South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2025-2026

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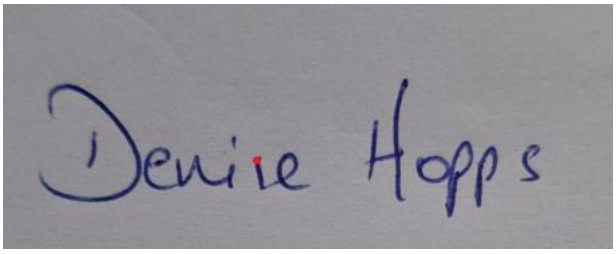
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found by clicking here

Signature:



This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2025 and March 2026

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

1 In 2025 – 2026, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

This is the 19th Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) prepared by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust). As with previous reports, the Trust has used the template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Trust has also produced a more accessible and user-friendly publication in the form of the Equality and Human Rights Newsletter to highlight some of the innovative work that the Trust advances to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and in addition the work to promote the disability duties.

The report also goes to provide assurance to Trust Board and the Executive Management Team on how the Trust has fulfilled its legislative duties and in many instances, gone beyond compliance to achieve best practice and therein improve outcomes for patients, service users, carers and families and our staff.

The South Eastern Trust is an employer of approximately 16,000 staff (including bank staff) providing integrated health and social care to the population of the Trust and beyond, and we are committed to instilling equality, good relations and human rights at the heart of all that we do, in service provision, employment and procurement.

The Trust has compiled Part A of this report to provide an overview of the work undertaken to progress statutory implementation of its Equality Scheme. It is important to note that the content within this annual report does not comprise an exhaustive list of all the work that the Trust undertakes to address inequalities. The Trust has as part of its core business the aim to improve health and wellbeing and to address inequalities and therefore not all the activities, which address inequalities, will be detailed in this report.

Part A:

Section 1: highlights the range of corporate work to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Section 2 is based on progress to date in regards to our Equality Action Plan (2024-2029). Full progress update on our Equality Action Plan for 2024-2029 is appended for ease of reference and details achievements in this year. (See Appendix 1).

It then goes on to illustrate our compliance with the Trust's Equality Scheme including details on Screening and Equality Impact Assessments, Consultation, Training, Information Provision, Access, Monitoring and Complaints.

Section 3 of Part A "Looking Forward" seeks to lay out what work will be taken forward in regard to compliance with the Equality Scheme in the next reporting period.

Part B is appended (Appendix 1) and relates wholly to compliance with our legislative duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO): to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their full participation in public life. This corresponds to our Disability Action Plan (2024-2029) and what we have achieved in the year 2025-2026

Policy and Service Delivery Developments

Launch of the Neurodiversity Toolkit - January 2026

The Trust has developed, and launched in January 2026, the Neurodiversity Toolkit. The aim of the Neurodiversity Toolkit is to improve support to staff who are neurodiverse including revised guidance for managers. A multi-disciplinary group was established in 2025 to co-produce and launch the Neurodiversity Toolkit for all staff and managers in SEHSCT.

The Toolkit was launched and promoted to all staff at the end of January 2026. This included online lunch and learn sessions, awareness sessions at Café Connect across all sites, Desktop advertising and via the Weekly Wrap in SEHSCT.

Neuro Cafes – Ards, Lisburn, Downpatrick

A number of successful Neuro Café events organised by the South Eastern Trust have brought together families, carers and a wide range of support organisations to provide information, advice and practical support for people with neurodivergent conditions.

The events have welcomed visitors to meet representatives from a variety of services and community groups, offering an opportunity to learn more about the supports available locally. A number of information stalls were available throughout the day, alongside workshops designed to provide guidance and share practical knowledge with parents and carers.

Organisations taking part included the South Eastern Trust Social Work and Mental Health Service, Health Visiting, School Nursing, Children's Disability Service, Children's Autism Intervention Service and the ADHD Service.

Community and voluntary sector partners have also attended, including Autism NI, National Autistic Society, Cedar Foundation, Middletown Centre for Autism, The NOW Group, The Rainbow Project, Orchardville Society and Mencap.

Equality Action Plan 2024-2029 and Disability Action Plan 2024-2029

The Trust has continued to work in partnership with fellow Health and Social Care organisations to deliver the actions, as consulted on and agreed, in the five-year Equality and Disability Action Plans 2024-2029. Further detail of the Year 2 Progress on these two Action Plans can be found in Appendix 1

The six HSC Trusts developed our Five Year Equality Action Plan 2024-2029 and Disability Action Plan 2024- 2029 regionally and have worked collaboratively to collate available research and data to identify emerging themes.

These themes were shared with a range of stakeholders at regional listening events and Stakeholders included service users, carers, staff and trade unions representatives. We drafted the plans based on our consideration of the research and the feedback from the listening events hopefully to make a real and meaningful difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland by considering the inequalities they experience and to better promote equality of opportunity.

The Trusts organised a Joint Regional Consultation process, which ran for 16 weeks in 2023. Trusts then continued to work together to facilitate two consultation listening events via virtual and face-to-face engagement sessions in September 2023. The Trusts then took the necessary time to carefully consider feedback, amend the Plans and develop the Consultation Feedback Report, prior to bringing forward for approval.

The Plans were taken through the Trust approval process of the People and Culture Committee and Trust Board in May and August 2024. The Plans have been shared with local and regional stakeholders. Easy Read versions have also been produced.

Employability Action Plan

The Employability Action Plan sets out to define our regional collective priorities regarding EDI, which considers and takes account of our different structures and available resources across organisations.

A focus on collaborative working and shared learning will be forefront at all times, as we strive to improve employment equality across the regional HSC network in Northern Ireland. This action plan may be read in conjunction with our regional corporate Equality Action Plan (2023 – 2028), which seeks to ensure compliance with our Section 75 duties and promoting equality in our services.

The Employment Equality Action plan is focused on the implementation and delivery of specific actions achievable by Human Resource Directorates for our staff. The plan includes actions aimed across 5 areas:

- Review & Implementation of Regional Policies and Toolkits
- Employer of Choice
- Implementation of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support
- Training
- Equality Information – Monitoring and Reporting

Building on the good practice that already exists across Health and Social Care we continue to adopt creative and innovative ways to maximise involvement in the challenging times. We continue to work with individuals, representative groups, trade unions, our staff and other relevant organisations to ensure our actions make a real difference for our staff and ultimately service users.

We continue to work with the Equality Commission for NI, the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in taking forward this Plan.

Health and Social Care Values

A key action from the Regional HSC Collective Leadership Strategy (2017) was the development and embedding of a set of values and associated behaviours for everyone working in health and social care. There was an HSC extensive communication and engagement process last year, involving staff and the people who use our services right across the HSC system in Northern Ireland. This resulted in four values and associated behaviours for everybody working in, and using, Health and Social Care.

The HSC 'Values for All' are Working Together, Excellence, Compassion, Openness, and Honesty. These values are reflective of the principles established and commitments made in our Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan. The Trust has also developed its People Plan, which includes a pledge to each other to improve the experience of everyone working in the Trust. The People Plan has five people priorities; Belonging, Wellbeing, Growing, Empowering and Leading.

Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook

The Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook is available on the Trust Intranet and is promoted during Equality and Human Rights staff training. The Handbook has been updated to include information on the Roma Community and is subject to ongoing review to reflect changes in the Trust population and current migration trends. This has proved to be a very useful resource for staff. Please see link below:

Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook

Provision of Face to Face and Telephone Interpreting

The Trust continues to provide a robust face to face and telephone interpreting service for patients and clients who do not speak English as a first language. This is a part of the Trust's commitment to ensuring and promoting equality of access to all our services.

During 2025-26 the total number of face to face and telephone interpreting episodes was 10,077. The top four languages for the year of 2025-26 are Arabic, Polish, Bulgarian, Cantonese and Lithuanian.

To support this work the Trust has, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS) Manager, delivered 2 Working Well with Interpreters training sessions all online over Zoom. This was extremely successful as we have 25 members of staff who attended these online sessions from all Trust facilities. The top five location requests for an interpreter in the 2025-2026 period were: Outpatients, Maternity (Ulster), Radiology, Physiotherapy and the Downe Hospital.

The Trust has continued to utilise the advantages of virtual training to increase access for staff from all sectors and geographical areas. The Trust was the first in NI to deliver this training virtually and it has been extremely successful, with other Trusts following this approach.

Telephone Interpreting Service

During the period of our Annual Report from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, thebigword telephone interpreting service was accessed on a total of 6457 occasions. The top languages requested were Arabic, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Slovak, Hungarian Bulgarian, Somali, Farsi (Persian and Afghan) and Romanian.

This service helps our staff to communicate with those service users who don't speak English as a first language. Service users may be those who attend our urgent care services or who attend for an appointment when a face-to-face interpreter has not been available or was not booked in advance

Regional Sign Language Remote Interpreting Service

A free remote Interpreting Service SignVideo for British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) users in Northern Ireland has been introduced to meet the ongoing needs of our deaf and hard of hearing patients and clients and to provide support to the deaf community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To compliment face to face Sign Language Interpreters, Trust staff can now access the Video Relay Service (VRS) and the Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) to facilitate communication with service users who require sign language interpreting services, in both community and acute settings.

Making Communication Accessible for All

The “Making Communication Accessible to All” Guide was co-produced with the community and voluntary sector. The guide provides practical tips, advice and guidelines to enable staff to communicate more effectively with people who are disabled or have a communication support need including face-to-face communication, telephone communication, written communication or information on the web. It also builds on supporting people with a disability in becoming well informed and expert in their own needs.

This Guide is available on the Equality and Human Rights Intranet pages and in alternate formats and languages on request.

Please see link below:

Making Communication Accessible for All Guidance

Good Relations Statement

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is committed to the promotion of Good Relations amongst people of different religious belief, race or political opinion.

Over the last year the Trust has continued to promote good relations between people of different race, religion or political opinion.

The Good Relations statement was also used to raise awareness of the Trusts ongoing commitment to all staff during the unrest in Summer 2025.

We celebrated Good Relations week in September 2025 by raising awareness of the Trust Good Relations Statement, which is displayed on service users and staff notice boards in Wards and Facilities throughout the Trust. This Good Relations Statement was produced in partnership with the 5 Regional Trusts and key stakeholders to develop a clear, consistent and meaningful regional Health and Social Care Statement. This statement illustrates our Trust commitment to promoting good relations amongst people of different race, religious belief or political opinion, which extends to our patients, service users, carers, visitors and to our staff.

We have updated our Access to HSC Booklet and now have it in 15 different languages and this provides health and social care information for any newcomers to Northern Ireland.

Further information or additional copies are available from the Equality Team at HR.Equality@setrust.hscni.net

Mental Health Ethnic Minority Toolkit

This toolkit considers how mental health is viewed in different cultures, barriers to accessing services, cultural competences in mental health, and a quick reference guide. The Equality Officer joined a Regional working group

during 2025 to support with the review and launch of the Toolkit which is now available via PHA website.
There is also information on interpreting and translation services as well as other support organisations that practitioners can refer clients to

Workplace Guidance on Marks of Remembrance

The Equal Opportunities Regional Group has revised the current guidance on the display of marks of remembrance in the workplace, subject to the general caveat as set out in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's (ECNI) guidance – 'Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment'.

This guidance advises that 'when these and other marks of identity are displayed with decorum during the designated time and with a sense of due proportion, then they are unlikely to create or sustain a hostile environment'.

