

GENERAL OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL



Equality Scheme

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Introduction

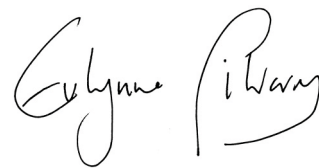
1. The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) was established by the Osteopaths Act 1993 and is the UK regulator for the profession of osteopaths. The GOsC carries out its functions through four statutory committees: Education, Investigating, Professional Conduct, and Health; and the following non-statutory committees: Finance and General Purposes, Audit, and Remuneration. The GOsC is headed by a Chief Executive and Registrar whose duties include ensuring compliance with the public equality duties.
2. The GOsC's role as a public authority is to develop and regulate the profession of osteopathy in the interests of protecting patients and the public. We maintain a register of all osteopaths eligible to practise within the UK. We set standards for the education of osteopaths, and also set standards of practice and conduct of osteopaths, and investigate any allegations about the fitness of individuals to practise as osteopaths, whether on grounds of capability, conduct or health. Osteopaths must not allow their views about a patient's lifestyle, culture, beliefs, race, gender, sexuality, disability, age or social or economic status to prejudice their assessment or care (GOsC Code of Practice for Osteopaths, May 2005: Clause 63).
3. There are currently just under 4000 osteopaths on the UK Statutory Register of Osteopaths. The GOsC employs 23 staff. In the United Kingdom, an estimated 30,000 patients consult osteopaths every working day.
4. The GOsC's objectives in respect of equality and diversity are:
 - > to promote equality of opportunity and access to the profession for all;
 - > to ensure a regulatory framework which maintains the profession's integrity and affords adequate protection to a diverse public;
 - > to ensure a system of governance for the profession that supports diversity; and
 - > to promote an inclusive and accessible

environment as an employer and provider of information and services.

We aim to be accessible, inclusive and responsive, to have transparency of our policies and procedures, and to promote best practice in all our activities. Both as an employer and as a regulator, we aim to ensure that all our activities support equality and diversity. Our equality and diversity objectives are reflected in the Code of Practice for Osteopaths, the Standard of Proficiency, procedures for governance, and in the range of our internal policies and procedures.

5. In preparing this Scheme, all heads of departments were asked to assess the equality and diversity implications of their teams' work, and to consider what action might be required to meet best practice. The detailed Action Plan that forms part of this Equality Scheme sets out how the GOsC intends to achieve its overall objectives.
6. The Scheme and Action Plan also take into account our duties as an employer. These include how we recruit, develop, train, reward and support those who work for us. We aim to create an inclusive working environment where people from diverse backgrounds and experience can thrive.
7. We will be publishing the Scheme on our website, and will provide printed copies of it on request.

Signed by



Elynn Gilvarry

Chief Executive & Registrar, General Osteopathic Council

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Race Equality

The public duties

8. The GOsC is a public authority listed in Schedule 1A of the Race Relations Act 1976 as being subject to the general statutory duty in relation to race. That general duty is set out in Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976. It requires the GOsC in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - (b) promote equality of opportunity; and
 - (c) promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.
9. The GOsC is not on the list of authorities bound to publish a Race Equality Scheme but we are of the view that such a scheme would assist in considering the effects of our activities aimed at promoting race equality. A scheme has therefore been prepared and is set out in the paragraphs that follow.

Functions, policies and proposed policies

10. The GOsC's functions are development and regulation of the profession of osteopathy. The policies and proposed policies that we have assessed as relevant to our performance of the general duty under this legislation are listed at Annex 1. Policies include the full range of formal and informal decisions that the GOsC makes in carrying out its duties and all the ways it exercises its powers or chooses not to do so. It includes custom and practice as well written practices. The list of all policies will be reviewed at least every three years. The next review will take place on or before June 2011.

Steps to fulfil the general duty

11. The steps which we propose to take towards the fulfilment of the general duty are set out in our Action Plan at Annex 2.

