

General
Medical
Council

Regulating doctors
Ensuring good medical practice

Equality and Diversity Strategy 2010-2013



Equality is defined as challenging discrimination, removing barriers faced by people from different groups, and creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Diversity is defined as recognising, respecting and valuing the differences that everyone has, as well as leveraging the opportunities that different people bring to the work that we do. In the UK context these diversity strands¹ include gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. These are described as 'diversity strands', or as 'protected characteristics'.

Fairness is defined as conforming with rules and standards, the ability to make judgements free from bias, discrimination and dishonesty, and about being just to everyone.

¹ Under the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristics are gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.

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Executive summary

The General Medical Council (GMC) has a longstanding commitment to making meaningful progress on equality and diversity (E&D), both as a regulator and as an employer.

Consultation with Council members and GMC staff during 2009 revealed an appetite to build on the GMC's work to date, and move towards a broader approach to working across all of the different strands of diversity.

The GMC's Council approved the strategy on 13 July 2010. The new E&D strategy supports the GMC's *Corporate Strategy 2010-13*.



Why E&D matters to the GMC

We believe that E&D is integral our work as a regulator and an employer for a number of reasons, including the following.

- Our ability to safeguard patient safety is reliant on maintaining the trust and confidence of all of our interest groups and stakeholders including our staff.
- The patients we safeguard are diverse, as are the professionals we regulate. We want to ensure that we understand the needs and expectations of different patients and users.

Our vision

We want to be confident about our approach and recognised as leaders in equality and diversity to ensure:

- absolute confidence that we are fair and non-discriminatory in how we regulate, and that our systems and guidance are free from bias and transparent to all of our interest groups

- that we are an inclusive organisation that uses our influence to tackle inequalities and create positive change
- that we are an employer of choice for the most talented people from all sections of society.

Our priorities

We have identified six priorities for 2010-2013, which will inform work across the GMC to deliver against our vision, and ensure that we are achieving our vision.

- Remain compliant with UK legislation and our legal obligations.
- Demonstrate where E&D is considered in core aspects of the delivery of our functions.
- Engage and involve diverse interest groups in the development and implementation of GMC programmes.
- Identify and explain any differentials in outcomes from GMC activities for diverse groups of people.
- Upskill staff around how to consider and integrate E&D into their roles and work.
- Move towards being an inclusive and diverse workforce at all levels.



The GMC's Equality and Diversity strategy: 2010-13

Background

We are committed to making meaningful progress on equality and diversity (E&D), both as a regulator and as an employer.

Consultation with Council members and GMC staff during 2009 revealed a will to:

- build on the GMC's work to date
- develop a framework to guide our work in this area
- move beyond focusing on compliance to broadening the organisation's approach to working across all of the different strands of diversity.

The new E&D strategy is a supporting strategy to the GMC's *Corporate Strategy 2010-13*. Council approved the strategy on 13 July 2010.

Our functions

The GMC exists to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine.

The law gives us four main functions under the *Medical Act 1983*:

- keeping up-to-date registers of qualified doctors
- fostering good medical practice
- promoting high standards of medical education and training



- dealing firmly and fairly with doctors whose fitness to practise is in doubt.

Why E&D matters to the GMC

We believe that E&D is integral to the work of the GMC as a regulator and an employer for a number of reasons, including the following.

- Our ability to safeguard patient safety is reliant on maintaining the trust and confidence of all of our interest groups and stakeholders.
- The patients we safeguard are diverse, as are the professionals we regulate. We want to ensure that we understand the needs and expectations of different patients and users.
- There is evidence of inequalities in the experiences, treatment and care of different groups of people in the UK.
- We hold ourselves accountable as a regulator for ensuring that we are robust, transparent and fair in the delivery of our statutory functions.
- We have a duty to remain compliant, and to meet our legal obligations.
- We believe that a successful approach to embedding E&D in what we do enhances confidence in us as a regulator. Conversely, there are risks to our reputation, both in compliance and other terms, in getting our approach to equality and diversity wrong.

[2 The GMC's Corporate Strategy 2010-13](#)



- Putting equality and diversity at the heart of our work also enables us to deliver on our strategic priorities: protecting the public, helping doctors, working with doctors, and delivering value for money².
- The UK working population is diverse. As an employer we want to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce at all levels.

What we are already doing

Our core standards and guidance

The principles of equality, fairness and transparency have been integrated into *Good Medical Practice*. This is the core ethical guidance the GMC provides to doctors. It is also intended to let the public know what they can expect from doctors.

Equality and diversity are also reflected in other GMC standards and guidance, including *Tomorrow's Doctors*, which sets out the requirements for the knowledge, skills and behaviours that medical students should learn at UK medical schools, as well as the standards for teaching, learning and assessment.

Compliance

The GMC continues to comply with the relevant equality and diversity UK legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, and our legal obligations around accessibility.

We are conscious of our legal duty to actively promote equality in discharging our functions, eliminate unlawful discrimination; and to foster good relations. We also publish an Equality Scheme (which is currently under review).

The GMC also continues to deliver a schedule of Equality Impact Assessments on policies and

processes across all of our statutory functions and the wider organisation.

