



Disability Action Plan
Regional Actions
2018 – 2023

Progress Report
Year 2 - 2019-2020

Section 1 – Promoting positive actions and increased participation through training, awareness and resources

Disabled people have told us that promoting well-informed social attitudes to disability is central to securing the right to equality for all disabled people. We are committed to providing training and resources to support our staff in the implementation of our disability duties.

Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will co-design and deliver bespoke disability equality training for frontline staff in partnership with disabled people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent staff training and awareness raising, co-designed and delivered, where appropriate, across health and social care. • Co-designed training programme in each Trust that includes specific guidance on communication on disability and autism. • Increased staff awareness on disability equality and how to promote positive attitudes and participation in public life. • Disability equality training that will reflect all disabilities (including hidden, autism, sensory) and will challenge negative stereotypes / attitudes about disabled people.
<p>Progress Year 2 – Complete for this reporting period</p> <p>The Making A Difference E-Learning mandatory training is the main training resource which all staff are required to complete. This incorporates disability awareness training and scenario based learning.</p> <p>In addition, HSC Trusts have revised the Staff Disability Etiquette Booklet which includes important information on Autism. This resource is aimed at raising staff awareness.</p> <p>Nearing completion is a new regional Staff Information Booklet entitled: ‘Staff Guidance – Autism in the Workplace’. This booklet aims to increase staffs’ understand and appreciation of Autism and how to provide practical support in the workplace.</p>	

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work with the consortium of mental health organisations and the ECNI to ensure health and social care is signed up to the Mental Health Charter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace that welcomes and supports staff with a mental health issue. • Development of best practice models that ensure services are accessible to people with a mental health issue. • Availability of long-term sustainable information and training support that will help managers to identify and offer help and support to staff with a mental health issue.
<p>Progress Year 2 - Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>All HSC Trusts have now signed up to the Mental Health Charter in collaboration with the Equality Commission for NI. The Charter commitments are currently being mainstreamed in the outworking of HSC Trusts respective Health & Well-Being Strategies.</p> <p>HSC Trusts continuously promotes the mental health and wellbeing of staff and notably during the outbreak of Covid 19, many psychological resources were disseminated and much more focused attention was given to mental health and wellbeing and resilience. It is clear that this will be a priority going forward.</p>	
Action Measure	Description
<p>We will continue to support the implementation of the Regional Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of regional sensory awareness e-learning programme. • Improve awareness among staff on how to ensure people with sensory impairment have access to information, services and supports.
<p>Progress Year 2 - Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>The Regional Service Group is a forum for engagement and collaborative working focused on services for people with sensory loss. It includes Health and Social Care service representatives, community and voluntary sector organisations, and Service Users. The purpose of the RSG is to consolidate and build upon service improvements made for people with sensory disabilities under the <i>Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy and Action Plan 2012-18</i>.</p> <p>The overarching objectives of the <i>Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy</i> continue to apply to the work of the RSG. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support disabled people to better exercise their rights, choices and life opportunities; • To support the continuing development of an inclusive and effective range of high quality health and social care services; and • To develop a more integrated approach to the planning and management of services within and across government departments, the HSC and the independent community and voluntary sector. 	

A work plan has been drawn up covering the period December 19-20 for the 4 following Task and Finish Groups: Sight Loss Services Framework, Hearing Loss Services Framework, Tinnitus, Sign Language in Care Settings Sight Loss Services Framework. Other worksteams will include: the approach to service users involvement, palliative and end of life care and regional awareness raising and accessible information provision.

Actions to encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will develop for staff a welcome pack with information about accessibility such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrangements for sign language interpreting • provision of auxiliary aids • disability etiquette • alternative formats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility welcome pack available for all disabled service users to improve access to services. • Improved service user and carer experience. • Resource available for staff to support them to meet the needs of disabled service users and carers.
<p>Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period?</p>	
<p>Ongoing work continues to produce a digital Welcome Pack which will provide front line staff (Health and Well Being Centres) with practical advice and guidance about inclusive and accessible communication. It was initially planned to have this in hard copy but for a number of factors it was decided to have this digitally so that it is accessible for community staff and it can be updated and added to as new information emerges. Being led by the Belfast Trust – this resource will be shared across the region in the interest of extending best practice.</p>	
Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work with relevant organisations to adopt a communication standard in line with the Accessible Communication Standard in England to ensure information is accessible for all disabled people including those with autism and those with communication disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a consistent communication standard across all Trusts. • Improved communication with service users and carers. • Improved experience for people using our services. • Improved accessibility to information and services.