HSC Trusts, NI Ambulance Service (NIAS) and Business Services Organisation (BSO) are in support of the recommendation this provides, giving clarity for staff and management on the appropriate display of marks of remembrance in the workplace.

Staff Training - 'Making a Difference' eLearning module

The Trust continues to develop and implement new ways for all staff to be aware of their Equality responsibilities and to access 3 yearly mandatory Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations training. Work is ongoing to review the frequency of this mandatory training and the Trust will work with regional colleagues to maintain consistency.

A regionally developed eLearning module entitled 'Making a Difference' has continued to be promoted and utilised by staff during 2025-2026. The aim of the module is to raise awareness and show staff how they can really make a difference by promoting positive attitudes to diversity by ensuring their actions and behaviours are in keeping with HSC organisational values and equality legislation.

The e-Learning programme is accompanied by a Training Manual, which complements the module. The module has recently been updated to reflect changes in the access marriage legislation.

The interactive module takes 30 minutes to complete and is scenario based introducing the concepts of equality, good relations and human rights. Part 1 is to be completed by all staff and part 2 by staff with line management responsibilities. A digital guide called Molly the Mentor takes staff through the training and feedback on the training has been very positive.

Equality and Human Rights Training Update

The Equality Team delivers various types of training to ensure that all staff within the South Eastern Trust are equipped with the necessary Section 75 knowledge and expertise to work effectively with each other and to ensure everyone can access our services on an equal to all basis.

Training this year was provided to over 3993 staff, which has ranged across a range of different types of training. Staff were trained on Equality based training programmes, completed Equality & Human Rights training online through E-Learning, and accessed Equality & Human Rights information when attending face-to-face training. This face-to-face training was primarily Support Services and Support Services Supervisor staff, Practical Manager, in addition to Working Well with Interpreters training over Zoom.

We hope to continue to deliver training via face-to-face and virtual methods giving a blended approach and providing training at a time and place that suits staff.

The Disability Toolkit

The Trust Disability Toolkit is in place to support our staff. The toolkit holds information, which is helpful to managers when considering disability issues in the workplace. The advice and information in this Tool Kit is based on the HSC's Disability Equality Policy informed by best practice drawing upon the Equality Commission's 'Disability Code of Practice – Employment and Occupation', relevant case law and operational experience. The toolkit is user friendly and is presented in a PowerPoint presentation lay out so Managers can easily click on areas relevant to their needs.

As an inclusive organisation and a leader in diversity, the SEHSCT is committed to the promotion of equality and to creating and sustaining an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of its staff and service users. The Trust aims to be representative of the community it serves and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

Awareness of the toolkit has been achieved through appearances on PC Background and Trustwide emails. The Equality Officer and Equality Manager have attended team meetings throughout the Trust to promote and give advice on the toolkit. The Disability Toolkit can be found on I-connect or please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department for further information

To supplement the toolkit there is 'Good Practice booklet', which informs readers of practical tips on how to interact and communicate effectively with people with disabilities.
The guidance and toolkit have been well received with in the Trust especially our colleagues in Occupational Health.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Regional Group

The group consists of equality officers/managers and data analysts from each Trust and the Business Services Organisation.

The objective of the group to share good practice and learning. The group has jointly created the 2023 -2028 Employment Equality Action Plan. The plan acts as a baseline for a consistent approach to employment equality in each of the Trusts and arms lengths bodies.

Actions include the development of learning tools, policies and guidelines which affect all staff within HSCNI. Actions for the first year of the plan include the development and launch of the Rainbow Pin initiative and the Reasonable Adjustment Plan to be implemented in each of the Trusts. This regional group has been chaired again by the SET Equality officer and group members include equality officers/managers and data analysts from each Trust and the Business Services Organisation.

Multi-Cultural Forum

Multi-Cultural Forum continues to grow and develop, with the support of Jeenat Khan and Denise Hopps as co-chairs within South Eastern Trust. Following five years dedication to the Forum, our co-chair Rafait stood down in December 2025. She has been replaced by Jeenat Khan, who commenced in post as co-chair in January 2026.

The Forum meets on a quarterly basis, offering participants a safe, welcoming and shared space to share their experiences, challenges and learning. Within the previous year, the Forum has welcomed a number of guest speakers to their meetings including SET Community Inclusion Officer, PSNI Neighbourhood Teams, and the Consumer Council.

The Co-Chair and some members of the forum also had the opportunity of attending an SMT meeting to share and discuss their experiences with senior staff and to raise awareness of the challenges faced by ethnic minority staff.

In February 2026, a Multi-Cultural Sub Group was formed, co-chaired by the Equality Officer and Jeenat Khan, with representation also from the Multi-Cultural Forum. The Multi-Cultural Sub Group will explore the good practice already being carried out in the Trust, bringing together existing internal expertise, researching regional examples and knowledge, and gathering feedback from those with lived experience. The Sub-Group aims to encourage our International Staff to attend and contribute to the Multi-Cultural Forum.

We continue to embrace good relations and diversity within the workforce, with the support of Trust Executive Directors who regularly attend the Forum and welcome our members to the Forum

Progress Programme for Global Majority Staff

From September 2025 to February 2026 the Trust worked in Partnership with The HSC Leadership Centre to design deliver and evaluate a Progress programme available to our Global Majority Staff.
The aim of this Programme is to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of global majority staff to encourage and enable them to work more effectively in their existing role and gain promotion.

A broad range of training approaches and relevant topics were used to deliver the programme and to facilitate global majority staff to learn together, share experiences and develop peer support networks.

An important part of the programme was to create an opportunity for senior Trust leaders to liaise directly with participants and to highlight to staff on other management and leadership programmes the under representation of global majority staff on training initiatives. It was also hoped to create a database of participants, alumni and expressions of interest which can be used to promote additional learning opportunities.

The programme attracted staff from nursing, AHP, CSSD and Support Services and from a range of Bands 4 to 6. A total of 12 staff commenced the programme during 2025/2026. It was clear that the role of the Line Manager in encouraging and facilitating staff to attend was crucial. Motivation for taking part in the programme was primarily linked to professional and career development.

Drop in Clinics

Having launched the Disability Advisory Clinics in December 2023, the Equality Team have continued to promote these via Learn HSC, internal communications and training programmes. Staff can easily book an appointment at various sites across the Trust throughout the year and meet with representatives in confidential setting from Digital Services, Occupational Health, Condition Management Programme, Ergonomics, Car Parking, Human Resources.

The Clinics have been well attended and positive feedback received from staff regarding how beneficial a one-to-one meeting has been.

Staff with Disabilities Forum

Henry McLaughlin, a Social worker in the Trust, and Gillian Foley, Unison Chair, currently chair the Staff with Disabilities Forum. Meetings are held

quarterly with staff attending from many different backgrounds throughout the Trust. Guest speakers over the past year have included Adult Mental Health Services SET, Noelle Hollywood, Community Health Development Practitioner Early Intervention Team; Parkinsons UK, Access NI, Access to Work, and Representatives from the Task & Finish Group with regards to SET Neurodiversity Toolkit.

The Forum celebrated International Day of Disabilities in December, attending information and awareness sessions at Café Connect across the three sites, in conjunction with the Trade Unions, to raise awareness of Disabilities and promote the Disability Toolkit.

The Forum has been promoted throughout the year with the support of the Communications team and with the Equality Team and Chair of the Forum presenting at a number of meetings including inductions for Social Work and Nursing colleagues.

Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Forum

The Trust Equality Manager continues to attend the Regional Joint Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Forum, which is held every six months.

The Forum welcomes representatives from the 6 HSC Trusts and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the NI Human Rights Commission and the Community Relations Council. The Chair of the Forum is rotated through all Trusts and Commissions.

Working together in partnership is a key way to drive improvement in health and social care as highlighted in the Regional Strategy Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together.

HSC Trust Equality Leads have a long and successful history of working together, and with others, to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Quarterly Screening Report

The Trust continues to carry out Equality Screening on all new and revised policies and proposals. The aim of this is to identify any potential adverse impact for any of the nine protected characteristics included in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

From April 2025- March 2026 a total of 42 policies have been screened and the results of these screenings are published on the Trust website every three months in a Quarterly Screening Report to promote transparency and to raise awareness to all staff of new policies in place.

Work Experience

The Work Inspiration Programme continues to support local students to experience what it is like to work in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust ('The Trust').

This supports the Trust outreach to schools and the aim of making the Trust an employer of choice. Continued support in communication with schools is inspiring the future workforce of the Trust. Going forward, the Trust, where possible, will take opportunities to continue to showcase what it is like to work within the Trust in varied roles.

School Engagement Events September 2025 – April 2026

- Oct 17 2025: Radiology 19 attendees
- Nov 4 2025: Dietetics 16 attendees
- Nov 19&20 2025: Medical 54 attendees
- Dec 5, 2025: Pharmacy 22 attendees
- April 26: Medical 52 attendees
- Total attendees: 163

Encompass

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust was the first Trust to go live with encompass on 9th November 2023, and we are now over 2 years beyond the implementation date.

The Equality Team continues to consider the implementation, and to update the ongoing Equality Screening locally to identify if there are any potential adverse impacts for any of our Trust staff.

This work goes hand in hand with our Trust Management of Change process which looks at issues such as redeployment, retraining and possible additional expenses for any of our Teams having to travel further to their place of work.

The Equality Team will continue to review the equality screening, and to gather information on any potential impact and note any mitigation which takes place.

PC Computer Background

The Equality Team in the South Eastern Trust is keen to promote equal opportunities for staff and service users to ensure our staff are kept up to date with services. We regularly book a slot on the PC background of all Trust computers.

Over the course of the year, we have displayed multiple PC backgrounds to raise awareness for staff. This has included Interpreting and Sign Language Provision information, Promotion of the Disability Toolkit, Information on Cultural Competence Resources, Awareness raising of our Diversity Celebration in September 2025, Good Relations Week awareness raising,

Launch of the Neurodiversity Toolkit in January 2026, Trust Workplace Adjustment Plan.

Information Poster for Staff to Support Service Users who are Deaf or have Hearing loss

The Trust worked in partnership with fellow Trusts to produce an eye-catching poster giving guidance to staff who may work with service users who are deaf, have hearing loss or communication support needs. These service users rely heavily on visual clues for effective communication, including body language, facial expression and lip reading etc.

The Trust has distributed this poster to all wards and facilities for display on staff and patient notice boards. The Trust has also raised awareness of this poster as part of its on-going Face to Face Training strategy. Feedback on the poster has been very positive and we have received requests for additional posters from a number of wards.

Time to Read – Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative

The Trust has a long tradition of volunteers taking part in the Time to Read initiative and supporting Key Stage 2 pupils to develop their reading skills in a one-to-one setting in their school environment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Time to Read was temporarily paused in Schools. The Trust has a number of dedicated volunteers who are returning to their schools and pupils to continue these important sessions.

The Trust will be recruiting volunteers in August 2026 for ‘Time to Read’ ‘Time to Code’ and ‘Time to Count’.

Access to Health and Social Care Booklet

The Trust is aware that arriving in a different country can be an overwhelming experience, and has worked in partnership with fellow Trusts to put together some information which newcomers to Northern Ireland might find useful. This booklet aims to inform about health and social care services and how to access them. This booklet advises on the various Trusts across Northern Ireland and the health and social care system and services, along with the rights of a person who is not proficient in English, to have professionally trained interpreters.