Arrangements for gathering information and ethnic monitoring

12. In order to comply with the general and specific duties, it is important to gather information regarding the ethnicity of osteopaths; those on the Register and those applying for registration. The GOsC therefore:
 - (a) requests all new applicants to provide information about ethnicity when applying for registration;
 - (b) from time to time requests existing registrants who have previously declined or omitted to provide ethnic monitoring information to fill out an ethnic monitoring form;
 - (c) stores this information in a computer database such as to be readily accessible for conducting statistical analysis and in compliance with the data protection legislation.

Arrangements for assessing and consulting

13. The GOsC's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of race equality are:
 - (a) to notify osteopaths and the public of proposed policies by publicising these policies in our bi-monthly publication *The Osteopath*, and on the GOsC public website, inviting responses or comments on the same;
 - (b) to review any responses received and discuss these at committee and Council meetings;
 - (c) to discuss proposed policies in the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum and take into account any comments or feedback received; and
 - (d) to carry out an impact assessment of particular policies where appropriate.

Arrangements for monitoring policies

14. Our arrangements for monitoring policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality are:

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- (a) to review the relevant data collected on the impact of that policy;
- (b) to keep a record of any complaints received from osteopaths, or members of the public, and to take this information into account when formulating new policies or amending existing ones;
- (c) to review feedback obtained from focus groups (e.g. regional osteopathic groups), and surveys conducted on-line or through *The Osteopath* magazine.

Arrangements for ensuring public access to information

15. A “find an osteopath” search facility is available on our website, enabling members of the public to locate osteopaths in their local area. Members of the public are asked for feedback when using this facility so that this resource can be updated/improved.
16. Our arrangements for ensuring public access to the information and services that the GOsC provides are via publication on our website. Our website includes the full range of information on the GOsC’s duties as a regulator, the standards of practice and conduct that osteopaths must observe, and information on how members of the public can register a complaint about an osteopath.

Arrangements for professional development

17. The GOsC currently recognises a number of qualifications from ten institutions.

The recruitment policies of those institutions therefore determine access to the profession. In line with the GOsC’s general duty to promote race equality as set out above, the GOsC requests the institutions to indicate the changes they have made in line with discrimination legislation. The GOsC has begun talks with the institutions on further actions that may be taken to enhance accessibility to the profession.

18. The GOsC has lobbied the Department for Innovation, University and Skills, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, for exemption from Equivalent or Lower Qualifications and associated legislation relating to funding, so as to increase the chances of access for poorer students who may come from minority ethnic groups.

Arrangements for assessing equality and diversity impact of professional standards

19. The GOsC will conduct an equality and diversity impact assessment of any new standards policy or any revision of existing policies. For example, the GOsC is currently reviewing its Standard of Proficiency and is developing a revalidation scheme. Specific equality and diversity questions will be included in the consultation process that will accompany both schemes and the feedback received will be used to refine them.

Arrangements for publishing results

20. Our arrangements for publishing the results of assessments, consultation and monitoring are:
 - (a) to publish them in the GOsC’s annual report to Parliament and on the website;
 - (b) to contribute to the work of the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum, and publish information this Forum may provide.

Duties as an employer

Arrangements for meeting the employment duty

21. Our arrangements for meeting the employment duty are:
 - (a) to carry out ethnic monitoring of employees

and applicants for employment, training and promotion. To this end, all job applicants and employees are requested to complete an ethnicity monitoring form. This information is stored in line with data protection legislation and used for statistical analysis to enable the GOsC to address any issues regarding accessibility and promotion.

- (b) to analyse information gathered and identify issues of concern for further action, including providing further training or support to staff as appropriate or revising any policy or practice that puts employees or job applicants from some minority ethnic groups at a disadvantage.

Arrangements for training staff

- 22. Our arrangements, to be introduced in 2008 for training staff are:
 - (a) to require all staff to attend equality and diversity training, which includes training in connection with the general and specific duties;
 - (b) to provide refresher training every three years;
 - (c) to provide employees with a copy of this Scheme and the GOsC's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Other duties

- 23. We will implement the race elements of this Equality Scheme through the actions set out in the Action Plan.
- 24. We will carry out our annual reporting obligation by setting out in detail our equality and diversity activities in the GOsC's annual report to Parliament and on our website.
- 25. The GOsC will also have regard to the race equality duties when contracting with its service providers such as employment agencies.

