

Consultation Schedule – The Council Meeting 07 October 2025

	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY
1.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Public Consultation on Northern Ireland's draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027	8 October 2025
	<p>A workshop is being organised by the Business Decarbonisation team within the Department for Economy. Details for the workshop are below:</p> <p>Date: Thursday 18 September 2025</p> <p>Time: 9:30am Registration. Workshop starts at 10am, finishing at 12:30pm.</p> <p>Venue: Belfast Met Springvale Campus, 398 Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7DU</p> <p>To register for the workshop, please email energyBIP@economy-ni.gov.uk no later than Tuesday 16 September 2025. (Retrospective)</p> <p>You can view the draft Climate Action Plan and other key documents, including the link to the consultation survey on the DAERA website</p>		
2.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Fisheries and Water Environment Bill – Protection of the Water Environment	5 November 2025
	<p>The Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has today launched a consultation on the water quality policies to inform the development of a Fisheries and Water Environment Bill. The consultation will run for 8 weeks from 11th September to 6th November 2025. The primary method for responses is online via Citizen Space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries and Water Environment Bill – Protection of the Water Environment Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs 		

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3.	Waterways Ireland	Equality Consultations 2025	24 November 2025
	<p>Waterways Ireland is consulting on its Draft Equality Action Plan 2026-2028 and Draft Disability Action Plan 2026-2028.</p> <p>Waterways Ireland undertook an Audit of Inequalities to establish whether any of the Section 75 categories are or could be adversely affected or negatively impacted by the activities of Waterways Ireland.</p> <p>Simultaneously Waterways Ireland undertook an Assessment of Equality and Human Rights. This is an evidence-based approach to identify, scrutinise and analyse the information required based on the 9 protected groups under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 and also barriers to social inclusion, protection of human rights and equal opportunity.</p> <p>Where such inequalities were detected or suspected, Waterways Ireland has developed a three-year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan to address them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Consultations 2025 		
4.	Department of Health	Extend medicines for optometrists and contact lens opticians	27 November 2025
	<p>It is the ambition of NHS systems across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to make better use of the primary eye care workforce.</p> <p>This consultation is seeking views on extending the range of medicines that can be sold or supplied and, in some cases administered, by optometrists and contact lens opticians across the UK, so they can treat a wider range of minor eye conditions in the community. This will:</p>		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make it easier for patients to get the medicines they need • avoid the need for patients to see additional healthcare professionals just to receive medicines, helping to release capacity across other parts of the NHS <p>This consultation is aimed at individuals, professionals and organisations who live in, operate or provide services across the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend medicines for optometrists and contact lens opticians - GOV.UK 		
5.	Department of Health	Enabling pharmacist flexibilities when dispensing medicines	11 December 2025
	<p>We propose to amend the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 to increase pharmacist flexibilities when dispensing medicines by enabling pharmacists working in a community pharmacy to supply a different strength or formulation (which may mean a different quantity) of the same medicine originally prescribed, in certain circumstances.</p> <p>The aims of this proposal are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve patient access to medicines • reduce the burden on healthcare systems • improve person-centred care <p>We are not expecting this measure to resolve all the issues surrounding medicine supply difficulties, but it is another tool for pharmacists to improve patient access to their medicines.</p> <p>We intend to use this consultation to seek views on whether respondents agree with our proposal and to further assess any measurable impacts, risks and benefits before deciding whether to proceed with legislative change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling pharmacist flexibilities when dispensing medicines - GOV.UK 		

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Available to View



RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	PUBLISHED
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	Northern HSCT Annual Progress Report and our twelfth edition of Equality News	(copy attached)
Department of Education	Raise Programme – Publication of Strategic Area Plans and Launch for Call for Locality Led Projects	(copy attached)
Department of Health	Consultation on Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action Plan	Consultation on Draft Equality Action Plan and Draft Disability Action Plan Department of Health

Open Consultations (previously Listed)

- Northern Ireland Assembly Dilapidation Bill submission by 10 October 2025
- Linda Dillon, MLA Consultation on the Breastfeeding Bill (2025) Survey submission by 24 October 2025
- Department of Health and Social Care UK wide consultation - Medicines responsibilities for regulated non-medical healthcare professionals submission by 28 October 2025
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Public Consultation on the Timetable and Work Programme for Developing the Forth Cycle River Basin Management Plan submission by 3 January 2026

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2024 - 2025

Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme 	Name: Kelly McBride Telephone:  Email:  @northerntrust.hscni.net
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan 	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:
<http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services>

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 2024 and March 2025.

Introduction

This is the Trust's 18th Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) for submission to the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (ECNI). In preparing this Annual Progress Report, the Trust has used the template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Report provides assurance to Trust Board on how the Trust has fulfilled its legislative obligations and gone beyond compliance to achieve best practice in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part A of this Report provides an overview of the work undertaken in compliance with Equality Scheme obligations. It is important to note that this Report does not detail all of the work that the Trust carries out on equality, as a key element of the Trust's business is to improve health and wellbeing and to address inequalities.

The Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have worked collaboratively to develop the new five year Section 75 Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan. Respective Trust Boards have approved the final plans. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 provide updates on the actions completed in the first year, commencing in 24/25, of the new plans.

The Trust has developed 'Equality News' – a user-friendly newsletter for stakeholders and staff to highlight the extensive work that has taken place across the Trust to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and the disability duties.

Trust Governance and Assurance Framework

In terms of policy development, the Trust has a range of measures in place to ensure that policy authors, leaders and decision makers are aware of their obligations under Section 75 and wider equality responsibilities when it comes to policy development.

- In compliance with Section 75, a screening process is in place to identify policies which may have a significant/major impact on the nine equality categories.
- The requirement for the screening of policies is set out in the Policy Development, Review and Approval Process, which is accessible to all staff in the policy area on Staffnet. This guidance document also signposts policy authors to the Equality Unit Business Area of Staffnet and to the Equality Unit for support with Equality screening.
- The mandatory policy template requires policy authors to document within the policy that it has been reviewed in light of Section 75 and the outcome of this screening. Mandatory content within policies is considered by policy committees and approving groups as part of the approval process.
- All new and reviewed policies must have an associated Equality Screening document completed, which must be signed by the policy author and Divisional Director or Committee Chair, who have approved the policy before it is uploaded to the policy library.
- Equality Screening documents for all policies are held electronically and securely by the Equality Team and the Policy Team. Historical documents are available for reference through these teams.

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 2024-25, 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.

As context, during the year 2024/25, the Northern Trust implemented the new regional information system, Encompass, with rollout commencing during November 2024. This significant organisational change included targeted end user training and detailed online resources, equipment deployment and appointment of identified specialists in Encompass at Divisional level to facilitate the deployment process. This organisational change meant that certain elements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion work were put on hold. Examples include the Trust's decision, in July 2024, to put all non-mandatory training programmes on hold to allow for the training required in relation to the use and operation of Encompass to be rolled out.

Northern Trust also carried out two significant consultation processes during 2024-25; the review of General Surgery Services and the pilot of Body Worn Cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital. The Trust also participated in the regional consultation process led by the Public Health Agency in respect of the new Health and Social Care NI Involvement and Consultation Scheme.

Lanyards for the d/Deaf

The Trust has introduced support lanyards for staff, patients and service users with hearing loss. The initiative aims to improve communication and provide greater support for individuals who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or who lip read when accessing Trust services. The lanyards were launched during Sign Language week in March 2025 and will help to ensure that services are accessible to everyone.

