

Information Guide for Equality Impact Assessments

Volume 8 - Political Opinion

December 2002

Introduction

This guide aims to supply those tasked with undertaking equality impact assessments and subsequent monitoring with a clear indication of the availability of equality information in relation to political opinion.

The primary focus is on the availability of information on computerised systems in operation in the health and social service here. These are presented separately in terms of Hospital systems, Children, Personal Social Services and Mental Health, and Family Practitioner Services and Workforce systems.

The guide goes on to look at the availability of additional research material such as surveys and other relevant material that may be of use.

Finally the guide looks at available research material identified in Valerie Bunting's literature review that was commissioned by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS).

It is hoped that this document will expand over time as more sources of information are identified or become available, and as more research is commissioned.

It is also hoped that representatives of Section 75 groups will contribute with whatever research material they may have available in respect of their specific group.

Should you require further information on this guide, please contact Jim McColgan of DHSSPS, Information and Analysis Unit at:

Regional Information Branch,
Annexe 2,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont
BT4 3UD

CSA, Workforce - Information Available on Political Opinion

Section 75 Grouping	Political Opinion
What information is available?	No information available on political opinion from any system.
What are we doing to improve it?	Due to the sensitivity of this information it is unlikely that service users will be asked to supply details of their political opinion at the point of contact with the service. With this in mind the Equality Information Steering Group have decided not to attempt to put such information onto systems. In considering a phased approach to improving the availability of equality information, 'political opinion' is one of the data items that will be concentrated on in the third and final phase of work.
When will the improved information be available?	Not known at this stage.
What additional information is available? (e.g. research, surveys?)	No information identified bar votes cast in elections which may be used as a proxy for political opinion.

Other Relevant Information Available on Political Opinion

Other Available information	<p>The Geographic Area Equality Dataset (see Appendix 1) contains data at Local Government District level on political preference from first preference votes cast for seats won at the June 2001 Local Government elections. Individual electoral ward data is not available, however, a breakdown can be provided, on request, by electoral area which is the smallest area unit by which the Electoral Office can disaggregate voting data. Electoral areas are made up of groups of electoral wards and a listing can be provided with the data. Caution should be exercised when using this data as a proxy for political preference as voting behaviour can be influenced by a range of other factors apart from political allegiance. Data will be available in the near future based on all first preference votes cast, not just those for seats won. The Geographic Area Equality Dataset has now been updated and is available at:</p> <p>http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/iau/equality.html Information available from Information Analysis Unit, DHSSPS, Tel 028 90522081.</p>
-----------------------------	---

References to Political Opinion identified in Literature Review (Valerie Bunting)

POLITICAL OPINION

Key Issues	Reference
No specific research uncovered which focuses upon equality of opportunity, health and political opinion.	
Statutory Organisations have failed to recognise the specific needs of people affected by “the Troubles”.	Social Services Inspectorate, “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”, March, 1998, p. 37.
Some services are not accessible to people living in sectarian areas.	Social Services Inspectorate, “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”, March, 1998, p. 37.
Fears about confidentiality makes people reluctant to accept help.	Social Services Inspectorate, “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”, March, 1998, p. 37.
Lack of information and awareness about services for victims.	Social Services Inspectorate, “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”, March, 1998, p. 37.
Lack of trust in social services reported by voluntary & community groups.	Social Services Inspectorate, “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”, March, 1998, p. 37.
Lack of a joined up approach to community violence. Suspicion and mistrust of statutory authorities by victims.	“Joined Up Government: A multi-agency response to violence in Northern Ireland”, Know, 2000 in ORB: Northern Ireland Conflict, http://www.ark.ac.uk/orb/summaries/Knox00.htm .
People bereaved and injured by security forces might be reluctant to use services because of their mistrust of state provision.	“The Cost of the Troubles, Final Report”, April, 1999
Statutory & Voluntary Organisations have not addressed the needs of victims.	The Cost of the Troubles Final Report”, April, 1999
Attention needs to be given to participation and accessibility to services of the two main traditions in Northern Ireland.	The Cost of the Troubles Final Report.