The booklet has been translated into 15 languages and will be a timely resource for engagement with those who have come to Northern Ireland from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

LGBT Staff Network

The Equality Team supports the LGBTQ+ Regional Network. The network was re-established in 2022 and the Forum is focused on

- To create visibility for LGBTQ+ people in our organisation
- To provide a point of contact and to sign post for LGBTQ+ employees
- To be actively involved in HSC policy development
- To be accessible with a mailing list, meetings, activities/events
- Improve our knowledge of intersectionality in our LGBTQ+ community

The Equality Team continue to promote the Forum via staff training and presentations, staff networks, and through Directorate meetings. We have also attended a number of Awareness Training sessions that have provided an overview of LGBTQ+ identities, and have helped deepen understanding of the community, learn about appropriate language and terminology, build awareness of the experience and barriers that LGBTQ+ encounter as well as learn what LGBTQ+ inclusion can help create.

Staff Carers Forum

The Carer Support Service in SET is a central point of contact for carers of all ages. Information and guidance can be provided and the service will refer and signpost carers to relevant groups, organisations and support networks within the Trust organisation and provided by voluntary and community sector. The Staff Carer's Forum in SET holds regular information sessions, social events and activities for carers throughout the year.

The Forum has had many guest speakers and support carers lunches and activities. This has included a Working Carers Health and Wellbeing Event, designed to support staff members who also provide care for a family member or friend outside of work.

The event aimed to encourage working carers to prioritise their own health and wellbeing by taking time out for themselves. Those who attended had access to a wide range of information stands from Carers NI, the Trust's Staff Health & Wellbeing Team, the Nutrition & Dietetics Team and The Recovery College, among others, offering valuable resources and support.

The Forum is chaired by Pamela Smyth, Carers Coordinator and is supported by the Health & Wellbeing Lead and Equality Officer.

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Rural Needs Act

During the current year, the Trust has continued to address its responsibilities under the Rural Needs Act 2016. The Equality Team provide advice and guidance to staff regarding the completion of Rural Needs Impact Assessment and also provide support to services, including signposting staff to guidance. The Team is responsible for central coordination and completion of the monitoring report on behalf of the Trust.

The Trust continues to use the Template developed by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts, who have worked collaboratively to ensure the rural needs assessment template is user-friendly and relevant to HSC business.

The key components of the template issued by DAERA have been used incompliance with the legislative obligations. Advice and guidance is provided on the Trust's intranet to raise awareness and support staff when completing Rural Needs Assessments.

To ensure effective mainstreaming, the Trust's Policy Development Teams also signpost staff to requirements relating to the Rural Needs Act. DAERA have been reviewing and revising the submission of the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for all relevant organisations. The Trust is currently working in partnership with DAERA and has accessed the training which is being provided. All Trusts have taken the opportunity to provide DAERA with feedback on the submission process, in order to make it user friendly and appropriate to meet with the legislation. As a result of the new DAERA Portal and revised process for submission of the Monitoring Report, DAERA have rescheduled the submission date from June to Autumn 2026, and the Trust will report on this in our 2026/2027 Annual Progress Report

Rural Needs Toolkit

In 2023, the Trust participated in the launch of the Rural Needs Toolkit for Health and Social Care. This toolkit aims to assist Trust staff as they seek to address the needs of the Rural Population. This Toolkit was adapted for use in Northern Ireland in partnership with Health and Social Care and is available on the Equality and Human Rights i-connect pages.

It was developed by the National Centre for Health and Social Care, assisted by local partners Rural Community Network NI. This is a Northern Ireland version of the initial toolkit.

Collection and Validation of Equality Data

The Trust is currently working to ensure that it successfully collects and records Equality Data. By updating equality information, we can monitor how proposals may impact our staff and better understand inequality or unfair treatment or the different experiences people may have.

All information held on HRPTS is confidential, any data used will be anonymous, and individual staff will not be able to be identified.

Why does the Trust collect this data?

• We want our workplace to be inclusive and welcoming of all staff

• We want to be able to accurately monitor the recruitment and retention of our staff within all characteristics

• We want to be able to review the impact of policies and practices on different groups in the Trust

• Staff HRPTS profile will help us carry out equality screening of policies and proposals

• The Equality Team may contact you for your input and support regarding services or events related to a protected characteristic

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy

The DSVA Workplace Policy launched in March 2024, for all staff in SEHSCT. The Trust has been reinforcing the commitment to address domestic abuse, break the cycle of silence and extend a lifeline of support to those in need within the workforce.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse affects countless people across all walks of life. The repercussions can extend far beyond the confines of the home.

The Trust has a diverse workforce comprising 12,500 staff, with 80% of them women and it knows how crucial it is to support anyone suffering Domestic Abuse. Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse continues to be a significant societal issue. The Trust supports the Domestic Abuse Champions who help, support and signpost staff.

The Domestic Abuse Champions forum has been established to support the Domestic Abuse Champions in the Trust.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is a member of the Domestic, Sexual, Violence and Abuse Partnership.

Diversity Celebration Fun Day – September 2025

The South Eastern Trust proudly hosted a vibrant Diversity Celebration Fun Day at the Downshire Estate in September 2025. Over 1000 people enjoyed the day which was filled with cultural festivities and family-friendly entertainment.

The lively event, which was supported by Newry, Mourne and Down Council and The Housing Executive was opened by the Trust's Assistant Director of People and Organisational Development, David Cairnduff. The Diversity Day was arranged for Trust staff and their families to celebrate the richness of diversity within the South Eastern Trust and to promote unity, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding.

Everyone was treated to an array of activities, featuring traditional music and dance performances from various cultures, giving visitors a glimpse into the vibrant traditions. Guests enjoyed flavours from around the world with a fantastic selection of food stalls, representing an exciting culinary journey. Anyone who fancied trying some arts and crafts had plenty to choose from too.

Rainbow Pin Initiative

The Rainbow Pin initiative aims to make a positive difference by promoting a message of equality, diversity and inclusion. The Rainbow Badge itself highlights that SEHSCT offers non-judgemental and inclusive care for patients, service users and their families, who identify as LGBTQ+. Wearing this badge carries responsibilities and staff are expected to be a respectful listening ear, know how to signpost to relevant information and act as an ally in all matters relating to LGBTQ+

We have continued to support this initiative in SEHSCT via internal communications with over 750 Rainbow pins being sent to staff to date. Staff have pledged to reduce inequalities and provide support to the LGBTQ+ community.

The team continue with a focus on women's well-being in relation to peri/menopause and throughout the year, have ran numerous information events and menopause cafes ranging from talks on HRT and lifestyle, gut health, brain fog and dementia, menopause yoga, cold water swimming, looking after our emotional wellbeing, sleep. They won the regional prize for delivering community supports to peri/menopausal women. The Equality team have supported the social work team at a number of these events, whilst also promoting our Trust policies to staff.

Support for Staff observing Ramadan

As with previous years, the Trust has continued to support staff who were celebrating the Holy Month of Ramadan, which began on 17 February 2026 and ended on 18 March 2026.

Support Services colleagues provided a range of foods and snacks, and made them available for our staff when they were ready to break their fast after sunset each day. Snack Boxes were available including treats such as Water, Porridge Pots, Croissants and Jam, Custard Pots, Rice Pots and fruit including Apples and Bananas.

As a number of our staff who celebrate Ramadan also work shifts, Line Managers are encouraged to consider shift patterns, scheduling of breaks to facilitate prayer times and consideration of hospitality provision at meetings during the hours of the fast.

Support for Staff during Lent

During the season of Lent, our Chaplaincy Team invited everyone to take some time to join in reflection, renewal, and growth. The word Lent comes from an old English term meaning “lengthening,” referring to the lengthening of days and the gradual return of light. It is a powerful reminder that even in seasons of quiet discipline and reflection, light is increasing and new life is unfolding.

Our Lenten programme this year embraced the theme of “Lengthening” lengthening our awareness, our compassion, our patience and our sense of purpose.

In the midst of busy schedules and demand, this season offered us an opportunity to pause, reflect, and consider how we can grow both personally and collectively.

Throughout Lent, there was a range of reflective resources and opportunities on offer designed to support wellbeing, deepen connection and encourage thoughtful action.

Cultural Competency Framework

The Trust has worked in collaboration with fellow Trusts to develop a Cultural Competence Framework and staff resources to support our Teams. Cultural Competence is increasingly acknowledged as an effective approach to diversity and inclusion, particularly in Health and Social Care. However, as the need for cultural competence grows, so does the risk of misconceptions, the misunderstanding and misuse of terminology which may ultimately undermine our goals, values and behaviours.

Cultural Competence Workshop

This Framework highlights the need for Cultural Competence across organisations, in order to promote access to safe, effective and welcoming services for everyone, regardless of background, ethnicity or origin.

The Little Book of Cultural Competence, which is a glossary of key terminology, was developed by stakeholders across the region. Pauline Wilson, Consultant Public Health Nurse was a member of the Regional Cultural Competence Group who developed this resource which will help to embed and endorse a standardised approach to Cultural Competence.

The Trust is promoting the Cultural Competence e-learning module, which sits alongside our 'Making a Difference' e-learning mandatory training.

The number of staff who have accessed the e-learning training so far is 870, with 32 staff attending face to face Workshops, held between April 2025 and March 2026.

NIMDTA – A Night of Culture

SEHSCT supported a Night of Culture, organised by Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Association in June 2025, celebrating a diverse workforce with local and global traditions.

It was also an opportunity to meet with organisations here in Northern Ireland who support the medical and dental workforce, as well as discover new cultures and learn about our colleagues from all over the world.

SAS Week 6- 10 October 2025

Held in partnership between the BMA and HSCNI organisations, SAS week is dedicated to celebrating and valuing the work and expertise of SAS Doctors. A number of events were organised in SEHSCT during this week, including guest speakers such as Dr Ash, who shared stories from his book, 'The Boiling Frog', focussing on managing stress and mental wellbeing of our staff.

International Day of Disabilities

On 3 December 2025, Trade Union Representatives from Unison and Denise Hopps from the Equality Team visited Lagan Valley Hospital to speak with staff, sharing information on the Reasonable Adjustment Plan, SET Disability Toolkit and HSC E-learning with regards to Neurodiversity for all staff.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed annually on December 3. This day serves as a global reminder of our collective responsibility to create a world that is equal, accessible, and empowering for all individuals with disabilities.

In 2025, the theme focused on ‘Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress.’ The day has been promoted by the United Nations since 1992, highlighting the importance of promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in every aspect of society.

Mental Health Roadshows - September and October 2025

The Equality Team supported the Trust Health Development Team in partnership with Mental Health and Staff Wellbeing with a number of events to raise awareness of Mental Health and the supports available.

Roadshows took place in the following locations:

- 19 September - Cafe Connect Ulster Hospital
- 24 September - Cafe Connect Downpatrick
- 6 October - Cafe Connect Lagan Valley Hospital
- 10 October - QIIC Centre Ards

World Cultural Diversity Day, 21st May 2025

The team at Struell Lodge organised an International Day of culture event in Downpatrick on 21 May 2025. The Equality Officer attended this event alongside many colleagues from the Trust.

The day included Live music and some Spotify music from different countries, a tasting buffet featuring delicious dishes from around the world, fun, informal chats with our wonderfully diverse staff team and stories.