Progress Year 2 - Completed for this reporting period

A Regional Accessible Communication group has been established. Membership includes HSC Trusts, Disability Action, RNIB, Action on Hearing Loss, RNIB and Mencap.

The purpose of the Group is to guide the development and implementation of a communication standard in line with the Accessible Information Standard in England for the provision of appropriate communications support and personalised accessible information to disabled people by health and social care organisations. It has been agreed that a round table discussion will be convened to explore how the information standard would be taken forward across Northern Ireland learning from those with experience of taking this forward in England and Scotland.

Section 2 – Supporting full participation of disabled people by improving accessibility

We have done much work over the years in enhancing the accessibility of health and social care services but disabled people continue to tell us that barriers to full accessibility remain. We are committed to working with disabled people on the initiatives listed below to improve accessibility for and participation of disabled people when accessing our buildings, information and services.

Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work with disabled people to make sure we are ready for the introduction of new legislation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Capacity • Age Discrimination (Goods/Facilities/Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions plans available to ensure readiness for forthcoming legislation
<p>Progress Year 2 - Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>The Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016 ('the Act') is a piece of legislation which, when fully implemented, will bring together mental capacity and mental health law for those aged 16 years and over within a single piece of legislation. The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards as set out in the Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (MCA) became law on 2nd December 2019 - this was following an extension by the Department of Health.</p> <p>The Act provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make a decision and people who now have capacity but wish to make preparations for a time in the future when they lack capacity. Where a person who lacks capacity is being deprived of their liberty, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards must be applied.</p> <p>This new law states that by December 2020, the Trust must make sure that everyone who is currently deprived of their liberty has been reviewed and safeguards have been put in place by a special Trust Panel known as a Trust Authorisation Panel which can authorise a deprivation of liberty. There are different levels of training – according to people's role within the Trust and under the</p>	

legislation– much of this is mandatory. Simulation training was convened for practitioners to help them understand the complexities and intricacies of the legislation and its implementation. A Mental Capacity Implementation Team has been established along with appointment of Short Term Detention authorisers and coordination of Authorisation Panels. Much work has been led regionally to coordinate implementation and ensure consistency of approach. Regular regional meetings are convened with the Department of Health and other Trusts. Regular newsletters are produced to ensure there is a sound level of awareness.

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will review how we communicate with and seek feedback from disabled people (staff and service users) about health and social care and develop guidance to ensure effective engagement in the future</p>	<p>Introduction of new methods of seeking feedback and communication identified such as Citizen Space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of all available media (including social media) considered. • Guidance available for staff to ensure effective engagement with disabled people. • Improved development of policy and practice by drawing on wide range of views and experiences.

Progress Year 2 - Completed for this reporting period

The Regional Initiative ‘Care Opinion’ – platform facilitates real time feedback from service users and their families. Easy Read formats are available.

HSC Trusts have used CitizenSpace successfully in the past when engaging with S75 groups including the disability sector on the development of their current Equality and Disability Action Plans.

HSC Trusts are committed to the principles of the [Co-Production-Guide.pdf](#). HSC Trusts, other Arms Length Bodies and the DOH are the only public bodies in Northern Ireland which have a statutory duty to involve and consult its stakeholders, therefore the guide augments and builds on the requirements set out in current PPI Policy . The goal is to support transformational change through a co-productive approach and promote the opportunity for all sections of the Northern Ireland community to partner with health and social care staff in improving health and social care outcomes . This guide illustrates that we want a system that partners and organises health and wellbeing with people, for people, and by people. HSC Trusts PPI Annual Report provide further detail.