Mental Health Seminar

On 23rd May 2024, the Trust, in partnership with Inter-Ethnic Forum and Stronger Together, held an awareness seminar for ethnic diverse communities to engage with them on mental health. The co-designed seminar provided helpful information and practical advice in relation to managing mental health and signposting to support available.

Provision of Specialist Training

On the 18th of June 2024 specialist training in respect of equality and rural needs was delivered to senior managers and project leads involved in service change and improvement. The aim of this training was to cascade information in respect of the completion of screening templates.

Human Rights Training

On Human Rights Day, the 10th of December 2024, the new regional Human Rights staff training animation was launched. The Trust worked collaboratively with regional colleagues to develop a training animation and accompanying guidance, that looks at each one of the five FREDa (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy) principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care. The animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach, based on the FREDa principles.

Introduction of the Oliver McGowan Training on Learning Disability and Autism

The Oliver McGowan training is the government's preferred and recommended training programme and is now available for all Health and Social Care (HSC) staff.

This training is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for HSC staff to have better training. The training is aimed to help save lives by ensuring HSC workforce have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability. The training is available for all HSC staff, with two tiers, depending on the job role.

Update on AccessAble Facility Guides

The Trust and AccessAble have been in partnership since 2020, providing detailed accessibility information to patients, visitors and staff, ensuring that everyone can navigate Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital with ease and confidence. There is ongoing collaboration to ensure the guides are up to date, providing facts, figures and photographs to help people plan their journeys to and around the hospital, covering everything from parking facilities and hearing loops, to walking distances and accessible entrances and toilets. Following some recent development work, full-screen size images are now available on the AccessAble website, along with 360-degree images in accessible toilets, accessible bathrooms and Changing Places. AccessAble have been focusing on updating the existing Guides for Causeway Hospital to enhance user experience and work is in progress for the same in Antrim Area Hospital.

Ninety AccessAble guides are now available via links on the Trust website, [AccessAble website](#) or by mobile application. Between April 2024 and March 2025, the guides had 28,807 users and 42,092 page views. This breaks down to a monthly average of 2,401 users and 3,508 page views.

Staff Health Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy 2024-27

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a foundation stone of our #team NORTH culture and the Trust is committed to working together to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all staff regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, community background, religious belief, political opinion, race, disability, dependent status and marital or civil partnership status. The Trust launched a new Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion strategy in August 2024. Endorsed by the Trust Board, the three-year strategy sets out a series of actions that aim to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our staff with a strong emphasis on the need to embrace the culture of equality, diversity and inclusion. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, chaired by Owen Harkin, Director of Finance and Deputy Chief Executive oversees the implementation of the EDI actions arising from the strategy. Each division is represented on the group, who meet quarterly, alongside key stakeholders.

The overall theme of ***‘valuing diversity and promoting inclusion’*** is informed by the Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan, alongside ECNI recommendations on key employment inequalities and the Trust’s organisational People and Culture Plan.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Workplace Support

The Trust worked in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to refresh our organisational policy and to develop a workplace strategy to help support those experiencing domestic and/or sexual abuse. The strategy was endorsed by the Trust Board in March 2024 and includes a new domestic and sexual abuse workplace support pack, a network of designated advisors across the Trust and training programmes to support staff and Managers. A focus of the support pack is practical workplace supports including the provision of a period of safe leave. The strategy was promoted throughout 2024 with a series of staff broadcasts and HR clinics leading up to a pre-Christmas awareness campaign to coincide and support the international #16DaysOfAction campaign. In March 2025, the Trust were delighted to be highly commended in the marketing campaign category of the inaugural Northern Ireland Hummingbird Awards.

LGBTQ+ Equality

In 2024 the Trust was proud to support Pride attending both Belfast and Portrush events. During the summer months, the Trust also hosted and participated in a number of events across Trust sites to promote LGBTQ+ equality awareness and highlight the variety of resources and support available to all staff including the HSC staff forum.

Disability Equality

In December 2023 the Trust developed a Reasonable Adjustment Plan to support employees with a disability or long-term health condition in the workplace. It was piloted across the Trust during 2024 and launched in December 2024 as part of the celebrations of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Plan will be incorporated into the new HSC Attendance Policy which will be launched in 2025.

Race Equality

In February 2025, the Trust celebrated **Race Equality Week** which focuses on addressing barriers to race equality in the workplace. The theme this year was #ListenActChange, highlighting the importance of bringing everyone together to focus on listening to the challenges people may face, taking action to drive change and make a positive difference. To promote the campaign and demonstrate our support the Trust created a staff news bulletin providing information, resources and support on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Cultural Competency Framework

The Trust has collaborated with the other HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland to develop a Cultural Competency Framework, launched on the 5th of February 2025, designed to help reduce inequalities in health experienced by global majority populations and patient groups across the region. This new regional framework will help HSC staff to improve their confidence and competence in engaging with and providing services to people from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds. The framework, which is underpinned by a programme of staff training and resources, including the "Little Book of Cultural Competence" aims to promote equity and enhance patient care.

The 2025-26 workplace action plan will include how we will promote the framework and associated training programme across the Trust.

"Progress" Development Programme for Ethnically Diverse Staff

The Trust is pleased to support the second year of this regional programme that recognises the low numbers of ethnically diverse staff availing of development programmes through the HSC Leadership Centre. The programme was piloted in 2023 with successful programmes completed in 2024 and early 2025. A further programme is planned to commence in September 2025.

Response To Civil Unrest - Summer 2024

The Trust worked with the PSNI and other stakeholders to develop supports for staff during this time of civil unrest in the Antrim area. Owen Harkin, Deputy Chief Executive and Chair of EDI Steering Group, and Stephanie Greenwood, Trade Union Side Chair issued a video statement condemning the attacks and signposting staff to this support.

EDI Steering Group members facilitated drop-in clinics across Antrim, Causeway and Ballymena sites. Various practical supports were provided to staff directly impacted by community tensions including assistance to relocate and guidance and support on emergency and other leave provisions.

NIPEC (Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nurses and Midwives)

In 2023, NIPEC lead a regional collaborative to consider barriers to professional education and development of ethnically diverse nursing and allied health staff.

To help take this work forward, NIPEC recruited a Professional Officer for Ethnic Diversity for each Trust and in 2024 conducted a regional staff survey, "Enhancing access to educational and leadership opportunities for ethnically diverse staff." The survey results gathered will help tailor an action plan to ensure educational programs better meet the needs of the workforce and identify any existing barriers.

Carers within the Trust Workforce

The Trust recognises that staff work a variety of patterns and practices across health and social care settings and that modern life at times can be demanding. It can be difficult to balance the various social and economic pressures we experience outside of work on a daily basis including roles as carers. Annually, the Trust supports Carers Week in June to recognise and support staff who are carers, acknowledging their significant contribution, and recognising the potential impact on their work life balance. In June 2024 with the theme of "Putting Carers on the Map" there was signposting to a wide range of Trust supports including the Carers Hub and Carers Digital alongside workplace policies and procedures designed to help support working carers, including opportunities for flexible working arrangements and special leave provisions. In December 2024 the Trust launched new flexible retirement provisions which allow for members of the HSC Pension Scheme to apply for a range of flexible retirement options, allowing more flexibility on retirement age; the length of time taken to fully retire, and the nature and pattern of work in the lead up to retirement.