Disability Equality

The public duties

- 26. The GOsC is a public authority for the purposes of the disability public duties. The general duty is set out in Section 49A Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It requires the GOsC in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate unlawful disability discrimination;
 - (b) eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
 - (c) promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
 - (d) take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons;
 - (e) promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; and
 - (f) encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.
- 27. In addition to the general duty, the GOsC is under a specific statutory duty to publish a disability equality scheme. A scheme has therefore been prepared and is set out below.

Functions, policies and proposed policies

- 28. The GOsC's functions are development and regulation of the profession of osteopathy. The policies and proposed policies that we have assessed as relevant to our performance of the general duty under this legislation are listed at Annex 1. Policies include the full range of formal and informal decisions that the GOsC makes in carrying out its duties and all the ways it exercises its powers or chooses not to do so. It includes custom and practice as well written practices.

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The list will be reviewed at least every three years. The next review will take place on or before June 2011.

Steps to fulfil the general duty

29. The steps which we propose to take towards the fulfilment of the general duty are set out in our Action Plan at Annex 2.

Involvement of disabled persons

30. We have involved disabled people in the development of this Scheme via input through the website and consultation with stakeholder groups.

Arrangements for gathering information

31. Our arrangements for gathering information on the effect of our policies and practices on disabled persons generally, are:
 - (a) to request all members and applicants for registration to complete an equal opportunities monitoring questionnaire. Such information will be held in compliance with the data protection legislation;
 - (b) to include in all consultations on policies and procedures, questions aimed at assessing the impact on disabled persons.
32. Our arrangements for gathering information on the extent to which the services we provide and those other functions we perform take account of the needs of disabled persons, are by:
 - (a) research amongst members of the public and the profession, and
 - (b) monitoring any complaints received from disabled members of the public or the profession.

Arrangements for carrying out impact assessments

33. Our arrangements for assessing the impact of our policies and practices, or the likely impact of our proposed policies and practices on equality for disabled people are:
 - (a) to request feedback from osteopaths and the public on such policies. All consultation documents will include specific questions aimed at assessing the equality and diversity implications and feedback will be used to refine the policies where appropriate. Consultation documents and the outcome of consultations will be published on the website and, in some cases, in printed form.
 - (b) to obtain feedback or responses as a result of participation in the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum.

Arrangements for ensuring public access to services and information

34. Our arrangements for ensuring public access to osteopathic services include reinforcement, in the GOsC Code of Practice for Osteopaths, of the legislative requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
35. Our arrangements for ensuring public access to information about the GOsC's functions, the osteopathic profession and the standards expected of osteopaths are via the website, which provides a complete range of information for the public, including how to raise any concerns about the GOsC or an osteopath.

Arrangements for using information

36. Our arrangements for making use of information to assist us in the performance of the general duty are:
 - (a) to hold data in accordance with the data protection legislation and the freedom of information legislation;

- (b) to review all data collected and to discuss these in appropriate forums such as Council, committee and staff meetings and the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum; and
 - (c) to publish equality and diversity statistics in an annual report to Parliament.
37. Our arrangements for reviewing on a regular basis the effectiveness of the steps we propose to take towards fulfilment of the general duty are: to review this scheme and discuss at Council meetings; and to monitor the impact of steps taken in order to determine what further action may be required.

Arrangements for professional development

38. The GOsC currently recognises a number of qualifications from ten institutions. The recruitment policies of those institutions therefore determine access to the profession. In line with the GOsC's general duty to promote disability equality as set out above, the GOsC requests the institutions to indicate the changes they have made in line with discrimination legislation. The GOsC has begun talks with the institutions on further actions that may be taken to enhance accessibility to the profession.

Arrangements for assessing equality and diversity impact of professional standards

39. The GOsC will conduct an equality and diversity impact assessment of any new standards policy or any revision of existing policies. For example, the GOsC is currently reviewing its Standard of Proficiency and is developing a new revalidation scheme. Specific equality and diversity questions will be included in the consultation process that will accompany both schemes and the feedback received will be used to refine them.