Geographic Area Equality Dataset
(NB now updated with 2001 Census Data)

Project Support Analysis Branch (PSAB) has assembled a dataset at electoral ward and Local Government District level detailing the composition of each of the equality groups (where data were available). This dataset can be useful for Equality Impact Assessments when equality data on actual service users is not available or when the particular policy has a differential geographic impact.

Examples of the application of this dataset to date include:

- (i) Oral Health Strategy and General Dental Services Equality Impact Assessment - The percentage of people registered with a dentist in each ward was calculated using data from the Central Services Agency. The equality group composition of wards with differential registration rates was then analysed.
- (ii) Sure Start Equality Impact Assessment - The equality group composition of people living in wards designated as Sure Start wards was compared with those not living in these wards.
- (iii) Mental Health Strategy Equality Impact Assessment – electoral wards with high mental health needs were identified using the mental health needs index from the HSS Board Capitation Formula (used to allocate resources to HSS Boards). The equality group composition of these wards was then compared to the rest of the population in Northern Ireland.

In constructing the dataset Numerical data at electoral ward level was obtained in respect of the majority of the nine equality groups (or suitable proxies for the groups). Unfortunately, no information was available on sexual orientation and only approximate higher level data was available in respect of racial group (the Centre for Racial Equality provided some estimates of where the majority of the main racial groups were located in NI - typically at LGD level). Data on political preference was obtained at LGD level from first preference votes cast at the June 2001 Local Government elections (The Electoral Office do not have data in respect of the votes cast for individual electoral wards).

In instances where a direct count of the numbers in a specific group were not available, a suitable proxy was used. For example, the aggregate of attendance allowance and incapacity benefit claimants was used as a proxy for those with/without a disability. However, as there may be issues surrounding take-up of social security benefits, an alternative disability proxy was created based on numbers self-reporting a limiting long-term illness at the 1991 Census (this was the only available data source for a number of the equality groups).

More detail on the source of data for each equality group and the geographical level at which it was available is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of data in the Geographic Area Equality Dataset

Equality Group	Source of Data	Analysis Unit
Men and Women Generally	Northern Ireland 1991 Census	Electoral Ward
Persons of different marital status	Northern Ireland 1991 Census Small Area Statistics	Electoral Ward
Persons with different Religious beliefs	Northern Ireland 1991 Census Small Area Statistics	Electoral Ward
Persons with/without Dependants	Northern Ireland 1991 Census Small Area Statistics	Electoral Ward
Persons with/without Long-Term Illness	Northern Ireland 1991 Census Small Area Statistics	Electoral Ward
People of Different Ages	Nobel Dataset 2000 Estimate (Northern Ireland Measure of Deprivation)	Electoral Ward
Persons of Different Political Belief	First Preference votes cast for seats won in June 2001 District Council Elections	Local Government District
Persons with/without a Disability	Social Security (GIS) as at March 2000	Electoral Ward
Persons from Different Racial Backgrounds	Estimates from the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre (Dated – Jan 2001)	Local Government District

Accessibility

PSAB holds software to calculate by-road journey times and distances from the centre of each enumeration district to any point location in Northern Ireland. The software is called SMOSS (Simplified Modelling of Spatial Systems) and was developed by Dr Tony Hindle, University of Lancaster. This model has been used to inform the rurality adjustment in the HSS Board Capitation Formula and was subsequently adapted for use in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Strategic Review. It was also used to calculate scores for the Access Domain of the Noble Measures of Deprivation.

The model has been used to assess differences in accessibility to services from different parts of Northern Ireland. This information is aggregated to electoral ward level (1984 boundaries) and the data contained in the Geographic Area Equality Dataset are used to investigate potential adverse impacts on the equality groups. An example of this is given below:

Example – Acute Hospital Review Equality Impact Assessment

SMOSS was used to calculate the travel time from each electoral ward to its nearest acute hospital under the current configuration of acute hospitals and also for a range of possible new configurations. Wards were then grouped according to how their access time changed under each of the proposed scenarios. Finally, the composition of each category of wards was then examined, using the Geographic Area Equality Dataset, to determine if there were differences in the proportion of each equality group living within them.