



**NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION  
COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY**

# **Report on the Audit of Information Systems**

**October 2012**

# **1. Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In line with Equality Commission requirements, the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC) has committed to undertaking an audit of information systems by the end of September 2012.

In this report, we:

- Spell out what exactly we have committed to
- Outline what approach we took
- Report the outcome of our audit.

## **1.2 Who we are what we do**

NIPEC was established as a Non-Departmental Public Body by the Northern Ireland Assembly 2002. We support the development of nurses and midwives by promoting high standards for practice, education and professional development. We also provide advice and guidance on best practice and matters relating to nursing and midwifery. Our aim is to improve the quality of health and care by supporting the practice, education and performance of nurses and midwives.

We are a people-centred organisation guided by a set of important principles that directly impact on what we do and how we do it. We value deeply our responsibility to:

- Provide leadership that will have a positive impact on the nursing and midwifery professions
- Promote a culture of equality and diversity
- Work in partnership with stakeholders for the good of the public
- Act at all times with complete integrity and transparency
- Be accessible to individuals and interested organisations
- Be accountable to the public and our stakeholders
- Be open-minded and creative in our approach to our work.

We are a small organisation with finite resources and as a result a number of support and corporate services are outsourced to the Business Services Organisation (BSO), including finance, human resources, legal services, internal audit, equality, and procurement. It must be noted at the onset of this audit that due to the outsourcing of certain services, Section 75 data captured as a result of undertaking these roles on our behalf is not held by our organisation.

## **1.3 Our commitment and its rationale**

Under Section 75, public authorities are required to undertake equality screening (and if necessary equality impact assessments). Likewise, organisations have committed to ongoing monitoring to identify opportunities to better promote equality and good relations.

Our Equality Scheme (para 4.29) requires us to carry out:

*“An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions.”*

The Equality Commission thus clearly defines the audit as not an end in itself but a key stepping stone for organisations to ensure their decision-making is equality evidence-based.

While monitoring is twofold, involving not just the data collection of quantitative and qualitative information but also its analysis to assess inequalities and emerging issues, in our audit we concentrated on the extent of data collection in a first step and with this strand on data systems (thus excluding, for example, data held in personnel files).

## **1.4 Our approach to the audit**

In the absence of further guidance by the Equality Commission, we adopted the following approach to the conduct of the audit.

As a starting point, we drew on our Information Assets Register, a register which includes all information assets that we hold as an organisation including those in the form of databases, reports and papers. Each organisation is required to hold such a register, under governance requirements.

For the purposes of this audit, we focussed on those databases that capture information on people, relating to both services and employment. This means that many other types of information databases that we maintain for administrative purposes, for example, to record non-stock and stock requisitions, were filtered out.

We undertook this audit in four steps:

**Step 1** - we identified people-based information systems and reviewed all our databases to identify those which relate to people.

**Step 2** - we looked at these systems in terms of the coverage and use of Section 75 data, and looked at which of the nine equality categories and postcode the system currently captures. If the system did not capture a particular group we determined whether this is because: (a) the data field exists but is not used; or (b) the system is not capable of recording the data, ie. the data field does not exist.

**Step 3** - we undertook a high level assessment of what is required to fill the gaps, taking account of costs, benefits and feasibility of doing so.

**Step 4** - we would then decide on our priorities for addressing any gaps within service areas and at corporate level.

## **2. The outcome of our audit**

Table 1 overleaf shows the results of our audit. The table lists each of the people-based information systems that we identified and against each of these systems, it records what Section 75 and postcode data is currently being collected. It then documents our high-level assessment on the identified gaps.

Database	Section 75 data collected										High level assessment		Action to be taken and by whom	By when	
	Age	Gender	Disability	Religion	Political Option	Sexual Orientation	Racial Group	Marital Status	Dependants	Postcode	Costs and Benefits	Feasibility			
Registrants (nursing and midwifery) database for electronic communication	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Only name and email address captured on the registrants database with	No mandatory requirement to join database and no plans to extend this to capture other information, therefore feasibility of widening data range is limited	Some monitoring information on nurses and midwives is collected by NMC (ethnicity, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation); NIPEC will keep under review the NMC monitoring reports with regards to any potential learning from the NI specific data	Ongoing
Enquiry / FOI database	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Enquiries/FOI requests usually received via website therefore limited Section 75 data captured	Due to nature of this service, there are no requirement or plans to widen data range	None	N/A

Database	Section 75 data collected										High level assessment		Action to be taken and by whom	By when
	Age	Gender	Disability	Religion	Political Option	Sexual Orientation	Racial Group	Marital Status	Dependants	Postcode	Costs and Benefits	Feasibility		
Human Resource systems (including HR Management System, equal opportunities monitoring, recruitment, training)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NIPEC receives its HR support from BSO and their HR systems will be reflected in their audit report	Introduction of new HRPTS (Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence) in 2013 will result in Section 75 data being captured for all nine groups, and this information being available to NIPEC	BSO / NIPEC	In line with BSTP timeline
Staff training records	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	NIPEC currently holds limited staff training records - gaps will be addressed through the new HRPTS system	Introduction of new HR systems as part of BSTP will result in Section 75 data being captured for all nine groups and this information being available to NIPEC	BSO / NIPEC	In line with BSTP timeline

### 3. Our priorities

In order to decide what our priorities were in relation to gaps identified and action required (see steps 3 and 4 above), we undertook an assessment of costs and benefits against the following criteria which had been devised at the outset of this audit:

- Resources (time, people and money)
  - Incurred in creating capacity of system to record the missing data
  - Incurred in improving meaningful completion of the data fields
- Technology
  - Timescales involved
  - Technology upgrade
- Impact and outcomes
  - Potential to contribute to improvement of health and social wellbeing of individuals
  - Potential to contribute to promoting equality for HSC staff
  - Longer term savings or opportunity costs
- Unique or most efficient point of data collection within the HSC (within the constraints of data protection provisions)
- Practicalities of data collection (including ethical issues)

We also looked at the feasibility of addressing the gaps and concluded that no further action was required at this stage other than to monitor Section 75 data collected and reported on by the NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council).

### 4. Conclusion

This report has outlined how we went about conducting an audit of information systems and reported on the outcome of that audit.

We welcome your comments on this report – if you wish to do so, please contact:

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