Human Rights Resource and Video

The Trust has worked in collaboration with fellow regional Trusts to produce a staff resource and video to promote a Human Rights based approach to the delivery of care and service user support.

We know that Health and Social Care can be full of complex and challenging situations, where often we have to balance rights, for example a person’s ability to make their own decisions, their autonomy, versus managing risk and our duty of care.

We want all HSC staff who provide care and treatment on behalf of HSC Trusts, to be aware of their human rights duties in the context of the FREDA principles. FREDA stands for Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy

This guide and video takes our staff through each of the five FREDA principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care. We want

to ensure that the human rights of our patients, service users, carers and staff are protected, promoted and supported.

PSNI Support Visits

The Equality Team, working in partnership with Trade Unions colleagues and the PSNI, have organised a number of support sessions with PSNI Crime Prevention Officers over the past year. We visited the Ulster Hospital, Lagan Valley and Downe Hospitals, distributing personal alarms, offering practical guidance, and signposting as well as raising awareness of reporting crime to PSNI.

2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/**measures in 2025-26 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Please see Appendix 1 for a detailed update of actions progressed in Year 2 (2025-2026) of the Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2025 -26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes ☐ No (go to Q.4) ☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality Scheme Commitment	Action	Difference Made for Individuals
Arrangements for assessing our compliance with S75 duties		
Ensure S75 duties are mainstreamed within the Trust	A comprehensive, mandatory programme of training and awareness raising for all levels of staff. Training on conducting Equality Screening and EQIA.	Individuals aware of the Trust's commitment to equality duties. Trust staff aware of equality duties.
Prepare Section 75 Annual Progress Report (APR) and include section in Trust's own Annual Report	Annual Progress Report supported by "Equality Newsletter" to ensure updates available in accessible format.	Copies of APR and Newsletter added to Intranet, Internet and all consultees sent copy of newsletter and informed of availability of progress report - improving awareness of Trust's S75 duties and outcomes of work programme.
Ensure S75 duties are mainstreamed within the Trust.	The Trust's Equality Team provide staff with the information, training and resources to support staff to have the appropriate level of knowledge, expertise and skill to mainstream S75 duties. The regional Equality, Good Relations and	Individuals aware of the Trust's commitment to equality duties. Trust staff aware of equality duties and Trust commitment to not only avoiding discrimination but also to pursuing good practice, embracing diversity and

	Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme is mandatory and compliance is monitored	promoting good relations.
Prepare Section 75 Annual Progress Report (APR).	Annual Progress Report supported by Equality Newsletter to ensure updates available in a more accessible format.	Consultees sent copy of newsletter and informed of availability of progress report - improving awareness of Trust's S75 duties and outcomes of work programme.
Action Plan		
Continued delivery of Year 2 Actions in Action Based Plan 2024-2029 to include actions measures and timescales. Aligned to corporate and business planning cycle.	Five-year S75 Equality Action Plan developed in partnership with representative organisations. See Appendix 1 for actions progressed in year 2 and progress on actions carried forward from Year 3	Its implementation is intended to have a positive impact on S75 groups
Arrangements for consulting		
Consultation list reviewed and updated	Consultation list continues to be reviewed.	New consultees were added to consultation list resulting in more robust engagement process.
Training re Consultation	The Trust recognises the importance of proper and timely consultation as an integral part of fulfilling its S75 duties when making decisions and planning services.	S75 groups and consultees engaged and consulted on with regard to Trust decisions.

	Equality Team works in partnership with Engagement and Involvement Manager	
In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.	During reporting period new and revised policies or proposals were screened and the result published in the Quarterly Screening Report (QSR).	Views of representative groups and individuals considered during decision making process.
Provide feedback report to consultees in timely manner in formats suited to consultees.	When final decision has been made, consultees are made aware of consultation outcome report and are informed of how their feedback influenced the decision made. Consultation feedback reports are available on the Trust website. All Trust documents can be made available in an alternative format on request.	Representative groups and individuals informed of how their feedback influenced the decision made.
Revise screening template and accompanying guidance notes.	Trust policy development process ensures all Trust policies are screened. All policies approved during the reporting period were subject to S75 screening and appropriate consultation. Screening Template due to be revised and updated regionally in 2026-2027 During the reporting period the Trust	Transparent decision-making process for consultees and impact on S75 groups identified during policy development process.

	screened 42 policies and proposals.	
Publish reports quarterly and in accessible formats on request.	All quarterly reports for the reporting period were made available on the Trust's website.	Screening outcomes available to the public for consideration.
Publishing of EQIA reports.	During the reporting period there were no EQIA consultations carried out. Comprehensive Section 75 equality screenings have been completed and published on all plans implemented by SETrust.	When an EQIA is carried out consultees receive feedback on the proposed changes as part of the Trust Consultation Outcome Report
Monitoring		
Review of monitoring information.	The Trust continues to monitor by Section 75 categories and this has been enhanced by HRPTS Self-Service functions. During the reporting period this monitoring information was accessed for S75 screenings.	Increased understanding of the make-up of the workforce to ensure promotion of equality of opportunity and better information to identify any potential impact. Guidance supports HSC organisations to identify any unmet need and to target their resources thus tackling health inequalities experienced by BME communities.

Staff Training		
Draw up a detailed training plan.	During reporting period, implementation of the Trust's Equality Training Strategy continued. The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: Making a Difference Programme has been rolled out across the Trust and compliance is monitored.	3993 staff received equality and human rights training during the reporting period. .
Specific Targeted Training.	During the reporting period the Equality Team were able to provide focused training for specific staff groups.	It is hoped that the Equality Team will continue to deliver training via a blended approach in 2026-2027 to meet the needs of our staff.
Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide		
Ensure information we disseminate and services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland.	Information is provided in alternative formats on request and Trust's website has been designed to ensure accessibility. During reporting period, a total of 10,077 requests for interpreting were received.	Improved access to information and services for equality groups – specifically those whose first language is not English and people with a disability.
Provide information in alternative formats on request.	Trust staff access the translation of written material through the Regional Contract. The Access to Health and Social Care Booklet has been regionally revised and translated	Information provided in alternative formats to increase understanding, ensure effective communication and improved access to services.

	into 15 languages and is available on our website. Consultation documents were provided in Easy Read format to enable full access by our stakeholders.	
Provide interpreters and sign language interpreters.	A total of 10,077 episodes were delivered in 2025 -2026	Service users and staff supported to ensure good governance in information provision and communication.
Complaints Procedure		
How complaints are raised, timetable for responding etc.	No complaints relating to the implementation of its Equality Scheme in the reporting period.	The Trust will continue to monitor for any complaints regarding its Equality Scheme
Any other measures proposed in equality scheme		
Work closely with other public authorities to exchange learning and best practice.	During reporting period Trust participated in Regional Equality and Human Rights Steering Group, the Regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Forum and the Regional Equality Leads meetings.	Collaborative working ensures more effective use of resources and consistent approach across health and social care.
Liaise closely with the ECNI to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained.	During reporting period, the Trust met regularly with ECNI on S75 implementation and in the Regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Forum. Recommendations that have been received from ECNI investigations have been taken into consideration and implemented where required.	Ensures effective use of resources and S75 implementation. Recommendations received from ECNI supports with progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme.

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

There have been many tangible differences resulting from the equality screening of policies, procedures and ways of working. There has been better engagement with service users and those affected by the relevant policies – ensuring people's opinions are included and central to decisions made.

There has been more explicit consideration of reasonable adjustments in regards to each policy and a greater emphasis placed on ensuring communication, in all its forms, is accessible.

Increased awareness of the need to arrange for an interpreter for a person whose first language is not English, and for materials to be translated into other languages.

The screening of policies often results in service leads thinking differently about their service, considering new perspectives. Please also see column 3 above.

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☒ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy

Please see examples above.

☒ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise

There were no EQIA Consultations during the reporting period.

☒ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact

The Trust continues to monitor its workforce across the 9 equality categories. This monitoring information is used for all S75 screenings of proposals that impact on staff. This supports the assessment of impact and the identification of potential adverse impact.

☒ As a result of changes to access to information and services

The provision of interpreters and translated accessible information continues to result in effective information provision and better communication in situations where a clear understanding is required

A remote sign language interpreting service has been set up and service users can download an app to access a free online remote sign language interpreter 24/7.

☐ Other *(please specify and give details)*:

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2025- 26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Trust Values of Compassion, Working Together, Openness and Honesty and Excellence are displayed in full in each job description The values are rooted in equality and specifically reference compassion, dignity, integrity, openness and honesty.

All employees are required to comply with the procedures, policies and codes of practice within the Trust which include the Equality Scheme and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Job Descriptions of the Trust Equality Manager and Equality Officer specifically reflect responsibility for day-to-day delivery of Section 75 Targets for each year. Job Descriptions for the Director of People and Organisational Development, and the Assistant Director People and Organisational Development also reflect their responsibility with regard to the Section 75 statutory duties.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ **Yes, organisation wide**
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Trust Individual Staff Performance Plans, as part of Staff Appraisal Conversations, are clearly aligned with the Section 75 duties and principles of equality and human rights. These conversations are set within the context of the Trust's overall values and objectives and make explicit reference to ensuring 'staff are supported to deliver safe, compassionate patient-centred care and Equality Training.

The national Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) continues to be the process linked to annual development reviews of all Trust staff and personal development plans. Equality and diversity are one of the 6 Core Dimensions and it reflects a key aspect of all jobs and underpins all dimensions in the KSF.
Equality training is mandatory in the Trust and attendance at/completion of all mandatory training is determined through the appraisal process. Compliance is monitored and reported through the Trust's accountability framework.

Guidance for Trust Board Members
In response to the ECNI report 'Section 75 statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties: Acting on the evidence of public authority practices' June 2018 and in recognition that effective leadership is critical to the successful implementation of our Equality Scheme, guidance for Board Members has been developed and circulated. With an emphasis on mainstreaming equality the guide aims to support HSC Board Members to understand the statutory Board responsibilities as they relate to matters of equality, good relations and human rights.

6 In the 2025-26 reporting period were **objectives/targets/performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☐ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs

☒ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2025-2026 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Section 75 duties are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level into the business of the Trust. The Trust's Equality Team sits within the People and Organisational Development Directorate and supports all Trust Directorates through Equality Business Partners to ensure Section 75 is integral to planning processes.

Please also see answers noted in Question 5.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2025-26 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of actions completed:

Actions Completed	15	Actions ongoing	28	Actions to commence	8

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2025-26 reporting period:

Any amendments are noted in appended Equality Action Plan update.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2025-26 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

☐ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality

☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way

☒ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities – New Regional 2024-2029 Action Plans have been developed consulted on, approved and implemented.

☒ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance:*(tick one box only)*

☐ All the time ☒ Sometimes ☐ Never

The Trust carries out targeted consultation for relevant consultees as required.

As mentioned, there were no EQIA consultations carried out in the reporting period. In accordance with our Equality Scheme obligations, screening outcome reports were uploaded onto the Trust website on a quarterly basis.

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2025-2026 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

Quarterly Screening Report
The Trust continues to carry out Equality Screening on all new and revised policies and proposals. The aim of this is to identify any potential opposing impacts for any of the nine protected characteristics included in Section 75 Northern Ireland Act.

