

IIA Workstream

Report on pilot equality engagement process February – May 2015

1. Background

In December 2014 the IIA steering group presented a baseline report to the programme board. The board requested a range of next steps including that during its next phase of work the IIA steering group ensured enhanced representation from specific geographies and that groups with protected characteristics were engaged in the equalities impact work.

In response to this the IIA steering group with advice from the Future Fit Team :

- (i) engaged the services of a consultancy (Participate Ltd) with expertise in equality impact assessment and proven methodologies for engaging with groups with protected characteristics
- (ii) strengthened its membership with representation from groups who worked with people with protected characteristics
- (iii) designed a pilot equality engagement process to test approaches.

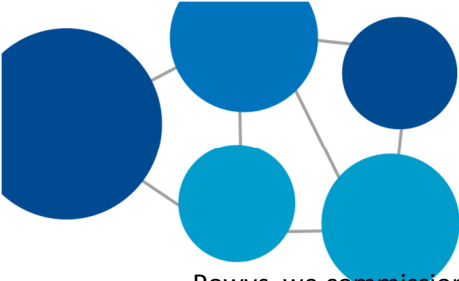
The pilot process was designed to facilitate initial contact with groups with protected characteristics, such that they would be better engaged during the planned Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). This work has assisted in preparation for the EQIA which will run in parallel to the Consultation process planned to begin in December 2015. The full equality impact assessment will form just part of the overall Integrated Impact Assessment, which will deliver a report and draft Mitigation Action Plan after the Consultation has closed to help inform the final decision.

2. Introduction

The section below describes the approach and learning from the pilot of the equality engagement process with groups with protected characteristics.

A range of materials were designed to assist with the engagement activity which sought to obtain feedback regarding the current experience of acute and community hospital services amongst individuals and groups of people with protected characteristics. Results were collated by facilitators and analysed to produce a report. The approach was designed to work with 'gatekeeper' organisations who would facilitate access to groups with protected characteristics and who would themselves carry out some of the engagement activity. This was supplemented by engagement carried out by the Future Fit internal communications and engagement team, drawing on the expertise of the Communications and Engagement work stream. The pilot equality engagement process was conducted during the electoral purdah and hence contact was targeted to specific groups.

Due to capacity constraints and challenges with engaging people with protected characteristics in



Powys, we commissioned Participate, a consultancy with expertise in engagement, to conduct the equality engagement work in Powys.

3. Results

In recognition that there would be significant learning that would inform the future EQIA, this phase of the IIA steering group work culminated in a lessons learned workshop.

The intention of the pilot equality engagement process was to obtain in depth feedback and assess current and possible future links with groups with protected characteristics. Although a relatively small number of individuals participated, the depth of feedback was significant.

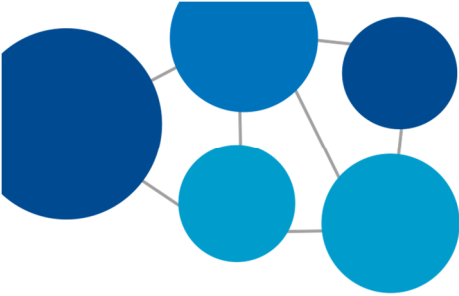
The use of Participate consultancy in Powys demonstrated that pre-existing links were not a necessity when engaging with groups with protected characteristics. As a result we have a significantly expanded the stakeholder list of people and groups in Powys with protected characteristics.

We are not yet in a position to share the detailed findings with the Programme Board. However, lessons learned during the equality engagement process are reported below at Appendix One. These will be shared widely alongside the report on the engagement process and relevant action points will be taken by the IIA and Communications and Engagement work streams.

4. Recommendations for consideration by the board

- (i) The steering group rapidly moves to resolve any significant issues with the report on the pilot equality engagement process and shares the outcomes and lessons learned with relevant Future Fit stakeholders.
- (ii) The focus of steering group activity for the next phase should be in preparation for the full Integrated Impact Assessment which will run in parallel to the consultation process.
- (iii) The steering group membership is reviewed to
 - a. ensure adequate expertise for the next phase
 - b. ensure representation / links with gatekeepers to enable large scale future engagement with groups and individuals with protected characteristics.

