

Council meeting 6 & 7 June 2006

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

## **Diversity Action Plan: promoting equity, valuing diversity**

### **Purpose**

To inform the Council about the Society's current diversity activity and to provide proposals/recommendations for future action.

### **Strategic objective domain**

An organisation that consistently performs as a regulator, professional representative leader and publisher.

### **Recommendations**

The Council is asked:

- i. to support the proposals for future action suggested below, in order to progress the Society's diversity agenda, and
- ii. to nominate 2 or 3 Council Members to act as 'champions' to actively support and oversee work in this area.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this paper diversity refers to ethnic origin, race, colour, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation and/or age.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians constitute a broad spectrum of individuals who are of various ethnic groups, religious beliefs, ages, gender, disabilities and sexual orientations.
- 1.2 The most recent workforce census conducted in August 2005 reveals that the Register includes 21.5% of pharmacists from ethnic backgrounds and results from the Longitudinal Cohort Study demonstrate that amongst the 2006 graduate respondents (i.e. those beginning their pre-registration training this year) 47.2% are from non-white ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore 54.7% of the register is female and 71.5% of the 2006 graduate cohort respondents are female.
- 1.3 This in turn presents profound variables in the way in which pharmacists and pharmacy technicians view, perform and experience their work, as well as having an overall effect on the way pharmacy is delivered throughout Great Britain. Indeed the Cohort study demonstrates that gender and ethnicity has a significant impact on experience of- and sources of information about- pharmacy as a career, the level of influence these factors have on choosing to study pharmacy at university, the factors that influence the choice of a host institution and career expectations and intentions re. sector of practice and employment contract.

- 1.4 The Society is the professional and regulatory body for the pharmacy profession. It is therefore arguable that the issue of diversity is a core business concern and that the Society should develop a strategy on how to take the agenda forward.
- 1.5 This paper has been produced without the benefit of the “diversity audit” suggested by the last Council paper. On reflection, and on further investigation of the costs of a formal audit, we believe this process is not necessary at this stage. This paper proposes a methodology to make more progress across the Society within the resources available during 2006. []

## **2. Drivers for considering diversity**

- 2.1 There are three key drivers for considering diversity as a strategic objective, these being: legal, moral/ethical and “the business case”.
- 2.2 Firstly, as reported to Council in February 2006, the Society is responsible and liable as an employer for ensuring that it meets standards concerned with discrimination as laid out in legislation. However, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, as employers and as individuals, will themselves have similar responsibility/liability under the same legislation. Discrimination can be direct (e.g. not allowing an employee to wear a religious garment) or, more subtly, indirect (e.g. working hours that could preclude a female from having time for caring commitments). Increased awareness within the profession is likely to minimise the risk of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians falling foul of the law.
- 2.3 Morally and ethically, discrimination (and the prejudices of individuals) can have an adverse affect on someone’s ability to carry out their work, their earning and career prospects, health and overall wellbeing etc; this in turn can perpetuate social injustice. The principle of freedom from discrimination is recognised as a fundamental human right. As the representative for the profession, the Society should publicly state that discrimination (whether direct or indirect) is something that will not be condoned.
- 2.4 Finally, there is a “business case” for the promotion of diversity. An organisation, business or profession that does not value diversity is likely to experience a demoralised workforce, which in turn is likely to suffer higher attrition rates and lower standards. The business case revolves to a large extent around the nurturing of talent; for example, talented individuals with disabilities who are pitted against an unaccommodating working environment may be precluded from developing in the profession. Diversity awareness can promote loyalty and foster creativity as well as helping to attract people from the widest possible talent pool.
- 2.5 All this indicates that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians need to be aware of the legal and moral/ethical issues around diversity that relate to their work, to ensure that they are able to deliver the best possible professional standards and practices. This in turn can help increase the value of what the profession can bring to ‘health’ and the public as a whole. Put simply, diversity awareness is likely to help the overall health of the profession.

### 3. Suggested future action

- 3.1 It is proposed that 2 or 3 Members of Council act as “champions” for the diversity agenda, reporting into Governance committee. In order to give the agenda real momentum and focus it is also recommended that dedicated resource is identified to take this project forward by acting as the ‘engine room’ for work associated with the agenda, working closely with other individuals outside the organisation and outside pharmacy (e.g. people with responsibility for/an interest in diversity from the Department of Health, other health regulators and large multiples, for example, in order to generate and inspire new ideas. People who could potentially contribute to the agenda in the initial stages could include relevant members of staff from Human Resources, Policy, etc.
- 3.2 One of the first tasks will be to draft and agree an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Society, in its roles as professional body, regulator and employer, which should scope and rationalise how the Society intends proactively to tackle and promote the agenda. The strategy should include:
- Statements on the Society’s core values on the area (e.g. “the Society is committed to promoting and developing equality and diversity in all its work. This includes ensuring that our policies and the ways in which we work are fair to all individuals and groups, regardless of their ethnic origin, race, colour, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age”).
  - Definition of the Society’s understanding of the meaning of Equality and Diversity.
  - Consideration of the Society’s legal and moral responsibilities.
  - A rationale of the Society’s overall aims and strategies and how these relate to the Equality and Diversity agenda.
  - A framework to ensure that Equality and Diversity issues are considered when other Society business and policy is undertaken.
  - Adequate reflection of diversity in all the Society’s professional codes and standards.
  - Consideration of the Society’s current performance across the organisation.
  - Consideration of the duties and responsibilities of Council, staff and any other relevant people in handling issues concerning Equality and Diversity. And further, looking to ways of impacting upon culture.
  - A timeline for achieving a measurable outcome
- 3.4 There will be regular reports to Council on progress with the development of a strategy and its implementation.
- 3.5 Simple, practical measures could include:
- drafting practical information for pharmacists/pharmacy technicians on the subject and making this accessible on our (new) Society website;
  - consideration of the production of relevant Society information in other languages and Braille;

- ensuring that relevant literature produced is written in plain English and, where appropriate once the Society's Welsh Language scheme is agreed, in Welsh

#### **4. The Society as an employer**

4.1 The Human Resources department has made an initial assessment of the current position of employment practices within the Society and is confident that it meets all legislative requirements as well as displaying many examples of best practice. Also, the department is taking action to ensure that employment processes and practices are compliant with forthcoming discrimination legislation (such as age considerations). Overall, initial benchmarking shows that the Society is broadly in line with other professional/regulatory bodies.

4.2 Currently the Society conducts ethnic monitoring both of applicants and employees, with statistics being published in the annual report and on the Society's website. Also, Council, the Statutory Committee, Examiners and all levels of staff are required to undertake qualitative training on equality and diversity.

#### **5. Risk Implications**

Successfully promoting the Equality and Diversity agenda enables the Society to support members regarding obligations and risks associated with current legislation and the environment in which they work. Good communication on diversity supports and helps members address issues of discrimination and prejudice which if left unaddressed could have a negative effect on the working lives of members and/or the public which the profession serves. Instituting best practice in diversity is an opportunity on which the Society should capitalise, enhancing the abilities, image and value of the profession and of the Society and mitigating against the risks, both legal and reputational, which could result if such policies were not taken forward.

#### **6. Resource Implications**

In order to give the agenda real focus and momentum, it is proposed that, for an initial period of 6-12 months, resource is identified and dedicated to this agenda, the cost to be contained within the existing operational budgets of the Corporate & Strategic Development Directorate.

#### **7. Recommendations**

The Council is asked:

- i. to support the proposals for future action suggested below, in order to progress the Society's diversity agenda, and
- ii. to nominate 2 or 3 Council Members to act as 'champions' to actively support and oversee work in this area.

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