During 2025-2026, a total of 42 policies have been screened and the results of these screenings are published on the Trust website every three months in a Quarterly Screening Report to promote transparency and to raise awareness to all staff of new policies in place.

12 In the 2025-2026 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently <u>used</u> by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

☐ Face to face meetings

☒ Focus groups

☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing

☒ Questionnaires

☒ Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation

☒ Internet discussions

☒ Telephone consultations

☐ Other *(please specify)*:

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

The Trust provides in person consultation events and meetings in parallel with virtual consultation opportunities. There are clearly advantages to a blended approach to engagement and online consultation provides the opportunity for lots of different interaction, including the chance to use break out rooms, run polls, allow people to share their screens and to use 'chat' to comment and share responses.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2025-2026 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Initiatives include

- Staff Training and Awareness Raising
- Staff Summary of Equality and Human Rights responsibilities
- Guidance for Board members
- QSR publication on website
- Team working with Equality Team and Engagement and Involvement Manager
- PPI Strategy
- Guidance and Briefings to EMT and Trust Board
- Dissemination of Section 75 Annual Progress Report
- Equality Newsletter available on Trust Intranet, Trust Internet and disseminated to consultees
- Equality Information in Trust Annual Report

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

Whilst there was no formal review of the consultation list, when the list is used to distribute information, it is reviewed and amended afterwards, because of undeliverable emails and stakeholder feedback.

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

During 2025-2026 a total of 42 policies were screened and published on the Trust website in the Quarterly Screening Report.

Please click here to access Quarterly Screening reports

16 Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2025-2026:

There were no EQIA Consultations during this reporting period.

17 Please provide details of the main consultations conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

N/A

18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No concerns were raised ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

.

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2025-2026 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No, already taken place

☒ No, scheduled to take place at a later date ☐ Not applicable

Staff monitoring is reviewed annually via HRPTS to ensure the Trust has an up-to-date equality profile of its workforce to support more effective screening of proposals and policies that may have an impact of staff.

Continual monitoring of interpreting identifies the top five languages requested in the Trust and ensures the Trust can provide accessible information and the appropriate type of interpreting is used for appointments

Encompass
The encompass programme is an HSC-wide initiative which will introduce a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland. This will support the HSCNI vision to transform health and social care in order to improve health outcomes and create better experiences for those receiving, using and delivering services.

Encompass will create a single digital care record for every citizen in Northern Ireland who receives health and social care. It will be in use across all Health and Social Care Trusts to create better experiences for patients, service users and staff. encompass will give patients and service users the ability to view and update their health information, and it will make it easier for appropriate Health and Social Care staff to securely view important information about their patients and service users.

The EQUIP system will be implemented and reported on in the next reporting period.

The Trust is currently working to ensure that it successfully collects and records Equality Data. By updating equality information, we can monitor how proposals may impact our staff and better understand inequality or unfair treatment or the different experiences people may have

In addition, the Trust will continue to monitor via:

- Staff Monitoring
- Publication of Quarterly Screening Reports
- Collection and analysis of Interpreting provision and uptake
- Gathering of Ethnic Monitoring data
- The Trust's Audit of Inequalities required for the development of its previous and new Action Based Plan 2024-2029, was reviewed and updated during the reporting period and will influence the consultation documents in partnership with feedback from the stakeholder listening events.
- Continual monitoring of interpreting identifies the top five languages requested in the Trust and ensures the Trust can provide accessible information and the appropriate type.

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples: N/A

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2025-2026 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Monitoring is integral to ongoing screening of policies and proposals. The Trust's policy development process ensures that all policies are monitored and reviewed. The process also ensures that if there are any substantial changes to a policy it is screened again to identify any adverse impact across the 9 equality categories.

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Monitoring via HRPTS
Within HRPTS, staff are able to log into the Employee Self Service function to update their own Equality and Diversity data which includes disability and ethnic background information. This provides more accurate information for conducting Equality Screening and EQIA's.

The EQUIP system will be implemented and reported on in the next reporting period.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2025-2026, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The Trust recognises that statutory and mandatory training is of vital importance in the provision of high-quality services to our patients and clients and is essential for effective risk management and the maintenance of required standards

Training Initiatives
During the reporting period the Trust continued to training and provide advice and support on equality duties to Trust staff/project leads.

The Trust Equality Team delivers a range of training to ensure that staff is equipped with the necessary S75 knowledge and expertise to work effectively with each other and to ensure everyone can access our services. During 2025-2026, 3993 staff have attended or accessed training.

Training includes:

Corporate Induction (Support Services)	401
Line Managers Training – e-learning	178
Working Well with Interpreters	25
E-Learning Module	3313
Practical Manager	76
Total	3993

As with previous years the Trust has promoted the e-Learning module 'Making a Difference' which is available through The Leadership Centre platform. This regional module enables staff who may move from Trust to Trust to carry forward Equality and Human Rights training as part of their ongoing Training Portfolio.

The Trust has a range of resources available for staff to increase awareness of equality and diversity matters including the following:

- Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights – A Training Manual for Staff
- Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook
- Disability Etiquette Booklet
- Disability Toolkit
- Making Communication Accessible for all
- Screening Guidance

25 Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Targeted Training
The Trust has identified the need for specific training to be developed and delivered to staff groups at a time and in a place that is appropriate for them. Specific Equality and Human Rights training has been delivered to Support Services staff as part of their induction.

Working Well with Interpreters Training

To support staff a series of 'Working Well with Interpreters' training Sessions have been held hosted by Claire Hamilton, the Regional Interpreting Manager. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic rather than commuting to different Trust locations the Equality Team adapted their approach and moved our training online to Zoom. This training has been very successful as it resulted in 25 members of staff attending from a wide variety of Trust locations. Feedback has been very positive.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2025-2026, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- The Trust is committed to ensuring everyone is given equal access to information about services in a format they can understand. The Trust provides interpreting services, including sign language interpreters, to help patients and clients and staff to communicate when using services.
- Guidance and information leaflets about COVID-19 in a range of different languages are now available on the Trust website and Intranet.

- Monitoring of uptake of face to face and telephone interpreting provision. The top five languages requested in the Trust area were - Arabic, Polish, Bulgarian, Cantonese and Lithuanian. A total of 10,077 episodes were provided during 2025-2026. The monitoring of interpreting usage ensures the Trust can provide its information in the main languages requested. It also ensures that the appropriate type of interpreting is used for appointments. For simple, straightforward and short appointments, telephone interpreting is the most appropriate and most cost effective and is promoted to staff. Face to face interpreters is then available for more complex or sensitive appointments.

- Interpreters are provided and funded regionally through the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS). Interpreters are professionally trained and adhere to a Terms of Engagement.

- Interpreters are bound by confidentiality and provide their services on a 24/7 basis. Following a register update, NIHSCIS now has 342 Interpreters registered in 35 different languages.

- It is clear from monitoring information that the Trust's population is culturally and linguistically diverse and the Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook continues to be a useful resource for staff which is available on the Trust's intranet and now includes information on the Roma community.

- Monitoring of requests for Written Translation services which enable staff to produce information in alternate languages and format. For example, the Trust has translated appointment letters into a range of languages including Arabic, Lithuanian, Spanish and Bulgarian.

- The Trust continues to use Care Opinion to allow patients, carers and visitors to provide real time feedback on their experience. Information is entered online and this is then passed to the relevant service manager to

allow them to respond and to welcome positive feedback or learn from negative feedback and make necessary changes.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2025-2026?

During the reporting period, no complaints have been received with regard to the application of commitments in the Equality Scheme.

During 2024/2025 the Trust received a single complaint with regard to our Equality Scheme. This was investigated by the ECNI and the Commission found that the Trust failed to comply with its Equality Scheme, as alleged by the Complainant, and the complaint was upheld.

The Trust accepts the overall finding that omitting to equality screen the change in wording in the patient information leaflet at that time, was a breach of our Equality Scheme.

However, the rationale for change was driven by a time sensitive significant patient safety risk to one of the Section 75 categories, and the need to communicate with an under-represented community.

Recommendations from the ECNI Report were accepted by the Trust and action taken. The Trust provided an update to the ECNI in April 2026, as requested.

The Equality Team have forged a strong working relationship with the Complaints and Compliments Team and their advice is sought in regard to issues where any of the 9 Section 75 protected groups, human rights, good relations or discrimination are cited.

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

During this reporting period, the Trust along with other HSC Trusts, has implemented our 5-year regional Equality Action Plan 2024 – 2029.

The audit of inequalities covers the nine Section 75 categories but also, given the impact of COVID-19, has a further section on the inequalities exacerbated or created by the pandemic. The Trust has carried out a five-year review on the effectiveness of our Equality Scheme.

The purpose of the 5-year review is to examine how the arrangements set out in the Scheme have been applied and to assess how effective they have been in assisting the Trust in complying with the Section 75 duties.

The Trust Equality Scheme was reviewed and approved in August 2024.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The Trust will be focused on the actions and outcomes in the five-year Action Plans and any consultation outcomes of recent service proposals.

Training
On-going delivery and evaluation of a wide range of training and awareness raising for staff in a blended approach or virtual and face-to-face. In the coming year the Trust will continue to promote the use of the regional e-learning module 'Making a Difference'. Training materials are subject to on-going review and are updated in the light of new case law and information.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2025-2026) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- ☒ Employment
- ☒ Goods, facilities and services
- ☒ Legislative changes
- ☒ Organisational changes/ new functions

- ☐ Nothing specific, more of the same
- ☐ Other (please state):

Appendix 1

Equality Action Plan
2024-2029 Update March 2026

Disability Action Plan
2024-2029 – Update March 2026

Equality Action Plan
2024-2029 Update March 2026

HSC Health and Social Care



South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Section 1 – Improving the data we use to support decision-making

We know that high quality data plays a role in improving services and decision-making. When Trusts have good population data, they can identify areas that have worse health outcomes and target health and care resources to reduce health inequalities. Feedback from consultees has indicated that we need to improve the data we collect in relation to health and social care inequalities. The following actions are aimed at improving the data we collect to ensure the effective discharge of our S75 equality duties.

The Trusts monitor staff across the 9 equality categories to ensure equality of opportunity. Staff input their own equality information on an online system but there are currently gaps in the data available.			
Actions	**By when**	**How we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
1. We will take active measures to encourage staff to update their equality monitoring information as part of corporate welcome/staff induction and by developing a regional and local campaign to encourage staff to update their equality profile information.	April 2024 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Regular awareness raising campaigns to encourage staff to update their equality data. • Development of regional and local campaigns with timescales for staff to update their equality profile. • Increase in percentage of staff completing their equality monitoring data.[1] • Promotional resources/Toolkits produced and disseminated to promote inclusion of all staff. • Input into the EQUIP project to ensure the next HR IT system is fully appropriate and fit for operational purpose. Regional subgroups to support its development and implementation. • Benchmark where appropriate with examples of good practice.	**Action to date:** Progressing within Regional Employment Equality Group. Representatives from Regional Employment Equality Group also involved in regional sub groups of EQUIP and regularly reports updates as required.

[1] n.b. Provision of equality monitoring data on our Information System is voluntary for HSC staff but staff are encouraged to complete and update.

