role to improve and protect the public's health. We were established as a listening organisation and we must actively give voice to the public. We want to understand what is important and what works to ensure that what we do is both innovative but also pragmatic. We have developed a public involvement strategy for this purpose.

We have especially focussed on voluntary and community sector engagement alongside public involvement, recognising the critical role that all stakeholders including those with protected characteristics, have in the delivery of our priorities. Embedding high quality engagement and involvement with our system partners and establishing stakeholder forums to develop and co-produce our work are key to the delivery of everything we do.

A key part of our public engagement work is the People's Panel, which is a large group of almost 1,000 members of the public in England who have expressed an interest in our work. It forms the largest consumer panel of its kind in the country. The People's Panel was established as an innovative way to engage with the public about public health priorities, information and services. Membership was drawn from two national random survey samples giving a unique and valuable insight into issues the public feel are important and how people understand and respond to health information. We will refresh this list in 2014.

Our Equality Forum helps to ensure that Public Health England better supports and considers equality and diversity in the way we work across corporate and public facing activities. It has a diverse membership drawn from the People's Panel and our own staff groups who have self-identified as having a protected characteristic, together with a range of user-led and community organisations. These are organisations representing and mediating for people with protected characteristics, those who are at risk of worse health outcomes on the health inequality gradient, and those often socially excluded or marginalised.

In going forward, our plans include a range of activities. For example, we will:

- support the Strategic Partner Programme alongside the Department of Health and NHS England. This programme brings together 21 voluntary and community sector organisations and coalitions of organisations to help facilitate effective partnership working with health, social care and public health system organisations. Our strategic partners have an important role to reach people and communities with protected characteristics and provide extensive depth of reach to particularly vulnerable groups and communities;
- help assess and offer support to organisations wishing to access voluntary sector funding through the Department of Health's Innovation, Excellence and Strategic Development (IESD) fund;
- seek feedback from stakeholders and the public on how we are doing on delivering on our commitment to engage and involve stakeholders effectively via qualitative and quantitative surveys; and
- continue to develop plans to engage with our stakeholders about our business plan for 2014/15

Equality objective 3: We will ensure that our advice (including to local authorities, NHS England and government) includes dimensions of health equity and equality and diversity in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Public Health England will champion the Equality Duty with its system partners and provide support to help achieve it with evidence and intelligence about equality and

diversity issues for functions and services our partners are responsible for. For example:

The mission of Public Health England is to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities. We have established a programme of work to lead, shape and monitor our work on health inequalities. Within this programme we are evolving our understanding of health inequalities issues as they relate to those with protected characteristics and will address these as the programme develops.

We develop national service specifications for key public health functions such as immunisation and screening services. Through local screening and immunisation teams, we ensure these are commissioned with due regard to population diversity and equality needs. Our expert advice includes dimensions of equality and diversity (such as by undertaking health equity audits against some protected characteristics) and forms the basis against which NHS England commissions such services.

Work is on-going to develop a Health and Wellbeing Framework for England. The Framework will be a guide to the actions key decision makers across the health and social care sector can take to improve the public's health. Equality considerations will be embedded throughout the framework. For example, if any of the actions we recommend for our partners have the potential to exclude or disadvantage certain groups, we will include advice on how to mitigate this risk.

Finally, our 15 centres are the 'front door' to Public Health England at a local level, and as such, have the closest working arrangements with local authorities and NHS England's area teams. Centres will champion the Equality Duty with their partners to help ensure that health equity and equality and diversity considerations are incorporated into centres' business plans and partnership work with stakeholders.

Driving change with information and intelligence

Equality objective 4: As an expert organisation, we will build on our strengths in knowledge and intelligence, improve the information we hold and collect from our system partners and lead the way on expanding the knowledge and intelligence evidence base on people with protected characteristics.

In meeting this equality objective, we have made progress and will further improve our aims to:

- work with partners to ensure, and continue to advocate for, improvement in the collection of data on the health of people with protected characteristics through data linkage and through other routes, for example in health surveys, to ensure that the needs of people with protected characteristics can be identified;

- analyse and monitor the health outcomes of people with protected characteristics wherever possible, particularly for indicators included in the Public Health Outcomes Framework *Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency*.⁴ This will help us and our partners achieve equality and determine how well outcomes are achieved for all people, whether they share protected characteristics or not; and
- provide tools and resources for commissioners, for example in local government and the NHS, to enable them to target evidence-based effective interventions towards people with protected characteristics wherever possible

Equality objective 5: We will improve accessibility and ease of understanding of the information and advice we produce. We will seek to improve the accessibility of the information that we provide to the public and stakeholders.

