



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust



5 Year Review of the effectiveness of our Equality Scheme

April 2024



Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Trust, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the Trust must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Trust's Equality Scheme outlines how we propose to fulfil our statutory duties under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the Trust gave a commitment to apply the screening methodology below to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment.

Effectiveness Review of Equality Scheme

SET's Equality Scheme was officially approved by the Equality Commission in 2018 and the Trust is currently reviewing and updating this.

In keeping with the statutory requirements laid down in paragraph 8(3) of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act the Trust has completed a formal 5 year review of its Equality Scheme and now wishes to inform the Commission and the wider public of the outcome of the review.

The purpose of the review is to allow the Trust, through a process of self-evaluation, to review its approved Scheme.

We will address the following questions as part of the review process:

1. How the scheme's implementation has benefitted individuals within the Section 75 groups
2. How leaders within the authority are engaged in the scheme's implementation
3. Challenges and how they have been overcome
4. Lessons learned
5. Good practice

Questions and Responses

1.1 How the scheme's implementation has benefitted individuals within the Section 75 groups?

All individuals and designated S75 groups will have directly or indirectly benefitted from the policies and activities implemented by the Trust over the past five year period.

It is our aim to help create and support a culture that is inclusive at all levels and help create a sense of belonging, in line with the Trust's Vision, Values and Priorities. Through the Trust People Plan, we strive to ensure the Trust is a great place to live, a great place to work, and a great place for care and support. The Trust aims to promote positive attitudes to diversity, both in relation to staff and service users.

We wish to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded across our organisation and that our employment practices are fair, flexible and enabling so that each employee can reach their full potential.

Some key highlights during the five year review period include:

- The Trust has established and supported a number of Staff Forums and Staff Advice Clinics
 - Disabilities Forum
 - Multi-Cultural Forum
 - Carer Forum
 - LGBTQ+ Forum
 - Disability Advisory Clinic
- Piloting the Mutual Mentoring initiative
- Valuing Working Carers Video. In June 2023 members of the Carers Forum created the 'Valuing Working Carers'. This video was designed to promote the importance of our managers being flexible with our staff and the benefits of being a working carer within SET.
- Developing a user friendly guide and awareness raising information on 'Updating your Employment Equality Data' for staff. This guide is regularly communicated to staff to help ensure our workforce data is as up to date as possible.

- Setting up a staff Inclusion Panel. The Panel includes members from each of the Staff Forums who review policies and procedures before prior to ratification. This gives a new perspective on the policies.
- A comprehensive programme of Equality and Diversity Training is provided in-house, both face to face and via the e-learning module 'Making a Difference. The Trust has worked in partnership with those who have lived experiences and a range of organisations such as the Rainbow Project and BDA.
- Providing accessible language communication support for Service Users who do not have English as a first language. The Trust has seen a year on year increase in requests for foreign language interpreting. Top languages requested are;
 - Arabic
 - Polish
 - Bulgarian
 - Lithuanian
 - Romanian
- Providing 'Working Well with Interpreters' Training sessions for staff who will work alongside service users and interpreters.
- Multi-Cultural Celebration Event. Over 60 colleagues attended to celebrate the global majority diversity in SET.

1.2 How leaders within the authority are engaged in the scheme's implementation?

The Trust is committed to ensuring good governance procedures are in place and these procedures are regularly reviewed.

Members of the Trusts Executive Management Team (EMT) and Trust Board are involved in Section 75 implementation in a number of ways:

- Annual Progress Report approval and scrutiny of progress and feedback for the coming year
- Considering and taking action on equality scheme issues within the Trust, when appropriate
- Equality Screenings and EQIAs for key service developments are discussed at EMT and signed off at Trust Board. All equality screenings progress with associated policy documents are ratified via the Policy Committee.

- Equality and Human Rights are a standard section of reports progressing to EMT/People and Culture Committee/Trust Board.

Senior Managers play an important role by:

- Contributing to the Annual Progress Report by identifying relevant initiatives in their area of responsibility.
- Undertaking equality screenings
- Ensuring that all staff attend induction and mandatory training sessions.

In August 2021, the Trust launched 'Our People Plan' which outlines our five people priorities; Wellbeing, Belonging, Growing, Leading and Empowering. The Plan includes the commitment that the Trust needs to cultivate a strong sense of belonging, to help ensure an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Trust Board is kept informed of equality issues and plays an active role in ensuring compliance with Section 75 duties. Equality updates are provided on a regular basis, in particular when the Annual Progress Report is brought to EMT, People and Culture Committee and Trust Board for approval each year.