Management of Violence and Aggression

All staff have the right to feel safe from the threat of violence and aggression in the workplace including behaviours, verbal or physical, motivated by an equality characteristic such as race, sex, religious belief and sexual orientation. During 2024 the Department of Health launched a new Violence and Aggression framework. The Trust established a Management of Violence and Aggression working group to oversee the implementation of the framework and have relaunched the toolkit which provides practical advice to staff and managers around the management of violence and aggression in the workplace, and, in particular, the types of support that staff should receive following an incident.

Institute of Government & Public Policy Conferences

In June 2024 the Institute of Government & Public Policy (IGPP) hosted its first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference in Northern Ireland. The Trust presented on the theme of '*the case for a diverse and inclusive workplace*' highlighting work in this area.

In February 2025 the Trust were invited to present at the IGPP Neurodiversity conference showcasing the work of the Autism Co-ordinator and the plans in place to take forward a workplace project during 2025 designed to support neuro-divergent staff across the Trust.

Inclusive Artwork Project - Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital

In 2024, the Trust was delighted to announce the installation of two unique art pieces in Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital which celebrate the diversity of Trust staff. Artist in Residence Helen Bradbury worked closely with staff across both sites and evolving dialogue helped inform the final pieces.

Accessible Communication Pack for staff – October 2024

In October 2024, an accessible communication guide was developed to help and support staff to ensure communication with service users, carers and families is accessible and inclusive. The Trust promotes good communication, as it supports the delivery of quality healthcare and can provide a positive impact on health outcomes. The guide is available via Staffnet and covers all forms of communication including in person, on the telephone, in letters, emails, text messages, websites, leaflets and videos.

Carer Hub

The Northern Trust Carer Hub is a central point of contact for carers and staff for signposting and support. During 2024-2025, the Carer Hub had 19,225 contacts with carers. The Carer Hub facilitated 100 classes through the carer support programme such as monthly peer support groups, nutritional classes, physical health classes; paracise and walking groups, classes to support mental wellbeing such as (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) WRAP and Mindfulness with 1,337 carers joining in. There are currently 2,925 unpaid carers on the Trust's Carer Register.

The designated carers' website for Northern Trust www.carersdigital.org has been updated to include You and Your Wellbeing, Spotlight on Nutrition and Caring, About Me (building resilience) and Working and Skills E-learning for Working Carers. Any carer in the Northern Trust area can access the website by creating an account and there are currently over 925 current users.

The Trust's carer community network brings together community and voluntary sector organisations that have a carer support strand to their services to share information on available services. As part of Carers Week 2024, the Carer Hub hosted an information fair for family carers in Ballymena with over 50 exhibitors from across the community and voluntary sector and Trust services. This annual information fair continues to be a source of support for many family carers.

To celebrate Carers Rights Day in November 2024, the Trust hosted an information session with the Make the Call service for unpaid family carers. This session provided carers with vital information on their rights and entitlements for both them and the cared for person as well as highlighting all the support available from Make the Call. Forty carers attended this session and the Make the Call staff held individual appointments with carers after the presentation to help them with individual queries.

The Northern Trust Carer Listening Forum is a designated time for the carer voice to be heard. The Chief Executive, Jennifer Welsh and Trust Chair Anne O'Reilly meet with carers and associated stakeholders twice a year. Now in its second year, the Listening Forum has discussed issues such as transitions between services, identifying and recognising carers, including young carers.

Carers also meet quarterly in the Trust's Carer Pathway Steering Group, which is Chaired and Co-Chaired by carers. Two carers are also involved with the new Northern Partnership and Population Health Committee. The Northern Partnership and Population Health Committee reports directly to Trust Board.

Accessible Communication

During the reporting period, the Northern Trust made 15,541 requests for interpreters through the Northern Ireland Regional Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS). The top three languages requested within the Northern Trust during 2024/25 were as follows:

Language	Numbers
Polish	4649
Romanian	2686
Arabic	2114

A total of 935 appointments were supported with sign language interpreters and 213 documents were translated into minority languages.

2 Please provide examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/ measures in 2024-25 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

Equality and Disability Action Plans (2024-2029)

The 6 Health and Social Care Trusts are working collaboratively to implement the plans. The aim of this collaborative approach is to ensure consistency of approach, sharing of best practice/experiences across the region and to avoid duplication of work.

Our 2024 – 2029 Equality Action Plan contains a total of 30 actions whilst there are 22 actions in our Disability Action Plan. Our Equality Action Plan has been structured across four themes namely:

- Improving the data we use to support decision-making
- Addressing barriers to accessing health and social care
- Supporting our staff
- Supporting informal/family carers

The Disability Action Plan is framed around the two Disability Public Sector Duties namely:

- Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Actions to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

The Equality & Disability Action Plans have been transcribed into an easy read format to ensure maximum accessibility and are located on the Trust website and staff intranet.

Please see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for a detailed update of actions progressed in 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 2024-25 reporting period? (tick one box only)

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

Please provide any details and examples:

The table below details how the application of the Equality Scheme commitments resulted in changes to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during 2024-25.

Equality Scheme Commitment	Action	Difference made for individuals
Arrangements for assessing our compliance with Section 75 duties		
Have in place appropriate structures and reporting mechanisms	The Trust has prioritised Section 75 in all aspects of its business agenda and has established a range of governance, management and reporting mechanisms that reflect this. The Northern Partnership and Population Health Committee reports directly to Trust Board.	Section 75 duties are integral to the Trust's Assurance Framework. Trust senior teams aware of and comply with statutory requirements during decision-making.
Ensure Section 75 duties are mainstreamed within the Trust	<p>Partnership and Population Committee includes Partners representing a range of Section 75 categories to support the mainstreaming of equality duties by embedding the duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations into its core functions, ensuring these considerations are integral to their decision-making and service provision.</p> <p>The Trust's Equality Unit provides staff with the information, training and</p>	<p>Individuals are aware of the Trust's commitment to equality duties.</p> <p>Trust staff are aware of equality duties and the Trust's commitment to not only avoiding discrimination, but also to pursuing good practice, embracing diversity and promoting good relations.</p>

	<p>resources to support staff to have the appropriate level of knowledge, expertise and skill to mainstream Section 75 duties.</p> <p>The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme is mandatory and compliance is monitored two times each year.</p>	
Prepare Section 75 Annual Progress Report (APR) and include section in Trust's own Annual Report	<p>Annual Progress Report supported by "Equality News" to ensure updates are available in a more accessible format.</p> <p>Equality Matters section included in the Trust's Annual Report.</p>	All consultees sent a copy of the newsletter and informed of the availability of the progress report - improving awareness of Trust's Section 75 duties and outcomes of the work programme.
Action Plan		
Development of Action Based Plan to include performance indicators and timescales. Aligned to corporate and business planning cycle	Five year Section 75 Equality Action Plan developed in partnership with stakeholders and approved March 2024, to run until March 2029.	The implementation is intended to have a positive impact on Section 75 groups.
Arrangements for consulting		
Consultation list reviewed and updated	Review of consultation list on going.	New consultees added to the consultation list on an ongoing basis.
Training re. Consultation	<p>Involvement training was delivered to 924 members of staff during 2024-25.</p> <p>30 advice clinics were provided to support staff in relation to involving service users and carers.</p>	<p>Support transformation and service change by involving service users, carers and the community and voluntary sector.</p> <p>Develop skills to enable staff to facilitate and plan service user involvement.</p>

