

Integrating Service Change and Impact Assessment

Impact assessment is an important process for NHS Boards to ensure that their policies, practices and services do not inadvertently exclude or discriminate groups of the population, providing an opportunity to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

CEL 4 (2010) *Informing, Engaging and Consulting People in developing Health and Community care services*¹ provides a step-by-step guide for NHS Boards on engaging the public in service change proposals. In accordance with equalities legislation NHS Boards are responsible for impact assessing the engagement process and ensuring that any potentially adverse impacts of proposed changes to services have been taken into account.

The Scottish Health Council and NHS Health Scotland identified two projects to pilot the integration of Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA) with processes for service change; Scottish Breast Screening Service Review and the development of the Primary Care Resource Centre at Queen Margaret Hospital. HIIA is an integrated approach to impact assessment, considering nine legally protected characteristics, wider population groups, the social determinants of health and human rights. HIIA offers an opportunity during any planning process to assess the potential of the policy to reduce or exacerbate health inequalities. The HIIA approach was piloted in 2010 with NHS Boards and the Scottish Government following a recommendation in *Equally Well* and has been used across a wide range of policy and service areas over the past 3 years.

Using the learning from the case studies, and experience of the two processes, the Scottish Health Council and NHS Health Scotland have developed the attached flowchart. The steps highlighted in purple are part of the service change process and those in green specific to impact assessment. We recognise that there may be local variation as to how NHS Boards approach impact assessment and service change however the flowchart should help to demonstrate how to align impact assessment with service change processes.

Conducting an impact assessment at the start of a service change process can be helpful in identifying the affected communities, informing the development of a communication and engagement plan, and gathering evidence for the option appraisal. The assessment can be revisited once a preferred option(s) has been identified, with more in depth consideration of potential impacts, to be used during the public consultation on the proposals.

The two case studies, further tools and information can be found on the NHS Health Scotland website

<http://www.healthscotland.com/equalities/index.aspx>

¹ CEL 4 (2010), *Informing, Engaging and Consulting people in developing Health & Social Care*, Scottish Government

Process flowchart

CEL 4

Key:

HIIA