Actions to encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work with representative groups to develop an accessibility checklist to ensure that health and social care facilities are considered accessible spaces for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility checklist for health and social care facilities developed in partnership with ECNI and voluntary and community sector. • Health and social care facilities accessible for service users and carers. • Information from checklist to support prioritisation of programme of accessibility works. • Resource developed to promote best practice in the built environment including autism friendly spaces. • Promotion of best practice when working with colleagues on modernisation projects or new builds. • Guidance available on autism friendly spaces. Promote principles of autism friendly spaces and services.
<p>Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>Using an adapted version of the ECNI accessibility audit tool it is hoped that a range of changes will be implemented and developed. using an 'Access Checklist' to ensure physical environments are more accessible. Learning will be shared across the Trust and regionally.</p>	
Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work to ensure access to all forms of communication support including support for BSL/ISL users, Makaton users and people who have Autism Spectrum Disorder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional services established for the provision of communication support for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. • Health and social care communication accessible to all service users and carers. • Improved access to services.

- Improved communication with service users and carers.
- Improved experience for people using our services.

Progress Year 2 – Ongoing Rollover year 3

In 2013 the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) initiated a regional review of the provision of Communication Support Services in Northern Ireland to determine the most appropriate arrangements for providing the service in the future. The review concluded in January 2016 and proposed that communication support services should be supplied in future on the basis of a regional shared service provided by the Business Services Organisation. In June 2016 [a consultation on the recommendations from the regional review of communication support services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing across Northern Ireland](#) was launched. The public consultation supported for the recommendation that the Business Services Organisation would be commissioned to supply Regional Communication Support Services (RCSS) for deaf and hard of hearing people who need to access to health and social care across Northern Ireland. The RCSS service development has been driven by the need to improve the accessibility, quality and safety of current communication support to service users as intended by RQIA in its Recommendation in 2011. The RCSS Service Delivery Model has been developed based on the recommendations from the review of communication support in 2016. Over the reporting period a number of meetings have been held with sign language service users and a range of organisations and individuals across all of the Trust areas, providing an opportunity to discuss the service model. Work on developing the model continues.

Action Measure

Description

We will join the Equality Commission’s ‘Every Customer Counts’ initiative to try and ensure that services and the physical environment are accessible.

- Public commitment to ‘Every Customer Counts’ and formal sign up by all Trusts being a campaign signatory.
- Health and social care services accessible and open to all potential service users and carers. Raised awareness of three good practice guides to illustrate reasonable adjustments which have been made by various service providers in a range of sectors.

Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period

Every Customer Counts is an initiative developed by the Equality Commission to help organisations to make their services more accessible and inclusive to all our service users, patients, visitors and carers. The aims are closely linked to HSC Trusts regional values.

A regional workshop was held during the year under review. Attendees included Section 75 Equality Leads, a representative from AccessAble UK and Estates officers from each HSC Trust. The Equality Commission have developed a self-audit tool which the sub-group agreed could use to evaluate how accessible services are. The sub-group has had its initial meeting and are in consensus that it would be more appropriate and feasible to undertake this audit in a number of key areas in the first instance and then mainstream and roll out good practice across the other sites on an incremental basis.

Estates officers agreed to work collaboratively and in collaboration with AccessAble UK to identify a few pilot sites where work could commence on the introduction of Accessibility Guides to provide ease of access for patients, clients, visitors and staff.

Section 3 – Supporting full participation of disabled people in our workforce

We know that there continues to be gaps between the proportion of disabled people employed in health and social care compared with non-disabled people. We are committed to ensuring that disabled people are afforded equality of opportunity in respect of entering and continuing employment in health and social care. We will work in partnership with disabled people to make sure our employment policies and practices and working environments are as inclusive and accessible as possible. Please note the nature of the actions detailed below will relate directly to participation by disabled people in public life.

