



Council meeting

Date of meeting:	08 December 2016
Title of Paper:	RCN Equality and Inclusion strategy 2017-2020: Courageous about equality, bold about inclusion
Appendices:	Appendix A Equality and Inclusion strategy
Presented by:	Chris Cox, Director of Membership Relations
Is a decision required? Yes X<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the key elements of the proposed equality and inclusion strategy.

2. Detail

2.1. The Membership and Representation committee (MRC) agreed that the development of a new equality and inclusion strategy was essential to moving this agenda forward in a coherent way throughout the organisation. A sub group was convened shortly afterwards and in November, a draft strategy was returned to MRC for consideration which was approved and has been recommended to Council for adoption.

2.2. The strategy attached has been written to reflect the need for agility and rapid customisation of this complex and dynamic agenda as it operates across all four countries. It therefore is not intended at this stage to prescribe or record the operational actions that will need to be undertaken across the RCN structure but it does outline some key actions to be undertaken primarily by the Membership Relations Directorate. It is intended that they will act as a supportive spine to strengthen and drive activity undertaken across other directorates, countries and regions as appropriate.

2.3 The strategy plots an initial course of action over three years and is loosely-structured in the following way: The first year of operation spends some time in focusing on researching good practice and setting some important parameters in examining innovative practice from a

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wide range of other organisations. Years two and three tend to focus on piloting and scaling up interventions before a period of detailed evaluation. It is also acknowledged that change on the scale that we seek is going to take time to achieve and not everything that we try will work. Success is likely to demand that we take an innovative and experimental approach to test a wide range of approaches in different health and social care environments and learn quickly, moving focus from early failures and shifting rapidly to scale up successful approaches.

- 2.4 The strategy has also been developed around a particular model of leadership and engagement that stresses the importance of this work being integrated and integral to the day-to-day work of the organisation and throughout the entirety of its functions. It also places a high premium on the ability to work in collaboration with a range of other agencies and stakeholders. Other aspects of this model focus on the importance of activating accountability, personal agency and accountability. In recognition of the view that this agenda may appear challenging and uncomfortable to some, it is important that there is also an awareness of how to neutralise discomfort to enable clear communication and dialogue to take place. The other elements of this model underline the importance of personal agency through a focus on developing leadership at all levels and providing a framework for key constituencies to feel empowered to own their actions and results that are generated by working in this area.
- 2.5 The attached draft strategy reflects that ambition and focuses on five strategic priorities which are briefly outlined below. Each strategic priority is accompanied with some indicative headline actions that support and complement delivery at a departmental, regional and/or country level over the three-year period of operation.
- 2.6 The first priority refers to the way that RCN can effectively connect and communicate with its members and stakeholder groups on the issues of equality and inclusion. It also focuses on building a shared understanding of the concepts of equality and inclusion and its link to delivering better patient satisfaction.
- 2.7 The second priority focuses on identity and intersectionality. It makes reference to that fact that our framing of issues such as gender, age or disability or race often need to be understood in the context of how they relate and impact on other identities that we hold. In the same way that some forms of disability may worsen with age, some forms of discrimination may be worsened because of the interplay of different protected characteristics like gender and age or gender identity and race or ethnicity. This focus on intersectionality also includes integrating elements of the socioeconomic and wider determinants of health dimension too.
- 2.8 Priority three examines the importance of building the capacity of accredited representatives, RCN officers and professional nursing leads

- in terms of their ability to promote inclusion, inclusive practice and challenge inequality and discrimination.
- 2.9 The fourth priority seeks to enhance the ways in which we are able to inspire members and potential members into some form of activism through a focus on inclusion and equality.
 - 2.10 The final priority takes up the issue of challenge and change and gives consideration to the use of a robust- evidence base to provide constructive challenge to employers, policy makers and /or service providers to improve equality and inclusion outcomes for RCN members.
 - 2.11 The strategy requires that countries, directorates and regions create their own action plans to implement these strategic aims as appropriate. It is anticipated that this approach is integral to the process of mainstreaming equality and inclusion issues throughout the organisation.
 - 2.12 There is one headline key performance indicator for this strategy which is: that there are no significant differences in levels of satisfaction between and within groups of RCN members; with the services they have engaged with.
 - 2.13 The strategy is intended to impact on a number of long-term change issues across the RCN. Firstly, it aims to enhance the capability of the organisation to enhance inclusion and tackle inequality and discrimination overall. It is recognised that the primary terrain remains the workplace but there is recognition of the need to explore how equality and inclusion issues may operate beyond the arena of employment. Secondly, it seeks to create the conditions necessary for cultural change. This is achieved through a focus on the micro-interactions between individuals and groups as macro-level interventions such as changing equality legislation appears unlikely in the short-term.

3 Resources, costs and implications

- 3.1 At this stage, further detail about how strategy implementation will impact on budgets across the RCN is not known as there is a requirement for directorates and relevant departments to work up appropriate action plan as part of the normal operational planning cycle

4 Impact and/or risk assessments

- 4.1 The strategy applies across the four-country context and an equality impact assessment has been undertaken. There are some significant reputational and operational risks that have been identified with failing to adopt a strategy of this nature. If successfully implemented, it is

projected that the strategy will have a positive impact across all the protected characteristics described by the Equality Act 2010 and within equality legislation operating across Northern Ireland.

5 RCN policies, procedures, key performance indicators and strategic plan

- 5.1 This strategy is designed to help to deliver the RCN's strategic plan and specifically relates to being an effective, value-for money organisation.

6 Stakeholder involvement and member consultation

- 6.1 There has been engagement with the Equality and Inclusion sub group as well as consultation with accredited representative committees. A meeting has also taken place with a group of retired members and subsequent engagement has initially agreed throughout 2017. Further member engagement is planned throughout the life of the strategy with opportunity to alter the method of approach to respond to critical changes in the environment.

7 Evaluation and review

- 7.1 The strategy will be reviewed annually using the operational planning cycle to collect data and review progress against the outcomes desired.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 RCN Council is asked to note and adopt the equality and inclusion strategy for implementation for the period 2017-2020.

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Appendix A: Equality and Inclusion Strategy: *Courageous about equality, bold about inclusion*