	<p>The Trust held specialised training sessions to ensure staff have the skills to facilitate and plan service user involvement. 20 members of staff completed this training.</p> <p>Care Opinion Awareness Training and Framing the Ask training aims to raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of Care Opinion and provide staff with the confidence to ask for feedback and to value the learning received through the lived experience. 764 members of staff completed this training during 2024/25.</p> <p>Care Opinion responder training provides staff with the knowledge and skill to provide a timely, meaningful response. 36 members of staff completed responder training during 2024/25.</p> <p>CitizenSpace is an online tool, specifically for public sector use, which is used to design questionnaires and surveys. 314 staff accounts have been set up and staff have received relevant training and support.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of Care Opinion and facilitate staff to promote and value feedback received.</p> <p>Facilitate staff to respond to feedback received via Care Opinion.</p> <p>Train staff in practical survey tools.</p>
In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, take into	Policy Development Process ensures engagement and consultation.	Views of representation groups and individuals considered during

account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy		decision-making process.
Provide feedback report to consultees in timely manner in formats suited to consultees	All service users and carers involved in Trust projects received detailed feedback reports.	Representative groups and individuals informed of how their feedback influenced the decision made.
Screening		
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 Section 75 screening and appropriate consultation. During the reporting period, the Trust screened 181 policies and proposals.	Transparent decision-making process for consultees and impact on Section 75 groups identified during policy development processes.
Publish reports quarterly and in accessible formats on request	All quarterly reports for the reporting period made available on the Northern Trust website.	Screening outcomes available to the public for consideration.
Publishing of EQIA reports	Two Trust specific consultations during 2024-25; Transformation of General Surgery services and the Pilot of Body Worn Cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital. The Trust also participated in the regional consultation process led by the Public Health Agency in respect of the new Health and Social Care NI Involvement and Consultation Scheme.	Consideration given to feedback during consultation and mitigations and action plans delivered to address same.

Monitoring		
Review of monitoring information	<p>The Trust continues to monitor staff by Section 75 categories and this has been enhanced by HRPTS Self-Service functions and an active campaign to improve equality monitoring data gathered from staff.</p> <p>The Trust went live, on the 7th of November 2024, with Encompass, an HSC-wide initiative that introduces a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland, this greatly enhances and streamlines HSC records and systems, which, in turn, helps us capture better quality and consistent section 75 information for our service users. The roll out of Encompass allows service users to access their own information and use the system to communicate with their HSC team, view test results and manage appointments. There was targeted end user training and detailed online resources, equipment deployment and appointment of identified specialists in Encompass at Divisional level to facilitate the deployment process.</p>	Increased understanding of the make-up of the workforce to ensure promotion of equality of opportunity and better information to identify any potential impact.
Staff Training		
Draw up a detailed training plan	The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: Making a Difference Programme has been rolled out	Improved access to equality, good relations and human rights training and diversity training through

	across the Trust via Broadcast and Staffnet and compliance is monitored.	availability of more condensed training packages for staff and managers as well as the availability of a training manual for those who do not have access to computers.
Focused training	<p>The Equality Screening Toolkit, available on the Staff Intranet, supports staff with Section 75 screening. This is supplemented by one-to-one screening clinics, specific to a policy, project or proposal that continued to be offered during 2024/25. These have been popular with staff and positive feedback has been received. 101 requests were facilitated in the 12-month period from April 2024 to March 2025.</p> <p>During the year, the Trust held specialised online workshops and training to support the continued development of a coproduction culture, including facilitation training.</p> <p>During the reporting period 22 members of staff received Working Well With Interpreters training, which provides staff with a good knowledge and understanding of the interpreting service and the dangers of using untrained interpreters.</p> <p>The Business Services Organisation led training on "How to book</p>	<p>Enhanced skills of Trust policy makers.</p> <p>Increased awareness and enhanced staff skills.</p>

	<p>interpreters,” 125 staff attended.</p> <p>New regional Human Rights staff training animation with accompanying guidance was launched in December 2024. This looks at each one of the five FREDA (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy) principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care.</p> <p>The Oliver McGowan training on Learning Disability and Autism is available for health and social care staff. The training is aimed to help save lives by ensuring HSC workforce have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability. The training is available for all HSC staff, with two tiers, depending on the job role.</p>	
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	<p>Information is provided in alternative formats on request and the Trust’s website has been designed to ensure accessibility.</p> <p>During the reporting period a total of 15,541 requests for face to face interpreting were made to NIHSCIS.</p>	<p>Improved access to information and services for equality groups – specifically those whose first language is not English and people with a disability.</p>

	During the reporting period, 935 appointments were supported with sign language interpreting support.	
Provide information in alternative formats on request	<p>213 documents translated into minority languages during the reporting period.</p> <p>All minutes of Disability Consultation Panel meetings provided on disk or Braille and minutes of Learning Disability Panel provided in Easy read.</p> <p>Library of translated documents available to Trust staff.</p>	Information provided in alternative formats to increase understanding, ensure effective communication and improved access to services.
Provide interpreters and sign language interpreters	Ongoing provision of communication support.	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 Section 75 complaints received during the reporting period.	
Any other measures proposed in Equality Scheme		
Work closely with other public authorities to exchange learning and best practice	<p>During the reporting period, the Trust participated in Regional Equality and Human Rights Steering Group and Regional Equality Leads meetings.</p> <p>The Joint Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Forum, established in partnership with ECNI, Human Rights Commission (HRC) and</p>	More effective use of resources and consistent approach across HSC.

	Community Relations Council (CRC), continued to meet during the reporting period.	
Liaise closely with the ECNI to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained	During the reporting period, the Trust met with ECNI on Section 75 implementation.	Ensures effective use of resources and Section 75 implementation.

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?

Please provide any details and examples:

Please see third column in above table. It is important to note that the screening of policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas has resulted in many considerations on how to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. For example, there is better engagement with those affected by policies and decisions including with service users and carers. Through the screening process, decision makers are more aware of the need for effective and accessible communication.

Staff affected by policies and decisions in relation to management of change are engaged to ensure that any adverse impact can be mitigated as required. This is undertaken on an ongoing basis and, because of confidentiality issues relating to reasonable adjustments implemented, this information is not included in many of the screening templates.

Encompass Implementation in Northern Trust

The screening of this software implementation project identified potential accessibility issues for certain Section 75 categories of people. There is a potential differential impact on older and younger people, carers, disabled people and the global majority community. It was envisaged that this would be minor and was mitigated by direct engagement with the Trust.

The Trust recognises that it is important that information is communicated and available in accessible formats for people who are not proficient in English as a first language, either in written translations or via a professional interpreter, face to face or telephone.

For staff members with a disability that may lead to system accessibility issues, the Trust is aware of its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and will consider reasonable adjustments to support staff to carry out their duties. Compatibility with screen readers, text enlargement, and other software used by staff will be checked.

