Trust Board Accessibility Considerations

September 2026

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide SEHSCT Trust Board with an assessment of accessibility considerations relating to public Board meetings. In doing so it will identify potential vulnerabilities, and propose mitigation measures to support equitable access and participation for all members of the public, in line with Disability legislation and Equality duties.

2.0 Background

The Trust is committed to ensuring that as an organisation, it is accessible and inclusive for all service users and members of the public. In line with HSC regional guidance, **Making Communication Accessible for All: A guide for Health & Social Care Staff,** accessibility considerations should extend beyond physical access, to include the provision of communication support and inclusive communication practises. The guidance recognises and highlights the importance of making reasonable adjustments to enable effective participation and engagement.

Public attendance at Trust Board meetings is currently facilitated through meetings predominantly held on the Ulster Hospital site at Trust Headquarters. The Trust has a responsibility to ensure that Board meetings are accessible to all members of the community, including disabled people and those requiring communication support.

An Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment have been completed in relation to the accessibility considerations outlined within this paper. The assessment identified the potential for minor adverse impacts for some Section 75 groups and for people living in rural areas, particularly in relation to travel, geographical access and communication requirements. However, the proposed mitigation measures are intended to minimise these impacts and support equitable access and participation in Trust Board meetings for all who attend.

3.0 Accessibility Considerations

1. Geographic Accessibility

Current Position in SEHSCT	Key Vulnerabilities	Potential Mitigations
• Trust Board meetings are generally held at the Ulster Hospital • Board meetings are scheduled for Wednesday afternoons at 2:30pm • Public attendance is facilitated.	• Single-site meetings may disadvantage people from other parts of the Trust area. • Travel time, transport availability and travel costs may affect attendance. • Some disabled people may be unable to travel to meetings. • Meeting times may create barriers for carers, working-age people and those reliant on public transport.	**Immediate Actions (Minimal or No Additional Investment Required)** • Publish information on accessible parking, drop-off points and public transport links. • Include accessibility contact details in all meeting advertisements • Consider meeting times to optimise public participation **Actions Requiring Investment and/or Further Planning** • Consider rotating meetings across suitable accessible venues (which may be limited) within the Trust area. • Introduce a hybrid attendance option via Microsoft Teams or other virtual platform.

2. Accessibility of Site

Current Position in SEHSCT	Key Vulnerabilities	Potential Mitigations
• Trust Board Meetings are held in Ground Floor of QIIC Building, Ulster Hospital. • Accessibility information is not routinely published. • Car Parking –Disabled car parking available on request	• Externally this is accessible as it has a ramp and automatic doors. However not all internal doors to meeting room and toilets are push-button operated • Attendees may not know what facilities are available before attending. • Environmental factors such as lighting, background noise and sightlines may impact participation.	**Immediate Actions** • Complete an accessibility checklist before each meeting. • Publish venue accessibility information in advance. • Include a statement confirming that assistance dogs are welcome. • Ensure suitable lighting, acoustics and clear sightlines in meeting rooms. • Develop a standard venue accessibility assurance process

	• Lack of published information regarding assistance dogs.	**Actions Requiring Investment and/or Further Planning** • Introduce a hybrid attendance option via Microsoft Teams or other virtual platform. • Ensure accessible entrances, lifts, toilets, wheelchair spaces and signage are available. This includes use of push button doors. • Consider offering public attendees a car parking space

3. Accessibility of Meeting

Current Position in SEHSCT	Key Vulnerabilities	Potential Mitigations
• Board papers are generally printed prior to meeting and copies provided, checking font/size (Arial size 12) • Public information is available through existing channels and the Trust website. • Translation, interpreting, BSL/ISL support and hearing support may be provided on request but are not routinely advertised. • No formal process exists to identify accessibility requirements in advance. • Use of large screens not always visible to public participants • Microphones are used and presenters can verbally describe visual content if required.	• Individuals may be unaware of available support. • Standard documents may not be accessible for all users. • Hearing and visual accessibility barriers may affect participation. • No formal feedback mechanism to identify and address recurring accessibility issues.	**Immediate Actions** • Include an accessibility statement on Trust Board section of website • Provide a single point of contact for requesting reasonable adjustments. • Publicise availability of BSL/ISL, translation and interpreting services. • Add an accessibility requirements section to registration and attendance processes. (to be added to web page) • Ensure hearing loops are available, tested and advertised. • Circulate meeting agenda in advance • Establish a post-meeting accessibility feedback process.

		Actions Requiring Investment and/or Further Planning • Offer large print, Braille, Easy Read and accessible electronic formats. • Consider providing iPads for public attendees

4.0 Summary

In considering the proposed accessibility mitigations, the Trust Board should be mindful of the principle of proportionality. While some actions can be implemented immediately with minimal or no resource implications, other measures may require additional investment and planning. These may include the provision of alternative formats, hearing enhancement technology, digital devices, venue modifications, hybrid meeting arrangements, or relocation of meetings to alternative sites.

The Board should therefore consider whether the anticipated benefits of each mitigation, in terms of improving accessibility, participation and compliance with equality and disability duties, are proportionate to the associated costs, value for money and operational implications. Where implementation is not immediately feasible, a phased approach may be considered to prioritise actions that deliver the greatest benefit while remaining achievable within available resources.