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work in partnership with Recruitment Shared Services to promote a review of recruitment and selection processes to promote equality and ensure any barriers that may discourage a disabled person from applying are identified and mitigated action as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to recruitment and selection process improved. • Best practice model developed in relation to online recruitment. • Increased applications from people with a disability.
<p>Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026: Delivering for Our People sets out ambitious goals for a workforce that will match the requirements of a transformed health and social care system. It also addresses the need to tackle serious challenges with supply, recruitment and retention of staff. The Strategy document includes a very detailed look at the workforce problems and challenges facing health and social care in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Theme 1 in the Strategy is about Attracting, Recruiting and Retaining and includes the commitment to set up and roll out a regional HSC careers service to help ensure a good supply of people in the future; to inform and excite people on the range of jobs and professions and to publicise health and social care as a career option.</p> <p>Trusts have been working collaboratively to improve access for those seeking employment with the Trusts. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in website accessibility – providing greater ease of access for job applicants. • Production of a series of recruitment - How to Guides. • Outreach measures – regional and local career events to promote the HSC as an employer of choice. 	

The deployment of the Regional Disability Tool Kit is soon to commence starting with the Human Resources Directorate. The tool kit will be rolled out to other service managers. This resource was informed with input from the Disability Sector, ECNI, managers and staff across HSC as well as Equality practitioners. The Tool Kit provides very practical advice for both managers and staff when managing disability in the work place and will be used across the region as a resource to aid best practice and understanding of the out workings of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The Equality Commission's recently revised 'Outreach/Positive Action Measures for Employers' will be included within the HSC Disability Tool Kit as soon as it is launched and available.

Action Measure	Description
We will work with staff, schools and disability organisations to promote health and social care as a disability friendly employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of our work placements and employability programmes. • Improved awareness of the Trust as a disability friendly employer through increased work placements and promotion at careers conventions.

Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period

HSC Trusts continue to work with the Disability Sector to promote itself as an Equal Opportunity Employer. Within the body of the Annual Progress report, there is further detail about Positive Action measures aimed at encouraging the participation of persons with a disability in employment, volunteering, job experience.

Action Measure	Description
We will review opportunities for staff to disclose their disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff encouraged to declare that they have a disability. • Promotion of the benefits of disclosure and importance of monitoring. • Increased awareness of the importance of staff keeping personal equality monitoring records up to date (via HRPTS). • Increased staff disclosure and staff supported.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust equality monitoring statistics to ensure meaningful analysis to support decision making and benchmark workforce profile.
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Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period

A staff information booklet entitled ‘Should I Disclose to My Employer that I have a Disability’ has now been produced setting out the benefits of disclosure. Whilst disclosure is voluntary there are clear benefits for an employee in being open about their disability status. Firstly, it enables an employer, in this instance HSC Trusts, to provide for timely and practical implementation of reasonable adjustment in the workplace for new or existing employees with a disability. This is particularly important where there are health and safety considerations.

This staff information booklet draws on best practice advice provided by Disability Action.

Action Measure	Description
<p>We will work in partnership with disabled people and Occupational Health Services to ensure that disabled people are supported to continue in employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of revised best practice guidance on employing persons with a disability. • Development and delivery of bespoke equality and human rights training to Occupational Health staff. • Awareness campaign to highlight the benefits of referral to Occupational Health - for staff and for managers. • Improved support for disabled staff. • More robust reasonable adjustment process.

Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period

The new Disability Tool Kit includes a complete section on Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace to ensure managers fully understand their legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The deployment of the tool kit will be underpinned by bespoke training for managers to ensure compliance and importantly the provision of timely reasonable adjustment for new and existing employees with a disability.

Action Measure	Description
We will develop guidance on supporting people with autism in employment in partnership with representative organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-designed guidance produced which will raise awareness among staff of reasonable adjustments for people with autism. • Promotion of guidance across health and social care.
<p>Progress Year 2 – Completed for this reporting period</p> <p>A regional Staff information Booklet is almost completed and will be adopted by HSC Trusts. This resource provides practical advice for managers and staff re managing Autism in the Workplace.</p>	

Total Actions in Year 2	15	Total Actions Completed in Year 2	14	Actions ongoing into Year 3	1
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