Arrangements for publishing results

40. Our arrangements for publishing the results of assessments, consultation and monitoring are:
- (a) to publish them in the GOsC's annual report to Parliament and on the website;
 - (b) to contribute to the work of the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum, and publish information it may provide.
41. Our arrangements for developing the disability elements of future Equality Schemes are: to monitor the progress of this Scheme; take into account feedback from the public, the profession and staff, as well as any relevant forums or discussion groups; and include additional elements for future schemes as necessary.

Duties as an employer

Arrangements for meeting the employment duty

42. Our arrangements for meeting the employment duty are:
- (a) to monitor the effect of our policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees;
 - (b) to request all applicants and employees to complete monitoring forms and provide information regarding their condition taking into account individual's right to privacy and dignity. Such information will be held in compliance with the data protection legislation;
 - (c) to maintain sickness absence records and monitor these in order to identify any concerns or underlying health issues;
 - (d) to encourage feedback from employees and to monitor any internal concerns, complaints or grievances raised by disabled employees;
 - (e) to ensure that our place of work is accessible to disabled employees and disabled candidates seeking employment with us.

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Arrangements for training staff

43. Our arrangements, to be introduced in 2008, for training staff are:
 - (a) to require all staff to attend equality and diversity training which includes training in connection with the general and specific duties;
 - (b) to provide refresher training every three years;
 - (c) to provide employees with a copy of this Scheme and the GOsC's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Other duties

44. We will implement the disability elements of this Equality Scheme through the actions set out in the Action Plan.
45. We will carry out our annual reporting obligation by setting out in detail our equality and diversity activities in the GOsC's annual report to Parliament and on our website.

Gender Equality

The public duties

46. The GOsC is a public authority for the purposes of the gender equality duties. The general duty is set out in Section 76A Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It requires the GOsC in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of gender;
 - (b) eliminate harassment on the grounds of gender; and
 - (c) promote equality of opportunity between men and women and people of transgender.

Functions, policies and proposed policies

47. The GOsC's functions are development and regulation of the profession of osteopathy. The policies and proposed policies that we have assessed as relevant to our performance of the general duty under this legislation are listed at Annex 1. Policies include the full range of formal and informal decisions that the GOsC makes in carrying out its duties and all the ways it exercises its powers or chooses not to do so. It includes custom and practice as well written practices. The list of all policies will be reviewed at least every three years. The next review will take place on or before June 2011.

Steps to fulfil the general duty

48. The steps which we propose to take towards the fulfilment of the general duty are set out in our Action Plan in Annex 2. In addition to the general duty, the GOsC is subject to a specific duty to publish a Gender Equality Scheme which is set out in the following paragraphs.

Overall objectives

49. The GOsC aims to promote gender equality by ensuring both genders are reflected and equally valued within its governance structures. More generally the GOsC aims to ensure that its policies and processes enhance the promotion of gender equality within the profession. There are currently just under 4,000 osteopaths registered with the General Osteopathic Council. Of these 53% are male and 47% are female.
50. We have identified the following as specific gender equality objectives:
- (a) to ensure our governing structures continue to reflect a fair gender balance;
 - (b) to identify ways to ensure that access to osteopathic training is available to both genders equally;
 - (c) to ensure all registrants can access our services and take part in direct engagement.

Arrangements to gather information

51. In order to comply with the general and specific duties we gather and record information about:
- (a) the gender profile of the profession;
 - (b) the number and gender of registrants who are non-practising;
 - (c) the number of registrants on maternity and paternity leave and the rate of registrants returning to work from such leave;
 - (d) the extent to which our policies and practices promote equality between male and female members of the profession and the student osteopath population;
52. Our arrangements for gathering information on the extent to which the services we provide and those other functions we perform take account of gender needs, are by:
- (a) research amongst members of the public and the profession, and
 - (b) monitoring any complaints received from members of the public or the profession.

Arrangements for assessing and consulting

53. The actions which we are taking to assess the impact of our policies and practices or the likely impact of our proposed policies and practices on equality between women and men, are:
- (a) to identify the profile of osteopaths with respect to gender, and also the profile of those against whom complaints are made or referred with respect to gender;
 - (b) to obtain feedback from the Health and Social Care Regulators Equality and Diversity Forum;
 - (c) to obtain feedback from osteopaths and the public on the services offered by the profession and the GOsC as a body.
54. The action which we have taken or intend to take to consult the profession, the public, the Osteopathic Educational Institutions and other stakeholders is to request feedback (via our website) from stakeholders on the impact of our policies and practices on gender equality.