ENCOMPASS is a new health and social care wide programme that will introduce a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland.			
Actions	**By when**	**How we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
2. We will work collaboratively to influence the ENCOMPASS programme to ensure that it monitors ethnicity, first language and communication support needs of patients and service users.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Ethnicity and communication support needs recorded on ENCOMPASS system. • Increased access to communication support in timely fashion. • Improved policy formulation, service delivery and population health data.	**Action to date:** Only available in English, function for Arabic but not activated at this time. Encompass say they will look at it another time. Service users can record own ethnicity and language needs in my Care app. Still work in progress Accessibility issues for staff raised by RNIB, solution being sought to attach software such as Fusion and Dragon for those with sight loss. Accessibility Issues also re Read & Write Gold assistive technology software.
Under a new way of planning and commissioning services, the Integrated Care System (ICS) will bring together health and social care organisations, partners in voluntary and community sectors and local government, to develop population health plans to improve outcomes and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.			
Actions	**By when**	**How we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
3. We will work with partners to ensure the inclusion and analysis of Section 75 data in the development of population health plans.	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Robust population health plans including Section 75 data. • Identification of health inequalities. • Targeted services that address identified health inequalities and improve health outcomes.	**Update:** Southern area will moved from test to shadow Nov 2025 Western area and south eastern area are stood up in shadow in November 2024

			Belfast and Northern area to be stood up in early 2025 PHA will have to publish population health plans for each AIPB

Section 2 – Addressing barriers to accessing health and social care

While much work has been done to date to promote equality of opportunity, it remains the case that there are a number of equality groups, who continue to face particular and unique barriers. During the listening events and consultation period, we heard many suggestions on how to improve equality of access to health and social care services. The following actions have been developed in response to what we have heard, and are aimed at providing welcoming, person-centred and accessible services for everyone.

Trusts have a duty to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The regional Health and Social Care Good Relations Statement provides a consistent message in terms of our commitment to good relations. Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) has consulted on a co-produced Good Relations Strategy, which includes actions that will promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**
4. All Trusts will adopt the Good Relations Strategy and work collaboratively, with our partners, to take forward the actions and ensure consistency across Northern Ireland.	September 2026	• Co-produced Good Relations Strategy. • Strategy adopted by all Trusts. • Regional approach to promotion of good relations in HSC Trusts where relevant.	**Update:** SEHSCT plan to develop and launch Good Relations strategy by March 2027. Strategy to be consistent regionally, with Belfast Trust strategy already published.

We know that there is a lot of information available on improving health and wellbeing but we need to make sure that the content is understood and accessible.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**
5. We will co-develop a series of health and social care seminars with representative organisations, communities and individuals to support health and wellbeing and address inequalities.	April 2025 and annually thereafter	• Improved inclusive health and well-being information, targeted at the effected communities. • One regional seminar held each year. • Feedback and evaluation of seminars.	Regional Cultural Competency framework 5 February 25 launch event was attended by a number of Trust Staff including P&OD Director, Equality Team and the Community Information Officer Online training and booklet developed to run alongside face to face training for staff. A total of 870 SET staff have completed the e-learning training and 32 have attended face to face training during 2025/2026.
During Covid-19, the increased use of facemasks caused communication difficulties for Deaf and hard of hearing people and people who lip-read. The regional Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing was established in 2023 to provide consistent and improved access to communication support when accessing health and social care services.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**
6. We will ensure staff are aware of the Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing and the facemasks	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Greater awareness of the regional HSC Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. • Greater awareness of the importance and availability of accessible facemasks. • Improved communication and patient experience. • Reduction in complaints. • Increase in compliments/positive feedback.	**Update:** Regular communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements. The contract for Sign Language Provision is with SPPG. Linked in with Trust Sensory support team.

approved by Infection Prevention Control, that are more accessible for people who have hearing loss, are Deaf/deaf and lip-read.		• Proactive and targeted use of Care Opinion to promote better communication.	Trust Communication Support Guidelines to be updated and reissued during Sign Language Awareness week – communication plan in place. (Similarities with DAP Action 10) Deaf Awareness posters to be further highlighted and reissued.

The Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS) provides professionally trained interpreters on a face-to-face basis. Trusts also have a regional contract for telephone interpreting for people, whose first language is not English, when accessing Health and Social Care services across Northern Ireland. Feedback indicated that access to interpreting support remains a barrier for some when accessing services.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
7. We will develop an interpreting card for patients and service users to present when they are in health and social care facilities. The card will indicate that the service user needs an interpreter and include contact details.	April 2025	• Interpreting card for service users and patients to bring to their appointments to help support their communication needs. • Promotion of card in training sessions. • Increased staff awareness. • Reduction in complaints about lack of interpreting support.	**Update:** SETrust working with regional colleagues to develop card, which will have a QR code embedded. The QR code will take users to page tiger to NIRIS and telephone interpreting access codes. This will also be translated into different languages as required.
Neurodiversity is a broad term, used to describe the many and varying ways in which human brains are wired. It encompasses the wide variety of ways humans think, learn, feel and process information. Neurodiversity can include Autism, ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia and Acquired Brain Injury. We acknowledge that staff, as well as patients and service users live with neurodiversity and there is a need to raise neurodiversity awareness in the workplace and in the provision of our services.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
8. We will draft and co-produce neurodiversity guidance and a podcast for our	April 2026	• Production of an online signposting resource/service directory on neurodiversity services.	**Update:** The Trust has developed and launched, in January 2026, its Neurodiversity Toolkit for staff and managers. A multi-disciplinary Task and Finish Group

staff along with key stakeholders including experts by experience.		• Increased awareness and information provision for staff in terms of people who are neurodiverse. • Improved user experience. • Improved awareness of information and services for people who are neurodiverse. • Dissemination and launch of guidance.	gathered service user feedback and lived experience to inform the toolkit. The Toolkit has been shared widely within the Trust and regionally with excellent feedback to date.
We know that rurality has an impact on equality of access to services, especially for older people, due to lack of accessible transport, times of appointments and the availability of rural and/or community transport. Covid-19 has resulted in a widening of the digital divide affecting older people who may not be familiar with technology.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
9. We will work with our partners to ensure that the needs of older and disabled people, who reside in rural communities, are considered in service developments or by promoting and monitoring the use of the Rural Needs Toolkit for Health and Social Care and	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Increased awareness of the needs of older people who live rurally. • Raised awareness of best practice in overcoming rural inequality and providing adequate and appropriate mitigations. • Increased number of rural needs impact assessments, where appropriate, which evidence consideration of rurality in service design and service change with reduction in any potential inequality for those living in rural areas.	**Update**: RNIA toolkit available for staff on i-connect. DoH public consultations on NI Hospital Reconfiguration have been held. Rural Needs considered in light of any equality screening and rural needs annual monitoring report will be submitted October 2026.

completing Rural Needs Impact Assessments to identify mitigations put in place.			
We know that people may be reluctant to share their sexual orientation with health professionals and are unhappy having to disclose their sexual orientation repeatedly. We have also found that some people have had a negative experience when accessing health and social care services.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
10. We will implement the Rainbow Badge initiative whereby staff will complete online training to gain a HSC Rainbow Badge. This is a voluntary initiative. The badge will be used to symbolise an open, non-judgemental and inclusive place for people that identify as LGBTQ+.	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Adoption of Rainbow Badge initiative to ensure regional consistency. • Monitor the number of staff taking part in the initiative. • Gather feedback from staff and service users.	**Update:** This Action has been implemented regionally. SETrust has carried out a number of awareness raising initiatives and to date 750+ staff have requested a Rainbow Pin. The Trust continues to promote this via Trust Announcements, all user email, via HRBP's and SMT meetings. .

11. We will develop a resource for staff comprising professional body guidance on best practice for inclusion for people who are LGBTQ+.	April 2025	• Guidance available for health and social care professionals. • Increased staff understanding of improving access to services for LGBTQ+ service users. • Reduction in complaints and increase in compliments.	Work currently paused by DoH. HSCNI Trusts await outcome from ECNI consultation (Trusts responded to the ECNI consultation on this matter).

Section 3 – Supporting our staff

We know that our staff are our most valuable resource and the health and social care system in Northern Ireland is indebted to the work that they do every day and in particular, throughout the pandemic. We are committed to celebrating and embracing the diversity of our staff and to ensuring that they feel able to bring their authentic selves to work so that they feel valued and can continue to provide safe, effective and compassionate health and social care services.

We have one of the most ethnically diverse workforces in the public sector and it is vital that we continue to promote the inclusion and visibility of staff who come from ethnically diverse backgrounds.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
12. We will support the ongoing work of Trusts' ethnically diverse networks.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Action plans developed to oversee Trusts' strategies on EDI for staff. • Policies reviewed, developed and recommended relating to EDI. • Internal and external EDI groups and networks better engaged. • Stronger links across the region between our Ethnically Diverse Staff Networks.	**Update:** The Trust Multi-Cultural Forum meets quarterly and is Co-Chaired by a staff member and the Equality Officer. The Forum gives staff and their advocates an opportunity to share their experiences and raise any

			challenges they may have. Each Forum is attended by a senior EMT or Trust Board member. The Trust held a successful Diversity Celebration Fun Day in September 2025 with over 1000 staff and their families attending. Equality Manager and Equality Officer attended the Final Session of the Progress Programme for our Global Majority Staff.
13. We will develop a Cultural Competency training and awareness programme for staff	March 2025	• A co-produced package of e learning is developed and made available for staff to access. • Staff access to supporting resources. • Deeper understanding of the key issues to help create a more inclusive environment for all.	**Update:** Regional Cultural Competency framework launched on 5 February 25. Online training and booklet developed to run alongside face-to-face training for staff. To date, 870 SETrust staff have accessed the e-learning training and 32 the face to face training. Link to framework to be added to the mandatory Making a Difference Equality and Diversity Training section To further enhance inclusive mental health care, a new Practitioners Toolkit 'Mental Health and Ethnic Minority Groups' has been launched.

We know that there are still incidents of homophobia in the workplace towards staff who are LGBTQ+ and we know that there is an under-declaration amongst staff who record their sexual orientation as LGBTQ+.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
14. We will continue to work in partnership with LGBTQ+ representative organisations to ensure that training and awareness raising resources are consistent and up to date.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Training developed to support staff to increase understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences. • Staff access to supporting resources. • Deeper understanding of the key issues LGBTQ+ people face to help create an inclusive environment for all. • Increased knowledge of appropriate language and policies that support inclusion.	**Update:** The Trust continues to promote the Regional LGBTQ+ Forum for staff. Regionally we await DoH and ECNI Guidance on this.
15. We will promote the regional HSC LGBTQ+ network for staff across Trusts.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Increased awareness and celebration of LGBTQ+ diversity. • Space provided for LGBTQ+ staff peer support. • Improve experience for LGBTQ+ staff by providing access to support. • Increased understanding of LGBTQ+ inclusion. • LGBTQ experiences more visible in the wider organisation.	**Update**: Promotional Communication ongoing for Forum. HSC Regional LGBTQ+ Staff Forum have appointed two new co-chairs Caolan McClafferty (WHSCT) & Natasha McChrystal (NIAS). The Public Health Agency will continue to manage the oversight of the Forum.