Ruth Lemiech
Chair of IIA work stream
19th June 2015



Appendix One: Lessons learned through piloting the equality impact assessment work

Need to tailor our approach to different groups

Coproduction of materials with groups with protected characteristics will ensure that materials are more accessible and useable.

Younger people who took part suggested that they might benefit from stories and scenarios to better understand the implications for them. Younger people were also keen to undertake EQIA work with their peers.

Use a variety of flexible engagement mechanisms

Ensure facilitators have appropriate expertise to engage with the groups they are working with. Consider training a cohort of volunteer 'experts' to conduct some of the work.

Direct action – going through third parties to get contacts and then approaching those contacts directly was seen to be more successful than waiting for a third party to make introduction and linkages. Data Protection issues need to be recognised however.

It was felt that the digital questionnaire was not appropriate for face to face engagement as it was too rigid, therefore use the focus group 1-2-1 interview tools to enable a more informal style of structured conversation.

Permanent displays regarding Future Fit in hospitals and other units may enhance understanding and awareness.

Wider general engagement and 'warming up'

The pilot process illustrated that many of the people who were approached to participate in the equality impact assessment pilot had not previously heard of Future Fit. This will fall under the remit of the Communications and Engagement work stream and be of benefit to the planned equality impact assessment.

There is potential for a greater role to be played by Future Fit 'Champions' or volunteers who could facilitate contact.

There is some lack of understanding of Future Fit and a need for accessible messaging would help with engagement of some groups with protected characteristics.

Our pilot survey enabled people to register their interest in being kept informed of progress – these people will be added to the FF newsletter distribution list.

Also where people have left their contact details, we will respond to them directly to thank them for their views. Groups who participated will be offered the opportunity to request a presentation from the Communications and Engagement team to further their understanding of Future Fit.

For some respondents, there was widespread cynicism regarding the process of engaging with groups with protected characteristics who felt this was a box ticking exercise and no confidence that their views would make an impact; 'the decision has already been made'.

Regular checkpoints

Where multiple groups / people who are involved in conducting EQIA process will need regular checkpoints and sharing of what is working.

Create some milestones and KPIs so that we can constantly assess progress.

Assess progress and implement any mitigation action if e.g. it appears likely some groups of people with protected characteristics are not being reached.

Checkpoints will also offer regular opportunities to share materials, e.g. in Powys an email briefing note resulted in positive engagement.

Logging contacts and feedback was seen to be helpful in keeping track of the approaches made, even if this did not initially result in full engagement with the process.

Need to be sure of a shared understanding of issues discussed and language used.

Tools, materials and methodology

Will continue to use a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach, the latter will be more robust when we reach a larger number of people.

Need to ensure mechanisms for capturing feedback are appropriate and user friendly.
Ensure a more systematic approach to keep track of work completed and included in reports.
Have identified some helpful individuals with disabilities who are helping us to work through accessibility issues (e.g. deaf and partially sighted).

Some concerns that categorization of protected characteristics was too broad and as we reach greater numbers of people there may be a requirement to enhance the differentiation between groups with protected characteristics and reflect this in both data capture and reporting.

Where questions will require specific external support in order to be able to analyse the data, will need to check with experts when phrasing the questions to ensure that analysis will be possible.

Some felt that it worked well to ask people about impact on them 'as a disabled person', 'as a gay man'. There was a view that this brought out more equality-related issues and affirmed the importance of these in the assessment process.

Incentives and payment

A welcoming approach with appropriate refreshments was broadly seen as a good way to help individuals to engage with the process.

We have not yet seen the need to pay people for their time or views but this will be kept under review through checkpoints during the formal EQIA. There may be occasions where small numbers and seldom heard groups need to be encouraged to take part.