

Community Relations Equality Impact Assessment

Executive Summary

1. Moyle District Council is committed to fulfilling the responsibilities outlined under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In our Equality Scheme approved by the Equality Commission in April 2001, the Council made a commitment to carry out an impact assessment on the Community Relations Policy within Council.
2. The policy of Moyle District Council in respect of Community Relations is to adopt the 'District Council Community Relations Programme' (DCCRP) as established and promoted by the Community Relations Unit (CRU) of the Office Of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Through this Programme, local Community Relations Programmes are encouraged to reflect local needs within each district council area. The Community Relations Unit is not prescriptive in the nature of the Plans presented to them, however the outcomes of the activities identified must directly or indirectly seek to address the aims of OFMDFM Community Relations Policy which are to:
 - Develop cross community contact and co-operation
 - Promote greater mutual understanding
 - Increase respect for Cultural Traditions

By implementing this Programme the Council receives financial assistance towards funding a Community Relations Officer and an Approved Project Action Plan (Community Relations Operational Plan). The Community Relations Unit provides guidance on funding priorities and have established funding exclusions.

In accordance with this guidance, Moyle District Council prepares a Community Relations Operational Plan annually. This plan incorporates a number of themed functions to address Community Relations issues within the district of Moyle.

It is our objective through this Equality Impact Assessment to increase participation and inclusion and therefore produce better equality outcomes.

The Community Relations Operational Plan is produced on an annual basis in consultation with Moyle Community Safety Partnership and the Council. The objective of the Plan is to provide support and a programme of events for individuals and groups within the area which will bring the community together and provide opportunities to examine the wide cultural diversity which exists within the District. To support this the programme encompasses the following elements:

- The establishment and support of Community Development Groups within the district.
- The organization of a programme of events, training and educational activities aimed at encouraging understanding of equity, diversity and interdependence.

- Facilitating a small grants scheme which aims to encourage groups to undertake cross-community/single identity projects and/or cultural diversity themes.
- The establishment, maintenance and support of Moyle Community Safety Partnership with representation from the statutory, community, church and local schools.

A copy of the Community Relations Plan and Budget Request for 2004/2005 is available on the Council website at www.moyle-council.org. A copy is also available by writing to or telephoning the Council at the address listed under contact details. Large print copies are available and the Community Relations Officer is available to discuss the content of the Plan.

The key policy areas which will be subjected to this Impact assessment are:

- The Community Relations Grant Award.
 - Training and Educational Opportunities
 - Moyle Community Safety Partnership
 - Funding Exclusions Policy
3. This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been completed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and is based on the practical guidance for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments issued by the Equality Commission in April 2001.
 4. In conducting this Equality Impact Assessment the following data and research findings were taken into account:
 - data available within the Moyle District Council Survey 2001 relating to Community Relations
 - data available from the Best Value Customer Satisfaction Survey 2000/2001 and 2004
 - Community Relations User profiles from 1998 – 2001
 - data available following training and development coordinated by the Council
 - data regarding the nine specific categories outlined with the legislation.
 5. An assessment of the impact of each policy area was conducted in accordance with the equality of opportunity duty in respect of the nine categories of persons identified in Section 75. This exercise identified the following issues:

5.1 The Community Relations Grant Award.

The Council administers a Community Relations Grant Award scheme. This scheme is in place to assist constituted community groups who wish to engage in Community Relations projects or activities which will assist the development of better community relations within the District. The grant scheme was introduced in 1998.

Applications are received from the community sector on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. The availability of the fund is promoted via mailshots to the groups listed on the Council community groups database, biannually in the Council's publication Moyle Matters and through the local press.

All new community groups are advised to register with the Council and are then placed on the database. Details are also available on the Council website www.moyle-council.org

Following a detailed review of the grant applications received and a review of the grant awards issued (a full breakdown of this information is available, see full Equality Impact Assessment page 19). Based on the information available the Council identified that the number of groups representing the mother/toddler and women's groups made significantly less applications to the fund than other age groups. Also following a review of the Grant Guidelines it was identified that further information in relation to the Councils commitment to Equality and the Groups commitment to Equality should be extended.

Outcome

Based on the information reviewed the Council could not identify adverse impact in relation to religious belief and political opinion. We are aware however aware that information in relation to sexual orientation, disability, racial group, marital status and dependents is limited. It is hoped that consultation with these groups will provide further information which will assist us. We have also extended our monitoring form so that in the future, information in relation to all of the groups can be considered.

Positive Measures

As outlined above the review demonstrated that the number of groups representing the mother/toddler and women's groups make significantly less applications to the fund than other age groups. Council will ensure Grant scheme is publicised to this group.

It is also proposed to amend the Grant Guidelines to include Councils commitment to equality and include a recommendation to project organizers that they have similar regard to the needs of others. Following an analysis of the information available organizers will be advised to particularly consider those with a disability and those with dependants.

5.2 Funding Exclusions Policy

The Funding Exclusions Policy was agreed by Moyle District Council to ensure compliance with the District Council Community Relations Programme (DCCRP), to assist with project management and to support the efforts of the community/voluntary sector within Moyle in undertaking community relations projects.

The Council's policy is not to fund:

- Individuals
- Companies
- Groups acting on behalf of paramilitaries
- on-going running costs: and
- retrospective applications

Following a review of the Funding Exclusions Policy the council did not identify any adverse impact for any of the groups. Consultation and monitoring will assist the Council to determine if this remains the case.