Board Members participate in raising awareness of various equality initiatives and help support the ongoing work of the Equality Team.

Guidance for our Trust Board and Executive Team

The Six regional Trusts worked together to develop a guidance for our Trust Board and Executive Team members as an aide memoire on legislative requirements and matters to consider in their strategic decision making.

1.3 Challenges and how they have been overcome

During the five year reporting period, the Trust has continued the emphasis on enhancing our staff knowledge and capacity around equality, diversity and inclusion, across all parts of the organisation.

To this end, we continue to roll out the mandatory online training module "Making a Difference". During 2023- 2024 a total of 5056 staff undertook this training. This was an increase of over 3000 staff on the previous year

and is a result of a robust strategy to increase uptake of mandatory training and to continue to enhance our staff knowledge and capacity.

The Trust has continued to provide support to assist Trust managers and staff to ensure best practice and compliance with DDA legislation. This included the launch and promotion of The Disability Toolkit, provision of Disability Advice Clinics and embedding training and support for managers, including sessions such as Practical Manager. This information and support equips managers to make decisions regarding reasonable adjustments, as required, for their staff.

Access audits have been conducted and remedial works undertaken where buildings were not found to be accessible to include more loop systems, touch-pad doors, etc. New builds on Trust sites take account of access requirements.

The Trust has recently been working on the development and implementation of a new detailed access guide called AccessAble for our main Trust hospital sites.

The AccessAble system is predominantly used to provide detailed information regarding access, facilities such as accessible toilets, car parks, lifts and directions to departments or services to help improve the experience for users of sites who may have a disability or mobility issues.

1.4 Lessons learned

The Trust is always reviewing its practices and learning lessons from the way that it endeavours to meet its Equality responsibilities. The following are some ongoing examples:

- The importance of continued ongoing engagement with key stakeholders including service users and our staff
- Positive relationship building with the Section 75 groups and consideration of their feedback
- Ongoing monitoring of complaints received to identify area where equality of opportunity and good relations could be improved.
- The benefit of co-chairing and supporting a variety of staff forums including Multi-Cultural, Staff with Disabilities, Carers and LGBTQ+.

1.5 Good practice

Multi-Cultural Celebration Event

Over 60 colleagues attended to celebrate the global majority diversity in SET. Feedback from all attendees was very positive.

Consultations

Documents were provided for stakeholders during consultations on the Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services in the Ards and North Down Area, and the Temporary Changes to Urgent and Emergency Care Services at Lagan Valley Hospital Lisburn. These comprehensive documents included equality consideration of the potential impact of the proposals on all Section 75 categories.

Valuing Working Carers Video

In June 2023 members of the Carers Forum created the 'Valuing Working Carers' video, which was launched during Carers Week 2023. This video aimed to promote the importance of considering employees needs and the benefits of being a working carer within SET.

LGBTQ+ Video and Engagement Sessions and Lakewood Promotion Videos

Lakewood Social Worker Chris Millar has developed videos for staff and service users in support of LGBTQ+ issues. The videos were released during Pride Week.

Over 600 staff have taken part in the Rainbow Pin initiative since its launch in 2023 and over 1000 lanyards have been handed out.

A total of three Engagement Days were held across SET to promote the LGBTQ+ Forum.

Menopause Virtual Training Sessions

The Trust has worked in partnership with Business in the Community to provide virtual Menopause training sessions for both staff and managers

Continued provision and support for Staff Forums and Disability Advice Clinics and over 300 staff have attended.

Progress Development Programme

Three staff have been supported to attend this programme delivered in partnership with the HSC Leadership Centre.

Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy

This Policy reinforces the Trust's commitment to address domestic abuse, break the cycle of silence and extend a lifeline of support to those in need within the workforce. The policy pledges to provide essential assistance to employees facing domestic abuse and sexual violence, including facilitated time off for legal and medical appointments in compliance with the new Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act.

Please note that the examples given are not exhaustive. For further information please refer to our Annual Progress Reports, submitted to the ECNI each year, for a comprehensive review of the work the Trust has undertaken.

Contact Details

If you have any queries about this document, or to request availability in alternative formats, please contact:

Susan Thompson

Equality Manager

The Sidings

Building 1

Antrim Street

Lisburn

BT28 3AJ

E-mail: Susan.Thompson@setrust.hscni.net