Two stop model of chemotherapy delivery in Laurel House

In 2024, staff in Laurel House Chemotherapy Unit recognised that the current model of chemotherapy assessment and delivery, using a same day, one-stop design, was becoming much more difficult to manage and was causing long waits for patients in the unit. The Trust conducted a survey with patients (165 responses) and staff (35 responses) to understand the underlying problems from both perspectives. Utilising this feedback, the Trust changed the model of care to a 2-stop model, whereby patients were assessed on one day, with treatment at an allocated time on a separate day. This was implemented at the end of October 2024. In February 2025, the Trust completed a follow up survey with patients, receiving 92 responses. This indicated that 92% of patients reported their experience in Laurel House to be very good or excellent and that waiting times for treatment were greatly reduced.

Mental Health Length of Stay “Right Care, Right Time, Right Place”

This project was one of two Trust projects, identified as examples of best practice in the region, as part of the Health and Social Care Quality Improvement Delivering Value programme and as a result, has been selected for regional scale and spread, by demonstrating significant improvements in patient care, staff experience, financial sustainability and operational efficiency. The project team, with representatives across Mental Health Acute and Community teams, as well as service user representation from the Service User Consultant and a service user with lived experience, was established with the aim of reducing overall bed occupancy across all acute admissions and Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) inpatient mental health beds by at least 10% by the end of August 2024.

The Trust’s vision was to ensure all admissions are purposeful and outcome-based for individuals receiving care, culminating in timely discharges. As a result, services would provide “Right Care, at Right Time, in Right Place” with a focus on reducing length of stay, optimising patient independence and promoting staff wellbeing.

As well as attending project team meetings and workshops, the Service User Consultant and service user representative collaborated on the design of the patient engagement survey, in order to obtain feedback from our service users on their journey through our service.

From the data it was noted that as well as an, on average, 2% reduction in bed occupancy, 12.7% of referrals for voluntary admission between October 23 and July 24 did not progress to an admission. This equates to one in eight avoided admissions.

This means that one in eight of the service users were supported at home, in a collaboration among the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team, Mental Health Liaison Service and Community Mental Health Teams. This has significant benefits to service users and their families, enabling greater choice and control over their care in the least restrictive setting.

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 give details*):



As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (*please give details*):

Consultation: Working with you to transform General Surgery

The Trust held a public consultation on proposals for a reconfiguration of its General Surgery Service between the 23rd of August and the 29th of November 2024. The proposed option for future configuration of services was to centralise emergency general and major colorectal surgery in Antrim Area Hospital and high volume elective activity in Causeway Hospital.

To engage as widely as possible on the proposal the Trust held three in-person listening events across the Northern Trust area, in Cookstown on Monday the 30th of September, in Coleraine on Monday the 7th of October and in Antrim on Wednesday the 9th of October. A total of 140 individuals attended these events. Mindful that online engagement has the power to reach new audiences, a virtual listening event was held on Tuesday the 1st of October at 7:00pm. The online listening event was attended by 29 participants.

All four listening events followed the same format, with a Trust presentation followed by a panel question and answer session. All listening events were hosted by independent facilitators to ensure transparency and to encourage open discussion. The overwhelming majority of those who responded to the consultation were not in support of the proposals.

Themes were identified from the consultation feedback, and in response the Trust set out a number of proposed mitigations to address each theme. These are detailed below:

- The Trust will maximise the diagnostics and outpatient services available at the two hospitals so that patients can access these locally, this includes pre-assessment, outpatient follow up and tests.
- The Trust will also offer virtual and/or telephone appointments where it is appropriate to do so, recognising that for some an in-person appointment is the best option. The Trust will be flexible to avoid early appointments for anyone who has long distances to travel. The Trust has a partial booking process already in place which allow patients receiving an appointment to contact the booking office to confirm or rearrange at a more convenient time.
- The Trust will ensure that available transport options are well publicised. Trust staff will support people to find out if they are eligible for non-emergency transport services and promote how service users may be able to get a refund on their transport costs via the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme.
- The Trust will establish a Rural Transport task and finish group. Work has already commenced to scope out transport provision working with transport providers, other departments and the voluntary and community sector to explore the availability and gaps.

- The Trust has invested in the AccessAble mobile application (app). This is an online app for people with reduced mobility which allows them to research and plan their hospital stay or visit.
- The Trust will continue to support virtual visiting, where possible, through the use of iPad technology, to provide contact with families and friends as an alternative to incurring travel costs, recognising that this requires suitable and reliable internet/broadband connection.
- In recognition of the range of challenges for those who live in rural areas, including the North Antrim area covering Ballycastle, Cushendall and the Glens, the Trust has developed a Rural Framework to identify and raise awareness of key rural issues and inequalities compared to urban counterparts. The Framework seeks to map local strengths including mainstreamed and successful pilot projects whilst encouraging, supporting and strengthening relationships with the rural community and engaging stakeholders to maximise rural wellbeing. With our commitment in the rural needs assessment to establish a Rural Transport Group, the Trust will use this forum to talk to transport providers in a joined up way and explore gaps in provision.

☒ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details)*:

The Trust continues to monitor its workforce across the nine equality categories. A priority action was identified from the workforce framework and implemented throughout 24/25 to encourage staff to update and add to their personal data, through use of facilities on HRTPS, to improve equality monitoring data. This monitoring information is used for all Section 75 screenings of proposals that have an impact on staff.

☒ **As a result of changes to access to information and services**
(please specify and give details):

‘Sign Language Interactions’ provides face to face and remote sign language interpreting services for people who are d/Deaf and provide a full range of communication supports for people who are deafblind and hard of hearing attending health and social care appointments. The Strategic Planning and Performance Group commissions this regional service.

Sign Language Interactions offer a full range of communication supports to include:

- Face to Face Sign Language Interpreting
- Remote Sign Language Interpreting
- Relay Interpreters
- Interpreters for deafblind people
- Lip speakers
- Electronic Notetakers
- Speech to Text Reporting

☐ 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 2024-25 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:

5. Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2024-25 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 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 and completion of all mandatory training is determined through the appraisal process. Compliance is monitored and reported through the Trust's accountability framework.

6. **In the 2024-25 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 2024/25 report
☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Trust continues to prioritise Section 75 within all aspects of its business agenda and has established a range of governance, management and reporting mechanisms to reflect this. The Trust's Equality Unit sits within the Strategic Planning, Performance and

ICT Division and supports all Trust Divisions to ensure Section 75 is mainstreamed and integral to planning processes. Objectives and targets relating to the Trust's duties under Section 75 are built into its corporate and directorate planning processes. The Trust has set appropriate objectives and targets for individual responsible officers.

The Northern Partnership and Population Health Committee ensures compliance with and mainstreaming of Section 75 duties. The Group seeks assurance that the Trust is compliant with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998 and Section 49a of the Disability Discrimination Act and in doing so ensures that the above is embedded in decision-making. The committee is chaired by the Trust chair and co-chaired by the Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and ICT. The Committee reports to Trust Board.

Equality action plans/measures

- 7 Within the 2024-25 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:
- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|------------------|----|----------------------|---|
| Actions completed: | 3 | Actions ongoing: | 26 | Actions to commence: | 1 |
|--------------------|---|------------------|----|----------------------|---|

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

Plan examples provided in Appendix 1 - Equality Action Plan.