As an employer, the GMC has in place the required HR policies and processes to ensure that staff are supported and managed fairly, as well as promoting principles of equality and tackling discrimination.



Initiatives

The GMC also invests in a number of initiatives to promote fairness of outcomes and transparency around our policies, processes and procedures. These include:

- producing our *Gateways* guidance for medical schools on making reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities
- ensuring that our website and publications are accessible and reflect diversity
- providing E&D training for legal assessors and panellists involved in our fitness to practise procedures and making E&D training mandatory for all of our employees
- developing action plans for each directorate which show how they are embedding equality and diversity in their business plans and core activities
- targeting, consulting and engaging with a diverse range of interest groups in developing and implementing our plans
- commissioning research to inform our understanding of key developments and trends relating to diverse groups of doctors, patients and communities
- constantly reviewing and adapting our policies to ensure that they are fair, robust and non-discriminatory for the stakeholders on which they impact
- our membership of the main employer-led diversity networks of UK organisations committed to making progress in this area
- sharing good practice with other healthcare regulators and other influential bodies in the health sector.



Our vision

Our vision for where we want to be as a result of our work on E&D is about enhanced confidence and recognition of our leadership in this area.

We want to be:

- sure that we are fair and non-discriminatory in the way we regulate, and that our systems and guidance are free from bias and are transparent to all of our interest groups
- an inclusive organisation that uses our influence to tackle inequalities and create positive change
- an employer of choice for the most talented people from all sections of society
- an organisation that is recognised as a leader for our good practice by other influential entities and diverse stakeholders amongst our key interest groups
- a regulator that all our interest groups have confidence in.



Priorities and outcomes

The GMC's Council has reaffirmed the principles for our approach to E&D against which we will align the development of future work, set out below.

- Equality and diversity are integral to the work of the GMC as a regulator and as an employer.
- We will continue to integrate E&D considerations into core GMC policies, processes and guidance. GMC senior managers will be held accountable for ensuring that E&D is embedded in core GMC activities, and for delivery against the related workstreams.
- All GMC staff have a role to play in delivering the E&D strategy, and we will continue to invest in

the development of competences to enable them to identify the E&D dimension of their roles and work programmes.

- We will use our influence and take a leadership role. We will also consistently scan the horizon and track how social attitudes and public opinion are shifting to identify challenges at an early stage, and articulate a GMC position.

Priorities

We have also identified six priorities for 2010-2013 which will inform work across the GMC to deliver against our vision, and ensure that we are making meaningful progress. These priorities are to:

- remain compliant with UK legislation and our legal obligations
- demonstrate where E&D is considered in core aspects of the delivery of our functions
- engage and involve diverse interest groups in the development and implementation of GMC programmes
- identify and explain any differentials in outcomes from GMC activities for diverse groups of people
- upskill staff around how to consider and integrate E&D into their roles and work
- move towards being an inclusive and diverse workforce at all levels.

Outcomes

We expect to achieve a number of key outcomes, including:

- enhanced confidence amongst our interest groups that GMC policies, processes and procedures are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory
- increased understanding of the impact of our policies, processes and procedures on diverse interest groups
- enhanced awareness by doctors of the GMC's policies, processes and procedures, and of the diversity of UK patients and service users
- an enhanced reputation as a fair regulator
- being able to show how we have used our influence to achieve positive change and tackle inequalities.

Roles and responsibilities

The GMC's Council

Sets the overall strategic direction for the organisation on equality and diversity.

Equality and Diversity Reference Group (EDRG)

Tracks progress in embedding E&D in core GMC plans and processes on behalf of the Council.

Reference groups and boards

Responsible for ensuring that E&D issues are fully taken account of in their sphere of activity.

Deputy Chief Executive

The senior sponsor on the GMC Executive for our work on E&D. He leads on articulating the GMC's commitment and raising its profile on E&D with staff and external interest groups.

Diversity champion

Each directorate has a diversity champion, who coordinates the development of their E&D action plans and engages colleagues in embedding E&D in their area of work. Action plans will be reviewed periodically by the Senior Management Team.

The E&D Team

Based in the Strategy & Planning Unit, the team coordinates the development of the E&D strategy and associated action plans; ensures that the GMC remains compliant and provides internal consultancy to the rest of the GMC.

Measures and performance indicators

The GMC is shifting towards focusing on outcomes and the impact of the work that is being delivered in relation to the E&D strategy.

We define an outcome as what specifically has changed in making progress to meet our commitment to fairness and being inclusive, or the results of undertaking an action.

We are currently assessing information needs and data gaps in order to identify and develop baselines for each of our E&D priorities. Our intention is to use the baselines as a starting point to track and evaluate progress over the next three years.

Meaningful measures for our work as a regulator will include:

- perceptions of the GMC as a fair and transparent regulator amongst diverse interest groups
- awareness of our procedures and guidance amongst diverse groups of doctors, patients and the public. For example, our complains process and our fitness to practise procedures
- the alignment of the actions identified in the E&D plans being developed by each Directorate, with the overall strategic and operational objectives for each area
- the quality of information reported on in the relevant sections of Council and Board papers to demonstrate how E&D considerations have been

taken into account in planning, implementation and review.



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