Arrangements to use information

55. Our arrangements for making use of information gathered and any other information we consider to be relevant to assist us, are:
- (a) to review all data collected and to discuss these in appropriate forums such as Council, committee and staff meetings and the Health and Social Care Regulators' Equality and Diversity Forum and to review regularly the effectiveness of the actions identified for the purposes of fulfilling our overall objectives;
 - (b) to publish equality and diversity statistics in our annual report to Parliament; and
 - (c) to hold data in accordance with the data protection and freedom of information legislation.

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Arrangements for professional development

56. The GOsC currently recognises a number of qualifications from ten institutions. The recruitment policies of those institutions therefore determine access to the profession. In line with the GOsC's general duty to promote gender equality as set out above, the GOsC requests the institutions to indicate the changes they have made in line with discrimination legislation. The GOsC has begun talks with the institutions on further actions that may be taken to enhance accessibility to the profession.
57. Registrants are more likely to be non-practising if they are on maternity leave. The GOsC has therefore agreed that there may be a reduction in the number of hours' training to be completed by registrants on maternity leave to fulfil its compulsory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirement.

Arrangements for assessing equality and diversity impact of professional standards

58. The GOsC will conduct an equality and diversity impact assessment of any new standards policy or any revision of existing policies. For example, the GOsC is currently reviewing its Standard of Proficiency and is developing a new revalidation scheme. Specific equality and diversity questions will be included in the consultation process that will accompany both schemes and the feedback received will be used to refine them.

Duties as an employer

Arrangements for meeting the employment duty

59. Our arrangements for meeting the employment duty are:
 - (a) to carry out gender monitoring of employees

and applicants for employment, training and promotion. To this end, all job applicants and employees are requested to complete a monitoring form and data is gathered from employees and job applicants. This information is stored in line with data protection legislation and used for statistical analysis to enable the GOsC to address any issues regarding accessibility and promotion.

- (b) to analyse information gathered and identify issues of concern for further action, including providing further training to staff or support as appropriate or revising any policy or practice that puts employees or job applicants of either gender at a disadvantage
- (c) to conduct periodic reviews of remuneration arrangements to ensure equal pay .

Arrangements for training staff

60. Our arrangements, to be introduced in 2008 for training staff are:
 - (a) to require all staff to attend equality and diversity training which includes training in connection with the general and specific duties;
 - (b) to provide refresher training every three years;
 - (c) to provide employees with a copy of this Scheme and the GOsC's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Other duties

61. We will implement the gender elements of this Equality Scheme by the actions to be taken as set out in the Action Plan.
62. We will carry out our annual reporting obligation by setting out in detail our equality and diversity activities in the GOsC's annual report to Parliament and on our website.

Sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age

63. There is currently no duty on public authorities to promote equality with regard to sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. However, the GOsC believes in an integrated approach with regard to eliminating discrimination on prohibited grounds. It will therefore have regard to and explore ways in which it can eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age.
64. Where possible it will gather information regarding its staff, the profession, and the public accessing the GOsC's services, by reference to age. The GOsC has recently collected data from employees (following consultation with them) about sexual orientation, and religion or belief, and we are likely to do so again, for the purpose of informing the development of employment policies.

Annex 1 – Relevant functions, policies and proposed policies

We have identified the following functions and policies as being relevant to the general duty:

- > Registration of osteopaths;
- > Monitoring of educational institutions;
- > Setting of professional standards of education and training;
- > Setting of professional standards of practice;
- > Setting of professional standards of conduct;
- > Investigation of complaints against osteopaths including Fitness to Practise Procedures;
- > Governance of the GOsC;
- > Procurement of services;
- > Communication of GOsC's activities;
- > Investigation of complaints by staff;
- > Recruitment; retention of staff;
- > Equality and diversity.

GENERAL OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL



If you have any difficulty reading or accessing this document,
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