- 8 **Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2024-25 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):**

Detailed update provided in Appendix 1

- 9 **In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2024-25 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
- ☒ 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

- 11 Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2024-25 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:**

Consultation on Transformation of General Surgery Services

The Trust recognises the importance of proper and timely consultation as an integral part of fulfilling its Section 75 obligations when making decisions and planning services. For all public consultations, the details are sent out to over 1129 individuals, groups and organisation on the Trust's Consultation Database. Consultation documents are available on the Trust's website and the consultation document is available in alternative formats. Following consultation, a detailed consultation feedback report is drafted and time is taken to consider all the responses. All of those who provided feedback and participated in the consultation process are informed of how their feedback influenced the final decisions.

On the 23rd of August 2024, the Trust commenced a public consultation on Transforming General Surgery services provision. The consultation closed on the 29th of November 2024. The Trust extended the length of the consultation given that the new information system, Encompass, went live during the consultation period. The consultation was an opportunity for members of the public and interested parties to comment on our proposal and to share ideas, knowledge or experiences to help inform and shape the final proposal to be implemented.

The Trust used several different methods of engagement, detailed below, to encourage interested groups and individuals to provide feedback. To raise awareness of the consultation process the consultation documents were publicised through the Trust's regional consultation list, made up of organisations and representative groups and, in addition, through local groups and organisations including service user and carer groups. Consultation documents were made available to the public on all the Trusts websites. The Trust made all attempts to ensure the consultation was easy to understand. Plans were available in British and Irish Sign Language and Easy Read format and other formats on request.

An online proforma, hosted on Citizen Space, was available to complete. The Trust is mindful that to engage through Citizen Space individuals need to have access to a suitable device, broadband, and knowledge to complete an online proforma. In recognition that some people may prefer to respond in a different way, responses were welcomed in other formats including hard copies of written or typed responses, sent in by post, or email, by means of face-to-face meetings and responses provided over the telephone.

The Trust held three in person consultation listening events across the Trust areas, a total of 140 individuals attended these events. Mindful that online engagement has the power to reach new audiences the Trust also held a virtual listening event, which was attended by 29 participants.

Participation was enabled through accessible facilities and communication support. Communication support was also available at the online listening event. Participants had the opportunity to view the proposal documents and to provide feedback.

During the formal consultation period 1415 detailed responses were received. These responses, along with feedback from listening events, have been collated into key themes. Our Trust Board have considered this report at their public meeting. This report is available on all Trust websites and all individuals and organisations we have engaged with and those listed on the consultation database have been notified.

Consultation on Quality Strategy

This year the Trust launched its first Quality Strategy which sets out strategic priorities to deliver high quality care over the next three years. Throughout the development of this strategy the Trust engaged extensively with service users, carers, partner organisations and staff. In April 2024 the Trust engaged with over 600 key stakeholders who shared what matters to them and what the Trust need to do to continuously improve. Members of the Trust Engagement Advisory Board were instrumental in shaping the strategy.

Staff feedback included that service users should feel valued and heard, set clear expectations and involve service users and staff in all decisions around service delivery. There was a clear sense that the Trust need to design our services with service users' needs in mind, and ensure that lived experiences influence how the Trust plan and deliver services for the community. In July and August 2024, the Trust held follow up engagement sessions with stakeholders on the draft Quality Strategy, and in September 2024 the Strategy was launched.

Integrated Involvement Plan 2022-2025

The Trust also recognises the importance of better engagement with affected and interested parties to develop shared decision-making. The Trust's Integrated Involvement Plan details examples of good practice in targeted engagement/ involvement in decision-making.

12 In the 2024-25 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were most frequently used by consultees: (tick all that apply)

- ☒ Face to face meetings
- ☒ Focus groups – via zoom
- ☒ 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) CitizenSpace surveys

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:

Please refer to Trust's Involvement Annual Report (2024/25).

Involvement Network

The Involvement Network has continued to grow, and there is currently a membership of over 300 service users, carers and representative groups spanning Section 75 categories, who work in partnership with the Trust to develop HSC services. The Network is a key resource to help shape and design services and contribute to the development of service information. Over the last year, members have received 63 involvement opportunities and 375 members have attended more than 35 engagement events. Service users and carers have helped to shape and develop a number of service improvements. The Trust continue to advertise membership of the Involvement Network through our website and regularly on social media. In addition, the Involvement team regularly attend networking events to promote the network.

Engagement Advisory Board

The Engagement Advisory Board continues to ensure the Trust approaches engagement in a way that meets the needs and interests of all communities, with a focus on targeting the hardest to reach groups. Members of the Engagement Advisory Board include service users and carers, selected following an expression of interest process, to represent the local community. Each member has demonstrated links with local communities and are representative of the Section 75 categories. We have recently recruited 4 new members, selected following an expression of interest process, to represent the local community. During 2024/25, the Engagement Advisory Board continued to meet quarterly and members have been involved in the development of the Trust Quality Strategy. They have also provided pre-engagement advice on the General Surgery consultation and the piloting of body worn cameras within the Emergency Department consultation.

Care Opinion

Care Opinion is an online platform where patients, relatives and carers can anonymously share their experience about their services. It provides insight into what is working well and what the Trust could improve on to make our services better for everyone. Over the past year Care Opinion has published 1102 stories of experience of healthcare shared by patients, service users, their families and carers.

Involvement Human Library

This year the Trust piloted an Involvement Human Library assurance process. This process identified four projects submitted through the monitoring submission to attend a human library style event with the Public Health Agency (PHA) to talk further about their project. The process has been developed to capture learning and celebrate involvement and the positive contributions it makes. This monitoring process was completed with service user involvement which enhanced it. A task and finish group was established with service users, to reflect and review the process and to make improvements to it going

forward into 2025. Projects were featured on the regional Engage website to highlight positive examples of service user involvement and share best practice across the region.

Update on 10,000 More Voices Projects

The 10,000 More Voices survey is a patient and client experience initiative led by the PHA. Its primary goal is to gather in-depth feedback from individuals who have used health and social care services, including patients, families, carers, and staff. By collecting personal stories, the programme aims to understand the impact of healthcare experiences and identify areas for improvement. Unlike traditional surveys, the 10,000 More Voices programme employs Sensemaker, a narrative-based software that captures and analyses personal accounts to uncover themes and insights within complex healthcare contexts. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of individual experiences, moving beyond quantitative data to understand the nuances of patients and client perspectives.

Shared Decision Making

Shared Decision-Making (SDM) is a collaborative process where healthcare professionals and patients work together to make decisions about treatment options. It involves discussing the available choices, considering the patient's preferences, values, and circumstances, and reaching a decision that aligns with the patient's needs and desires. Shared Decision Making empowers patients to be active participants in their healthcare, promoting better outcomes and satisfaction.

As part of the Trust's ongoing work on the Shared Decision Making Project, members of the Involvement Team sit on the Trust Steering Group, to oversee its development and implementation. Following successful recruitment, three service users are being supported to participate in the group, ensuring that their perspectives are central to the project's progress and decision making process.

Service User Panels

The Trust has established and supported a number of Service User Panels in partnership with service users, carers and the community and voluntary sector. These partnerships ensure an effective network for ongoing stakeholder involvement and co-production in our work. Our Carer Pathway Steering Group and Disability Consultation Panel are both user-led, chaired by a carer and service user.

Support and Resources

Having the best health and wellbeing for everyone in our communities can only be achieved by putting people at the heart of the Trust's work. For effective involvement, people need to feel supported, and for their contribution to be valued, respected and have an impact. The Trust is committed to ensuring that our staff have the skills and expertise to involve service users and carers effectively by providing specialist training and ongoing support.

