



**Equality Commission for  
Northern Ireland**

Equality House  
7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square  
BELFAST  
BT2 7DP

30 January 2015

Service Frameworks Unit  
DHSSPS  
Room D1  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Dear Sir/Madam

**Consultation on the Service Framework for Children and Young  
People**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (the Department) on the Service Framework for Children and Young People, one of a series of Services Frameworks developed by the Department.

The Commission notes that the standards identified in the frameworks will aim to ensure that health and social services are, inter alia, equitable (does not vary in quality because of personal characteristics such as age, gender, disability (physical disability, sensory impairment and learning disability), geographical location or socioeconomic status) (at pages 43-33 of the consultation document).

Furthermore, the completed S75 screening template accompanying the consultation states (at page 2) that the Children's Service Framework is one of a suite of Service Frameworks which aims, inter alia, to: reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion.

We note that in some of the Service Frameworks there are explicit references to equality and explicit actions arising.

For example, in the Mental Health Services Framework, Standard 57 on Black and Minority Ethnic addresses access to culturally appropriate services and includes performance indicators to review available services to support BME people and to establishing a baseline for BME people availing of such services.

The Service Framework for Learning Disability states (at page 33) that a key priority for health and social care services and the wider community is to tackle stigma, discrimination and inequality and to empower and support people with a learning disability and their families to be actively engaged in the process. Reference is made to underpinning equality and human rights instruments such as the UNCRPD and the UNCRC and a key action is included to realise rights i.e. the development of a regional training plan that ensures that relevant HSC staff are training in consent and capacity issues.

Equality is even more explicitly referenced in the Framework for Older People through the inclusion of a standard (number 2 at page 6) that 'All older people should expect the same opportunity of access to assessment, care and treatment as other users of health and social care services' with associated key performance indicators that 'Older people experience equal access to assessment, care and treatment'; and a 'Review of Trusts Equality Policies that safeguard and promote Human Rights'.

However, the proposed Children's Services Framework does not appear to include any specific standard or actions to ensure equality.

The Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland's '*Jurisdictional Parallel Report on Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*'<sup>1</sup> highlights that children with disabilities are generally excluded from the decision making processes concerned with delivering government measures, policies and programmes concerned with their health, economic and social well being and that consequently children with disabilities face a range of barriers when accessing services, including the benefit of age appropriate services in areas such as health.

It is evident, in the light of the above, that there is a clear need to effectively address equality issues in the Service Framework for Children and Young People.

The Commission considers, therefore, that it would be helpful to include a standard embedding equality in the Service Framework for Children and Young People.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Addressing-inequality/UNCRPD-Disability>

## **Annex 1: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

1. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission is responsible for implementing the legislation on fair employment, sex discrimination and equal pay, race relations, sexual orientation, disability and age.

2. The Commission's remit also includes overseeing the statutory duties on the Department to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75) and to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

3. The Commission's general duties include:

- working towards the elimination of discrimination;
- promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice;
- promoting positive / affirmative action;
- promoting good relations between people of different racial groups;
- overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of the statutory duties;
- keeping the legislation under review;
- promoting good relations between people of different religious belief and / or political opinion.

4. The Equality Commission, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, has been designated under the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of the Convention in Northern Ireland.