5.3 Training and Educational Opportunities

As part of the Community Relations Operational Plan training and educational opportunities are provided for community groups and the general public. Courses offered reflect demand, which is assessed by the level of enrolment and participation. The Council offer a range of courses including, Speak Easy, Negotiation skills, Handling Conflict, Mediation, Cultural traditions History and Irish School of Ecumenics courses. It is our intention to review the courses available and identify future training needs by consulting with Community Groups.

Training and educational courses are generally held in a central location within the council area. Venues in Ballycastle and Armoy are most commonly used. Training and educational courses are advertised via the Council publication Moyle Matters, by direct mailshot to community groups registered on the community group database, through the local press and via church bulleting. When selecting venues for training consideration is given to geographical and physical accessibility.

Following a review of the courses held and the attendees it was the view of the Council that there was no adverse impact on the basis of religious belief and political opinion. Extending the monitoring provisions has also provided some information in relation to age, gender and marital status and disability. Based on the data received the majority of participants on the training courses are female adults with no dependants. The returns received in relation to Sexual Orientation were reduced and demonstrated reluctance on the attendees' part to complete this section of the monitoring form. In relation to disability the Council are aware that access is a major factor when considering training. Data from representatives of racial groups has been limited and we are working at the moment to establish partnership links with the local ethnic community a report has been undertaken by the Chinese Welfare Association to establish the needs of the ethnic community within the District.

A number of positive measures were however identified to improve the delivery of training and educational opportunities and so ensure that we are proactive in our approach.

Positive Measures

A process of consultation will be introduced to identify training needs and requirements within the community.

A standardized evaluation pack which includes an equality monitoring form will be designed for use at all training courses in the future and information will be collected regularly and reviewed in accordance with equal opportunities.

Based on the data and monitoring information available the current attendees at the training course are in the main adult females.

Consideration will be given to extend publicity to target all underrepresented groups for example youth groups, schools, etc to increase awareness and participation of the youth.

Consideration will also be given to extend information to sporting clubs which have a high male participation rate to increase the awareness and participation of males in the training and educational opportunities. Activities will be based, where possible, in buildings which have disabled access and facilities. Disabled participants will be made aware of access.

It is proposed to establish and maintain a financial support programme for persons who need to pay others to take over their caring duties so they may attend activities. The available budget will be 5% of the total project cost. Appropriate administrative documents will be developed and this resource will be published on all publicity materials.

5.4 Moyle Community Safety Partnership

Moyle Community Safety Partnership was established originally as the Moyle Community Relations Forum in 2000 and subsequently renamed in March 2005. The Partnership was established to apply a coordinated approach to resolving sectarian and anti-social behaviour issues in the Council area. Representation was invited from the statutory agencies (NIHE, PSNI, Causeway Trust, NEELB), all local churches, community development groups and post primary schools, Moyle Local Strategic Partnership and Moyle District Council. The Partnership agreed to focus on four key areas, Youth, Community Relations, Community Safety and the Environment.

After reviewing the administration of Moyle Community Safety Partnership the Council were unable to identify any adverse impact for any of the nine categories of persons identified in Section 75. Further monitoring and consultation with the groups will confirm if this is the case.

Positive Measure

It is proposed to monitor the continuing activities of this group to ensure it provides equality of opportunity for all.

It will also engage proactively in recruiting members who come from the nine Section 75 groups listed.

6 Good Relations

Moyle District Council is committed to ensure compliance with the Good Relations Duty. The Community Relations Programme plays an active part in promoting 'good relations' within and between the citizens of Moyle through its work with the community/voluntary sector, schools, churches, youth organisations etc. The programme also supports the development of good relations within the Council and between council and the community by supporting training in this area for Council members and Council staff. The Community Relations Programme is dedicated to the continuing promotion of 'good relations' and will continue to promote and support community efforts towards this goal.

The Community Relations Programme aims to build better relations, co-operation and understanding between individuals and groups with differing religious, political and racial backgrounds. The Guiding principles and the policies identified above are working to ensure that this is achieved.

The positive actions outlined above will work to eliminate any adverse impact for the categories of persons covered by Section 75.

The Council have begun a process of consultation to develop a three-year Good Relations strategy to be completed by July 2005.

7 Consultation

The Council now wishes to consult on the findings of this Equality Impact Assessment. With this objective in mind this summary has been forwarded to all consultees and posted on the Council's website. In addition a series of consultation meetings will be arranged within the District. Anyone wishing further details may receive a copy of the full report by contacting the council at the address listed below.

A copy of the report can be made available, on request, in alternative formats including large print, disk and audio cassette and in minority languages for those who are not fluent in English.

The following questions may assist you to take part in the consultation, but please feel free to submit your views in any format:

Is there any other data or information that might be drawn upon to assess the equality impact of the community relations programme?

Do you feel that the assessment of impacts made are fair?

Do you feel that the proposed items for positive action are fair and improve the delivery of the community relations programme in relation to equality?

Do you have any other comments on the equality impact of the community relations programme?

The Council positively welcomes and invites you to consult and comment on any of the issues raised. If you need any further information regarding this Equality Impact Assessment, please contact.

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Comments should be forwarded by 31st July 2005.

Publication of Results

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will be completed, taking into account the outcome of this public consultation. Any resulting amendments to the policy will then be made. A report of the EQIA will be published on the Moyle District Council website (www.moyle-council.org) and notified by correspondence to community groups by mail shot and to the general public through a press release.

Monitoring for adverse impact in the future

The impact of the Moyle District Council Community Relations Programme will continue to be monitored by the Council to identify any unforeseen results and to ensure that its aims are being achieved. Reviews will be conducted at key stages and results will be analysed to determine whether or not its impact on any of the nine categories has significantly changed.