Service users and carers are given the opportunity to receive induction training which provides information around the statutory duty of Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) and the support they can receive when becoming involved with the Trust.

There are a range of resources available to raise awareness of service user involvement on our Staffnet site and our website. This includes information for service users and carers on how to share their experiences and get involved. Engage is a regional website, which provides those with an interest in involvement, including health and social care staff, service users, carers and the public, with information, opportunities and resources in PPI, Co-Production and Partnership Working.

- 13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2024-25 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

During the reporting period, the following activities supported awareness raising of Equality Scheme commitments among consultees.

- Dissemination of Section 75 Annual Progress Report
- Equality Newsletter disseminated to all consultees
- "Equality Matters" section of Trust's Annual Report
- Staff training programme
- All engagement exercises
- Section 75 screening reports published
- Ongoing guidance and briefings to senior management and Trust Board
- Equality section on Trust internet and intranet
- Our Facebook page and Twitter account circulates opportunities for involvement to over 35,000 people.

- 14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

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

The consultation list is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

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

181

- 16 Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2024-25:**

Comprehensive Section 75 equality screenings have been completed and published, on the policies implemented by the Trust up to the end of the reporting period, March 2025.

The Trust also carried out two significant consultation processes during 2024-25; the transformation of General Surgery Services and the Pilot of the Use of Body Worn Cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital.

The Trust also participated in the regional consultation process led by the Public Health Agency (PHA) in respect of the new Health and Social Care NI Involvement and Consultation Scheme.

0	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
2	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
1	Consultations for an EQIA alone (regional consultation led by PHA).

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

Consultation: Transformation of General Surgery Services

The Trust held a public consultation on proposals for a reconfiguration of its General Surgery service between the 23rd of August and the 29th of November 2024. The preferred option related to centralising emergency and major colorectal surgery in Antrim, and high volume elective surgery in Causeway.

The Trust used several different methods of engagement to encourage interested groups and individuals to provide feedback. This included in-person and virtual listening events, hosted by independent facilitators and attended by 169 participants, staff engagement events were held both before, and during, the consultation. The sessions were attended by a total of 93 staff members. Engagement also took place with Trade Union colleagues.

The consultation information was sent to the Regional Consultee list, made up of 445 organisations and representative groups as well as 684 local groups and organisations including all of the Trust's service user and carer groups, along with the Trust's Involvement Network. The Trust sent information about the consultation and listening events to all local MLAs, MPs, Councils and GPs. The consultation was posted on the home page of the Trust's website, along with our internal staff intranet site and on social media.

An online proforma, hosted on Citizen Space, was also available to complete. 1,415 responses were received and the majority of respondents were not in support of the case for change. The consultation gave the Trust a deeper understanding of where the challenges with delivering the proposed transformation will be and provided the Trust with an opportunity to deliberately address these challenges. A number of mitigations were identified in order that the Trust can ensure that any proposed

transformation meets its intended aims and contributes to improved accessibility and service delivery.

Piloting Body Worn Cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital

The Trust held a public consultation on proposals for a pilot of body worn cameras for 14 weeks between the 23rd of January and the 1st of May 2025. The aim of the pilot relates to patient safety enhancement and reduction of the number of incidences of violence and aggression towards healthcare staff.

The Trust used several different methods of engagement including virtual and in person listening events, circulation to the regional consultation list, publicity on the Trust website, social media and posters which were placed around the Emergency Department.

An online proforma, hosted on Citizen Space, was available to complete. Staff engagement meetings were also held along with engagement with Trade Union Staff.

114 responses were received during the consultation period, the majority of these responses were supportive of the proposal to use Body Worn Cameras. As part of this consultation the Trust has considered any implications around equality, human rights, data protection and privacy in relation to the use of body-worn cameras in an acute healthcare setting. The cameras worn by staff will not always be recording. Under the proposals, they will only be used to capture footage should a situation escalate, and staff are obliged to tell a patient that they are being recorded. During the pilot, signage will be placed in the Emergency Department to make patients and visitors aware.

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

Please provide any details and examples:

Transformation of General Surgery Services

The majority of those who responded to the General Surgery services consultation were not in support of the proposals. Please refer to 11 above.

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 2024-25 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Consultation outcome reports published for Transformation of General Surgery Services and for the pilot of Body Worn Cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital.

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 2024-25 reporting period? (tick one box only)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No, already taken place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No, scheduled to take place at a later date | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |

Please provide any details:

Ethnic Monitoring of Service Users continues in a number of information systems including Child Health System, SOS CARE and NIMATS.

The Trust completes an Article 55 Review Report every three years, which involves gathering and analysing to inform the completion of the review.

The Trust continues to monitor the staff across the 9 equality categories. The monitoring of staff is enhanced by the self-service function of the Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence System (HRPTS). This information is used for screening purposes and helps to identify specific issues that need to be addressed to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity and 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.

The Encompass programme is an HSC-wide initiative that introduces a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland. This roll out of Encompass allows service users to access their own information and use the system to communicate with their HSC team, view test results and manage appointments.

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

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
|------------------------------|--|---|

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2024-25 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

The Trust's policy development process ensures that all policies are subject to monitor and review.

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:

The Trust has launched a campaign to help improve the quality of staff information across the equality groups promoting both a self-service and a manual option to update details. This information is used for screening purposes and helps to identify specific issues that need to be addressed to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity.

It is envisaged that the recent implementation of Encompass will greatly enhance and streamline HSC records and systems, which will in turn help us capture better quality and consistent section 75 information for our service users.

The Trust reports to the ECNI annually on community background and gender data under the Fair Employment and Treatment regulations and uses the monitoring data to help promote equality of opportunity.