Informal/family carers represent a significant proportion of the working population. A growing number of people working in health and social care are trying to balance their jobs and their caring responsibilities. The entitlement to carers' leave and flexible working arrangements are two of the main support measures that can help informal/family carers to keep a balance between their work lives and caring.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
16. We will improve awareness of options for flexible working, work-life balance, special leave policies to ensure they are accessible to all our staff.	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Establish baseline on uptake of flexible working and monitor year on year staff accessing these opportunities. • Increased awareness of flexible working, work-life balance and special leave policies. • Monitoring reports produced twice a year on flexible working.	**Update:** Ongoing promotion and awareness of flexible working options through People and OD. A baseline for each Trust is being gathered for monitoring report, which had been requested by Trade Union Colleagues
It is important that staff who have or acquire a disability are supported in the workplace by overcoming any potential barriers to achieving their full potential. Trusts are committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all staff.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
17. We will scope development of Staff Disability Forums and Networks to support regional consistency.	March 2025	• Effective implementation and widespread use of Disability Passport**.**	**Update:** The Trust holds Quarterly Staff Disability Forum meetings and regular Drop-In clinics at various locations throughout the Trusts.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
18. We will develop an individual plan in partnership with disabled staff members to ensure they are supported through the provision of reasonable adjustments where appropriate.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Better support for disabled staff to return and remain in work. • Record available of what has been agreed previously to support disabled staff member if changing role. • Guidance available for managers on how to support disabled staff member.	**Update:** The Trust Workplace Adjustment Plan enables our staff and managers to develop an individual plan to ensure they are supported as much as possible in the workplace. The Disability Toolkit and Neurodiversity Toolkit support our Staff and Managers.
Health and social care staff must have the foundation of effective policies and relevant training to support them to provide the most inclusive and compassionate health and social care services.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
19. We will develop a regional policy framework to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies are reviewed in line with governance requirements.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies reviewed. • Policies reflective of up to date advice and best practice from the Equality Commission and other legislative developments. • Regional consistency in EDI policies and equity for all staff across the Trusts.	**Update:** Regional EDI and Gender Identity Policies were planned to be reviewed in 2025/6. This review has now been paused on instruction from DoH and the Regionally the Trusts await further guidance from DoH and ECNI with regard to this matter.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
20. We will update the regional HSC 'Making a Difference' e-learning programme further to review of best practice in E-learning and EDI training.	April 2028	• Regional HSC Making a Difference e-learning programme updated. • Updated training incorporated best practice identified.	Programme and accompanying booklet to be reviewed and updated regionally through HSCLC. Contact to be made with original supplier to ascertain costs and timescales. Links to the Cultural Competency Framework and e - learning module.
21. We will work to improve uptake of equality training, which is mandatory in all Trusts.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Uptake of statutory mandatory equality training monitored. • Increased compliance levels with mandatory equality training. • Increased awareness of zero tolerance approach to racial harassment/ discrimination/ bullying and abuse at work.	**Update:** Regular review of training compliance and Directorates with lower uptake contacted. Alternative delivery methods explored.
22. We will identify an EDI Champion at a senior level in each Trust.	April 2025	• Identified lead on EDI at senior level. • EDI Champion at senior level identified in each Trust.	**Update**: The Trust is currently reviewing the role description for the EDI Champion and will identify a lead a senior level in 2026.
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
23. We will work in partnership with trade unions to ensure that	April 2026	• Trust Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy in place and support networks established.	**Update**: New Policy launched in 2024 and supported by additional promotion of Policy provided. Support and resources for

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
staff who experience domestic and sexual violence and abuse.		• Positive feedback from ongoing engagement from affected staff.	employees and managers, to be reviewed and refreshed during the year
Personal stories can really resonate and be most impactful in terms of effectively communicating key messages. We recognise that collaborating with people with lived experience enhances the training we provide and gives staff a different perspective, improving the services we provide.			
24. We will engage with external experts and representative organisations to provide specialist training for employees.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Training sessions developed delivered and evaluated. • Marketing and promotional strategy to increase uptake of training across all Trusts.	**Update:** The Trust has delivered a number of Cultural Competency Training sessions throughout the year and promoted the booklet, which accompanies the training, which is both face to face and via e-learning module. 870 SETrust staff have accessed the e-learning training and 32 the face to face training.
25. We will develop a human rights based training programme and guidance for staff providing care for people living in residential settings. We will share and actively promote these resources	April 2025	• Increased awareness and competence in providing person centred, person led care and what a human rights based approach. • Evaluation of training and associated resources.	**Update:** FREDA animation produced and shared during training sessions. The short animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach. The approach helps us all to deliver services that are compassionate and patient/service user focused; one of our core values. The video is supported by written guidance.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
with Independent Sector colleagues, who may also provide this care.			https://vimeo.com/1033099726/695acd51cd?share=copy **Guidance for HSC Staff: A Human Rights Based Approach to Services** **Team FREDA Animation: A human rights approach to healthcare**

We want to harness the talents of a diverse workforce and recognise that we need to take a proactive approach in improving access to health and social care employment for marginalised Section 75 groups.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
26. We will develop actions in line with legislative provision to improve access to those Section 75 groups, where there is a low representation in our workforce.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Improved access to employment for marginalised Section 75 groups. • Equality data indicating better representation.	**Update**: Discussions ongoing at Regional Employment Equality Group regarding accessibility of employment in HSC. Trusts continue to submit annual Monitoring and three yearly Article 55 Reports on workforce. The Trust has supported our global majority staff to attend the regional and local PROGRESS programme courses. This is a development course which is facilitated by the HSCLC specifically for this staff group.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
27. We will address specific health inequalities for staff, for example provide menopause information sessions and celebrate men's health week to promote inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues in the workforce.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Raised awareness of gender specific health inequalities for staff. • Increased inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues. • Better support for staff with gender specific issues.	**Update:** The Trust held a 'Menofest', a weeklong festival of events in October to coincide with World Menopause Day. This included seminars, moonlight cold water swimming, breast and bowel screen awareness workshops, information stands, and coffee at Café Connect. The Equality Team supported these events throughout the week and joined the Multi-Disciplinary Team Social Work and Trade Unions, speaking to staff and having discussions around menopause and our current policies and Menopause information
28. We will work collaboratively on the forthcoming gender pay gap legislation and determine appropriate methods of monitoring and reporting.	Dependant on enactment of legislation.	• Pay structure established that ensures fairness and equity in pay and reward arrangements.	**Update**: Await the publication of the DfC public consultation outcome report (closed Feb 2025). Proposal is to include not only gender monitoring and reporting but also race and disability – similar to what happens in rest of UK. Initial Draft Regional Consultation Response drafted for submission.

Section 4 – Supporting informal/family carers

We know that many of us are likely to become a carer at some point in life and informal/family carers cover a great part of care needs, often called the 'invisible workforce'. Strengthening the voice and representation of informal carers is the first step to address the challenges facing informal carers. Informal care can be physically and mentally demanding, resulting in carers often feeling exhausted, lonely, and strained. Carer Co-ordinators in each Trust area work collaboratively with carers to develop an accessible carer support and short break programme. The Trusts also work with community and voluntary organisations to ensure carers can be signposted to support in their local area.

Recognition of the key role a carer plays is essential and we must provide support when the caring role is having a negative impact on the health and well-being of the informal/family carer. It is also important to make useful information and training easily accessible and available to informal carers.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
29. We will work collectively to ensure that carers across the region are aware that they can have access to a conversation with their named worker in relation to their caring role and needs The conversation is carer led and encourages both staff and carers to take time to discuss the caring role.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Increased uptake of carers' assessments. • Improved carer experience of the carer assessment process. • Carers across Northern Ireland receive the same information and know where to get help and support. • Increase in people who identify as carers, which will enable them to link into supports available. • Quarterly DoH monitoring.	**Update**: The Carer Support Service in SET is a central point of contact for carers of all ages. Information and guidance can be provided, the service will refer, and signpost carers to relevant groups, organisations and support networks within the Trust organisation and provided by voluntary and community sectors. The Staff Carer's Forum in SET holds regular information sessions, social events and activities for carers throughout the year. The Forum has had many guest speakers and support carers lunches and activities. This has included a Working Carers Health and Wellbeing Event, designed to support staff members who also

Recognition of the key role a carer plays is essential and we must provide support when the caring role is having a negative impact on the health and well-being of the informal/family carer. It is also important to make useful information and training easily accessible and available to informal carers.			
Actions	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Progress March 2026**
			provide care for a family member or friend outside of work. The event aimed to encourage working carers to prioritise their own health and wellbeing by taking time out for themselves. Those who attended had access to a wide range of information stands from Carers NI, the Trust's Staff Health & Wellbeing Team, the Nutrition & Dietetics Team and The Recovery College, among others, offering valuable resources and support. The Forum is chaired by Pamela Smyth, Carers Coordinator and is supported by the Health & Wellbeing Lead and Equality Officer. The Trust holds a quarterly Carers Forum to support staff who have caring responsibilities.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2026
30. We will hold an annual event on Carers Rights Day to highlight care and caring and help informal/family carers understand their rights and find out about support that may be available.	November 2024 and annually thereafter	• Consistent, regional approach to Carers Rights Day.	**Update** A Working Carers Health and Wellbeing Event was held, designed to support staff members who also provide care for a family member or friend outside of work. The event aimed to encourage working carers to prioritise their own health and wellbeing by taking time out for themselves. Those who attended had access to a wide range of information stands from Carers NI, the Trust's Staff Health & Wellbeing Team, the Nutrition & Dietetics Team and The Recovery College, among others, offering valuable resources and support. The Forum is chaired by Pamela Smyth, Carers Coordinator and is supported by the Health & Wellbeing Lead and Equality Officer. The Trust holds a quarterly Carers Forum to support staff who have caring responsibilities.

Disability Action Plan
2024-2029 – Update March 2026

Health and Social Care









Section 1 – Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Disabled people have told us that negative attitudes are often the biggest and most common barrier they face and we believe as a large service provider and employer we have a vital role to play in shaping and modelling positive attitudes towards disabled people. Section 1 of this Plan focuses on promoting positive attitudes through an inclusive approach to the use of images and language, providing better training, guidance and support for our staff and ensuring our Disability Action Plan is easy to access.