Our ambition is to help people make informed choices about the ways in which they can protect and improve their health and wellbeing and where appropriate that of the wider community.

In achieving this objective we promote and improve accessibility of the information we produce. For example, our publication policy includes best practice guidelines set out by the Royal National Institute of Blind People and the Office for Disability Issues. Our editorial house style for publications promotes the use of plain English and we have revised our guidance to authors so that it recognises and specifies consideration of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 in all of our publications.

Our people and processes

Equality objective 6: We will improve our internal business processes so that equality and diversity is an integral part of everything we do. Our drive to increase value, efficiency and productivity will always consider the needs of people with protected characteristics, internally in Public Health England and in our externally facing functions.

We have embedded equality and diversity thinking into our policies to help ensure that that reasonable adjustments are made for people who share protected characteristics.

For example, within our human resources functions, we will ensure that equality and diversity principles are integrated into all policies and processes ranging from recruitment and selection, to appraisal, pay and grading and learning & development. We will monitor the application of our policies and processes using key equality and diversity metrics. We will aim to improve the diversity of our workforce to make it more

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-lives-healthy-people-improving-outcomes-and-supporting-transparency>

representative of the community that we serve at all levels. We will also improve the quality of data that we hold about the diversity of our workforce. In meeting these commitments, we will:

- improve the quality and completeness of the information available on our workforce in respect of protected characteristics to inform the development of future detailed action plans and interventions; and
- monitor disclosure of equality and diversity demographics compared to anonymous staff surveys and national population baselines

Across all finance and commercial areas - such as finance and procurement; information and communication technology; health and safety; sustainability; our estates and facilities, and expanding business development functions - we will continue to use equality analysis tools to understand the relevance of our business processes and policies to the Equality Duty and the context in which they operate. For example, we will:

- determine who will benefit from our processes or policies, what results are intended and if and why they are needed, including whether to continue or stop and remove the policy or process
- seek to establish which protected groups and aims of the Equality Duty are relevant in any commercial area, analysing any existing equality information and comparing information across directorates and processes; and
- identify any information gaps, ensuring engagement of relevant stakeholders and any further information gathering to be carried out

Equality objective 7: We will ensure we have a motivated and engaged workforce who live our behaviours of respect for each other.

We will do this through the provision of relevant policies and guidance, learning & development and targeted initiatives. We will ensure that our staff have the knowledge, skills and tools to embed equality, diversity and human rights in their work and are competent in equality and human rights best practice. For example, we will:

- ensure that we have up to date equality and diversity training, which reflects the legislative framework and models best practice; audit mandatory equality and diversity training on an annual basis to ensure all staff understand the importance of the aims of the Equality Duty and are trained accordingly
- develop training on human rights for our staff
- support staff diversity forums to flourish and thrive
- promote diversity role models in the organisation; and
- develop best practice policies for staff caring for dependants, acknowledging the potential compound burden of ageing parents and dependent children

We will learn from the feedback we received through the annual civil service staff survey of our people at all levels and work to identify equality and diversity issues currently faced by our staff. For example, this will help us develop appropriate interventions to improve the percentage of staff who say that they feel safe from discrimination, harassment and bullying and are treated equally at work in future surveys.

Governance

We will monitor progress against these objectives via our National Executive, thus ensuring that our commitment to equality and diversity is being led from the highest level through our senior leadership team. In January 2014, we have established a high level Health Equity Board, chaired by our national director for health and wellbeing, and with senior representation from all parts of Public Health England, including from key external stakeholders such as the chair of our Equality Forum. The board will lead a complementary programme of work on reducing health inequalities and integrating equality and diversity into everything we do.

Through this work, we will engage with forums such as the Strategic Partnership Programme, our External Stakeholders Group and the Equality Forum to identify the best ways of challenging equity and fairness on an on-going basis. The Equality Forum will act as a critical friend by providing feedback on the equality objectives as they are implemented, and provide advice and challenge to our Health Equity Board.

Next steps

We want to hear from you. If you have any feedback or thoughts on what and how we can do better in terms of articulating our equality objectives, please contact equality.diversity@phe.gov.uk. These are not static objectives – we are a new and learning organisation and committed to integrating our learning into plans for the years to come. Your suggestions for improvement will be considered in shaping our thinking and ensuring that we get it right.

Our business plan for 2104/15 will be published in the spring of 2014. It will be our vehicle for refining our equality objectives described in this factsheet and for setting out the actions we will undertake to meet them.