What you told us	What we will do (*Actions*)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2026
There is a need for greater visibility of disabled people.	1. We will continue to promote disability equality and the social model of disability through an inclusive approach to the use of images, which reinforce a positive towards disabled people and disabled staff members.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Increased visibility of disabled people and disabled staff, including those with hidden disability in Trust publications, use of social media and online presence. • Proactive promotion and communication of our co-production with disabled people and disability-related events.	**Action to date:** The Trust holds quarterly Staff Disability Forums for staff to discuss lived experiences. Having launched the Disability Advisory Clinics in December 2023, the Equality Team have continued to promote these via Learn HSC , internal communications and training programmes. Staff can easily book an appointment at various sites

What you told us	What we will do (*Actions)*	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2026
				across the Trust throughout the year and meet with representatives in a confidential setting from Digital Services, Occupational Health, Condition Management Programme, Ergonomics, Car Parking, Human Resources. The Clinics have been well attended and positive feedback received from staff regarding how beneficial a one to one meeting has been. The Trust Disability Toolkit is in place to support our staff. The Toolkit holds information which is helpful to managers when considering disability issues in the workplace. The advice and information in this Tool Kit is based on the HSC's Disability Equality

What you told us	What we will do (*Actions)*	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2026
				Policy informed by best practice drawing upon the Equality Commission's 'Disability Code of Practice – Employment and Occupation', relevant case law and operational experience. The toolkit is user friendly and is presented in a PowerPoint presentation lay out, so Managers can easily click on areas relevant to their needs.
	2. We will mark and celebrate allocated disability – related days to raise awareness at a local and regional level.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Co-produced calendar of events organised and publicised annually. • Increased staff awareness of disability equality.	**Action to date:** The Trust promotes allocated days and has in place a calendar of events. The Trust employs all users emails, Trust Announcements EMT Briefings and SMT updates via HRBP's.
That the disability legislation in Northern Ireland is very	3. We will work with disabled people and representative groups to enhance the profile and accessibility of the regional Disability	March 2025	• Increased awareness of the accessible Disability Action Plan internally and externally. • Disability Action Plan available on Trust websites and internal intranets, including Easy Read and Signed versions	**Action to date:** The Disability Action Plan including an Easy Read Version is available on the Trust Website. The Plan has been shared with

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complex and there is a need to ensure our Disability Action Plan is accessible and easy to understand.	Action Plan to ensure that the legislation and disabled people's rights are easier to understand.		• Proactively disseminate the Disability Action Plan to key stakeholders. • Co-produced resource explaining the disability duties and legislative requirements.	regional and local stakeholders and consultees.
All health and social care staff should be trained on disability equality and disability duties.	4. We will review our staff training programmes and ensure that training is co-produced, reflects lived experience and includes information on disability equality and the disability duties and promotes the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.	March 2025 and review Annually	• Evaluation of training completed. • Feedback on training gathered from staff to inform the evaluation. • Increased awareness of disability duties. • Co-production of training resources on disability equality and disability duties. • United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) guide for HSC staff updated.	Update: Training is available for all staff via elearning module Making a difference on Learn HSCNI. This training is currently being reviewed. Cultural competency training now available via e-learning and the Trust provided face to face sessions in 2025/2026. SETrust has developed and launched a Neurodiversity Toolkit for staff and managers in January 2026.

Section 2 – Actions to encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Disabled people have told us that too often, they and their representative organisations face barriers to full and effective participation. These include inaccessible physical and online environments and inaccessible information and communication. Actions in this section focus on increasing disabled people's participation in decisions about policies and service development.

It is important to note that the Trusts do not have direct control over public life positions within health and social care, however we do have disabled people sitting on many of our user groups and forums so we have also included actions to ensure these opportunities are accessible and promoted.

As one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland, disabled people have told us that this section of the Plan must include how disabled people have the opportunity to find out about the range of jobs available in health and social care and ensure people are provided with appropriate support to enhance employability and obtain employment.

What you told us	What we will do (*Actions)*	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2026
Disabled people want to be clear on how they can get involved, be heard and inform decisions.	5. We will share opportunities for involvement to ensure the voice of disabled people is heard in developments and changes to services at an early stage.	March 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Development of a specific database of disabled people and organisations and determine the best way for them to be involved. • Consultee database reviewed and updated annually. • Increased usage of involvement section on each Trust website and the Public Health Agency (PHA) “Engage” website and sharing of links with disabled people and representative organisations. • Promotion of Trust Involvement Teams and involvement opportunities with disabled people and representative groups. • Use of alt text in our social media.	**Update:** The Trust database of stakeholders and consultees is annual reviewed and updated. The Equality Team works in partnership with the Trust PPI team on any consultation processes. The Trust provides information in easy read format, alternate formats or languages on request or when a need is identified.
	6. We will work in partnership with relevant key organisations and individuals to identify advocacy services.	March 2026	• Development of a Directory of Advocacy and Support Services co-produced with representative organisations, published on each Trust’s website (and in alternative formats) and disseminated widely - reviewed on annual basis.	**Update:** Trusts are working regionally to gather information for this Directory.
What you told us	**What we will do (*Actions)***	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**

	7. We will work with representatives from the Regional Disabled People's Forum on disability equality issues.	April 2025 and annually	• Annual meeting with members of Regional Disabled People's Forum.	**Update:** Equality Leads regularly attend meetings.
	8. We will review the membership of our user forums and where necessary work to increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations.	April 2025 and annually	• Review of membership of forums and user groups completed. • Gaps identified where increased representation of disabled people on user groups and forums is required.	**Update:** The Trust continues to review the membership of our staff Forums. We encourage our staff and their advocates to attend and participate in a way that works best for them. The Trust annually reviews stakeholder and consultee information.

Consultation methods must be accessible to disabled people.	9. We will ensure that all consultations are inclusive, targeted and use appropriate methods to ensure participation of a wide range of disabled people.	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Checklist developed that includes standards for the accessibility of public meeting areas, the provision of information in accessible formats, and the use of new technologies suitable for disabled people. • Consultation processes designed to be as inclusive as possible from the outset. • Focused consultation with disabled participants as required. • Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy-makers. Methods and tools used for online involvement will allow disabled people to participate on a fair and equal basis.	**Update:** Trusts use a variety of methods for consultation to ensure they are inclusive and information is available in alternative formats throughout the process. Venues for events are accessible, Trusts have ensured changing places are available, various consultation methods are used including face to face, online meetings etc.
What you told us	**What we will do (*Actions)***	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**

It is the responsibility of HSC staff to book communication support for people who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing	10. We will continue the roll out of the Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing and improve access to Sign Video within hospitals using computers and phones accessing the Trust Wi-Fi.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Regional consistency and equity of access to communication support for people who are Deaf/deaf or have hearing loss. • Improved access to communication support for people who are Deaf/deaf or Hard of Hearing. • Increased awareness of HSC staff of need to provide communication support. • Reduction in complaints about lack of communication support available/provided.	**Update:** Regular communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements. Regional meeting held in September 25, arranged by SPPG, posters to be developed for each Trust. Task and Finish group was established and led by SPPG to progress equality and accessibility priorities for deaf service users. Staff and service user posters were co-produced with regional colleagues and advocacy representatives and formally launched during Sign Language Awareness Week to promote awareness and uptake of the Sign Video service. A further regional Task and Finish Group was established to improve the handling of complaints from deaf service users. A

				standardised complaints flowchart was regionally agreed and distributed to support consistent and accessible practice. Trusts to issue British Deaf Association (BDA) videos to help raise staff awareness of the barriers d/Deaf community face when accessing our services and to improve experiences. Deaf Awareness posters to be further highlighted and reissued. Various initiatives within Trusts to mark Sign Language Awareness week.
Consideration should be given to the installation of Changing Places toilets in all hospitals in Northern Ireland	11. We will scope the availability of Changing Places and new facilities will be added in accordance with legislation.	April 2026	• Scoping of all facilities completed. • Gaps identified in relation to relevant legislation. • Improved access to HSC services for disabled people.	**Update:** Work to be carried out with Estates/Strategic Capital Development to scope facilities and identify gaps.

Staff need to understand how to involve disabled people in decisions they make about services.	12. We will co-produce guidance for staff on how to effectively engage with disabled people in decision making processes. These guidelines will provide practical information to support staff to address the barriers to meaningfully involvement.	April 2026	• Health and social care decision makers have access to good quality co-produced information and resources to improve participation of disabled people in decision making. • Improved participation of disabled people in health and social care decisions.	Regionally, guidance has been co-produced with disabled people via a task and finish group. This will be promoted internally across the Trust in the coming year**.**
	13. We will co-produce and hold a masterclass in each Trust area for health and social care decision makers to develop a deeper understanding of how better participation with disabled people is central to the implementation of our Disability Action Plan.	April 2025	• Effective participation masterclass developed in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations. • Masterclass held – one in each Trust area.	**Update:** A regional Disability Masterclass was held on 10th February 2026 led by the Belfast Trust. The session brought together staff, members of the D/deaf and people with a disability, advocates, and regional equality leads, whose participation helped strengthen cross regional learning and collaboration. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Participants felt the event was highly informative, impactful, and engaging, with particular praise for:

				• Lived experience stories • Practical tools such as Spoon Theory and inclusive communication tips • Real life examples of improving accessibility and PPI in practice Many attendees reported feeling more confident in how they can adapt communication, service delivery, and decision making to better support disabled people.
What you told us	**What we will do (*Actions)***	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**
Policies need to be kept up to date and relevant, to support disabled staff to remain in the workplace.	14. We will review our Staff Disability Equality Policy in line with best practice to ensure it remains fit for purpose and relevant.	March 2025	• Review of Disability Equality Policy completed in partnership with disabled staff. • Revised regional policy in place.	**Update:** Currently under review and due to be consulted with Trade Union colleagues.
	15. We will review and update our Disability Toolkit.	March 2025	• Updated Disability Toolkit in place. • Policy and Toolkit reviewed and amended in partnership with disabled staff.	**Update:** The Disability Toolkit currently under review.

	16. We will engage with disabled staff to ensure they have a voice and influence the support we provide.	March 2025	• Method of ongoing engagement established in each Trust area.	**Update:** Workplace Adjustment Plan has been developed – this will provide a framework to guide conversations around how disabilities can affect our staff in carrying out their role and what reasonable adjustments can be considered/implemented
What you told us	**What we will do (*Actions)***	**By when**	**How will we measure success**	**Update March 2026**
There is a need for more opportunities for disabled people to gain employment within health and social care.	17. We will work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to review our employability schemes and placement schemes to enhance employment opportunities.	March 2026	• Opportunities and availability of our employability schemes and placement schemes scoped. • Plans developed to enable and support employment placements and work experience for disabled people across each Trust.	**Update:** Ongoing Regionally
	18. We will work to reduce barriers to recruitment in health and social care for disabled people.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Barriers to recruitment in health and social care identified in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations. • Development of actions, in line with the legislative provisions and supported by equality data, to improve access to employment for disabled people.	**Update:** The Trust has in place a Workplace Adjustment Plan which enables our staff and managers to discuss options and reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers.

				The Trust has developed a Neurodiversity Toolkit for staff and managers.
	19. We will provide an alternative way for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs until the current HSC jobs website is replaced by the new system.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Method for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs available. • Better communication with disabled applicants who require adjustments or support with their application.	**Update:** A Guide has been produced regionally re accessibility for the HSCRecruit website. Applications are accepted in alternative formats**.** Community and Voluntary groups and applicants can liaise with HR staff. Reasonable adjustments can be considered and put in place.

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There is a need to improve visibility and awareness of jobs for anyone who is disabled.	20. We will work towards Disability Positive Accreditation for all Trusts.	March 2029	• Disability Positive Accreditation achieved. • Increased awareness among disabled people of HSC jobs available.	**Update:** This will be progressed in the coming years of the plan.
Better data on service users communication support needs is required.	21. We will continue to work with ENCOMPASS to ensure that the communication support needs of service users are captured.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Communication support needs are recorded on the ENCOMPASS system. • Improved communication and access to services.	**Update:** We continue to work with encompass and monitor service user feedback.
	22. We will support the involvement of disabled people and representative organisations in the roll out of ENCOMPASS. *(Encompass is a new Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) wide initiative that will introduce a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland*.)	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	• Improved engagement with disabled people in the roll out of Encompass.	**Update:** Sensory/communication issues are flagged on encompass and visible to all professionals involved, regardless of where the individual presents within the Trust. Communication needs information is readily accessible so staff can proactively make adjustments e.g. book interpreters, arrange a

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				suitable environment to meet or prepare accessible information e.g. large print, easy read etc. encompass system aligns with Improvement through Involvement, ensuring the individuals preferences, communication and support needs and experiences are at the centre of care planning and service delivery. The Encompass system has helped with standardising forms and sensory support registers to reduce variations.