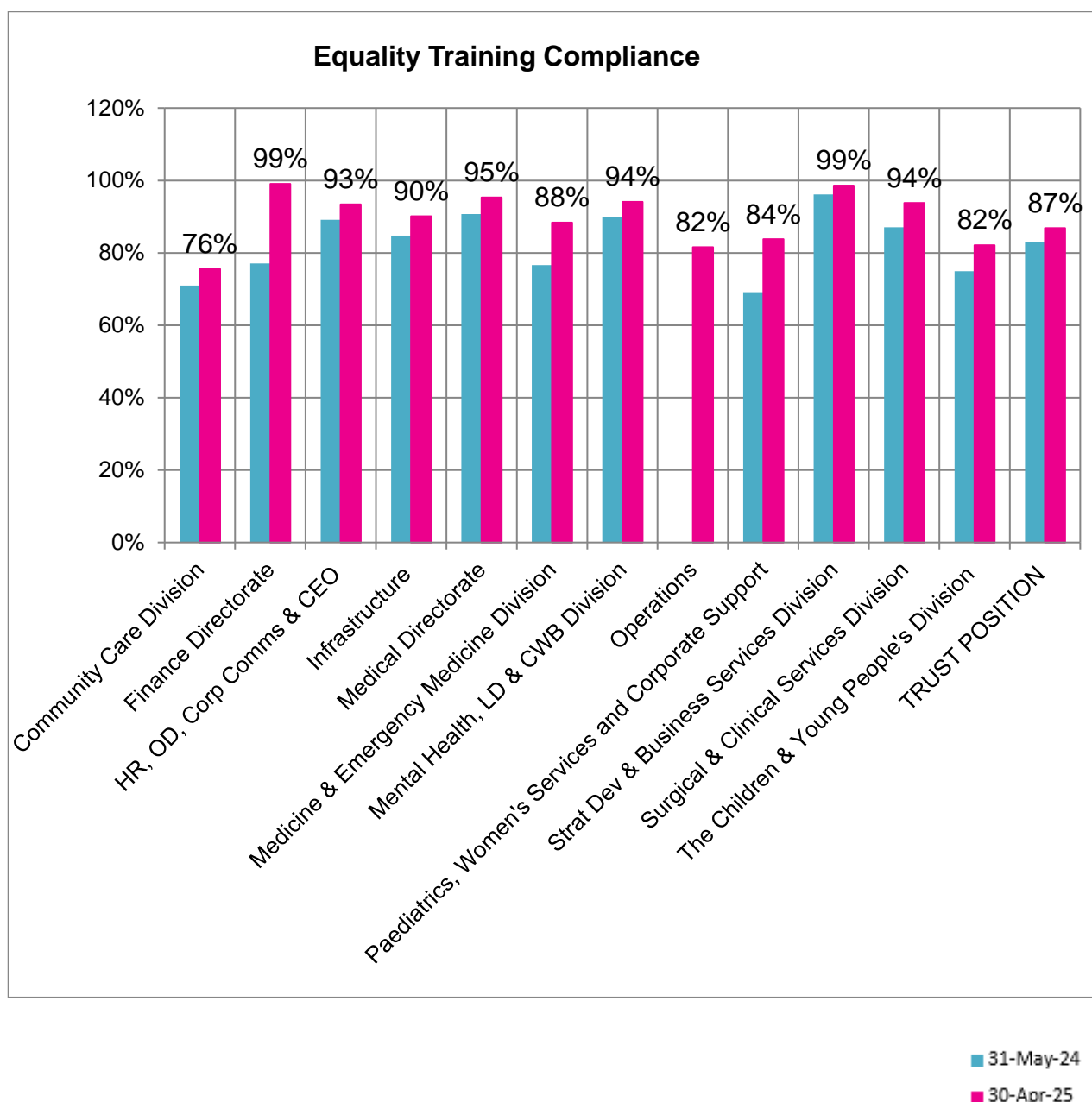
Census 2021, and the analysis of information collected, has positively contributed to the data used for service delivery planning, policy development and section 75 equality screenings.

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 2024-25, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The Equality Unit continued to provide advice and support on equality duties to Trust staff/project leads.

Equality training is mandatory and must be completed by all staff every three years. Uptake is monitored twice each year. The table below details compliance across all of the Trust Divisions and the overall position within the Trust for the year 2024-25; 87% of staff members have participated in equality training.



During 2024-2025 the following numbers of staff have attended or accessed training.

Equality and Human Rights e-Learning	4649
Dissemination of Equality Training Manual	341
Disability Equality Training Video	4033

Equality training is included in the Trust's Corporate Welcome Statutory Mandatory Training, rebranded as Team North in January 2024, and 575 attended from 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025.

The Trust delivers clinics to managers on a variety of employment equality matters including Disability and Managing Reasonable Adjustments, Flexible Working, Managing Attendance and Recruitment and Selection.

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
- Making Communication Accessible for all
- Screening Guidance
- Easy Way to EQIA
- Disability Equality training video

During the reporting period, 22 members of staff received Working Well with Interpreters training, which provides staff with a good knowledge and understanding of the interpreting service and the dangers of using untrained interpreters. In addition, 125 staff members attended the BSO “How to book interpreters” training course.

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:

The “My Journey” project was developed just over 3 years ago to support services to find a different way to provide information and educate patients via their care pathway in the Northern Trust, in the form of videos, podcasts and webinars. The project enables service users to have access to help and guidance in digital form when they are on the waiting list or in between appointments, and to self-manage their condition when at home, on public transport or even on holiday.

This year service users have contributed by telling their stories in the Continence Services Podcast “The Continence Challenge - Helping you regain control” to help service users and the general public manage their continence issues. The podcast covering the stories of two service users are available at <https://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/continence-service/>

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

26 Please list any examples of where monitoring during 2024-25, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation to access to information and services:

The Trust continually assesses the information provided in alternative formats and continues to extend its library of translated material during the reporting period. This is available on Staffnet and the Internet for both staff and service users. Guidance and information leaflets in a range of different languages is available on the Trust website.

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 on request to help patients and clients and staff to communicate when using services.

The monitoring of interpreting usage ensures the Trust can provide its information in the main languages. 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. Face to face, interpreters are then available for more complex or sensitive appointments.

During the reporting period, the top 20 languages supported in the Northern Trust area were as follows.

Language	Number of bookings
1. Polish	4649
2. Romanian	2686
3. Arabic	2114
4. Bulgarian	836
5. Slovak	637
6. Czech	598
7. Portuguese	527
8. Lithuanian	475
9. Russian	363
10. Ukranian	359
11. Tetum	311
12. Mandarin	237
13. Cantonese	222
14. Hungarian	200
15. Somali	175
16. Turkish	124
17. Urdu	120
18. Latvian	110
19. Tigrinya	89
20. Farsi	78

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.

During 2024/25 the NIHSCIS:

- Processed 127,252 requests
- Achieved 96.26% provision rate
- 25 new Interpreters were trained/registered between the 1st of April 2024 and the 31st of March 2025 - languages include: Arabic, Bengali, Dari, Farsi, Hungarian, Malayan, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu/Punjabi
- Top 5 NHSCT Languages: Polish, Romanian, Arabic, Bulgarian and Slovak

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2024-25

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome: N/A

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

Next review of the Equality Scheme is due in 2028/29.

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 focus of the next reporting period will be the adoption and implementation of the Good Relations Strategy.

The Trust has also agreed an accessible template for equality screening with the Equality Commission NI and it is planned to roll this out across the Trust during 2025/26, along with associated training, to aid completion.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next 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):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

1	20	1
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

We will work with disabled people and representative groups to enhance the profile and accessibility of the regional Disability Action Plan to ensure that the legislation and disabled people's rights are easier to understand.

Disability Action Plan, including easy to understand and signed versions on Trust website and shared with Disability Consultation Panel and consultees.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-	-
Regional ^{iv}	All consultations are inclusive, targeted and use appropriate methods to ensure participation of a wide range of disabled people.	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.	We will ensure that Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy makers.

		Trusts use a variety of methods for consultation to ensure they are inclusive and information is available in alternative formats throughout the process.	
Local ^v	Disability Consultation Panel.	The Trust regularly consults with disability consultation panel members to support staff to make informed decisions in relation to the experience of people with disabilities accessing and using Trust services.	Ongoing partnership working to influence the planning and delivery of Trust services.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: 'Making a Difference' Programme has been rolled out across the Trust.	<p>Compliance monitored.</p> <p>Every Trust staff member must complete the Statutory Mandatory Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Training.</p> <p>The training is part of the mandatory training matrix and all staff must complete this training every three years.</p> <p>As part of the Team North Welcome event, Equality and HR highlight the various EDI initiatives and training.</p>	<p>During the reporting period, the Equality team provided advice and support to staff as and when required.</p> <p>HSC Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Staff training manual also available as a useful reference guide or for training use by staff who do not have access to computers on a day to day basis.</p>

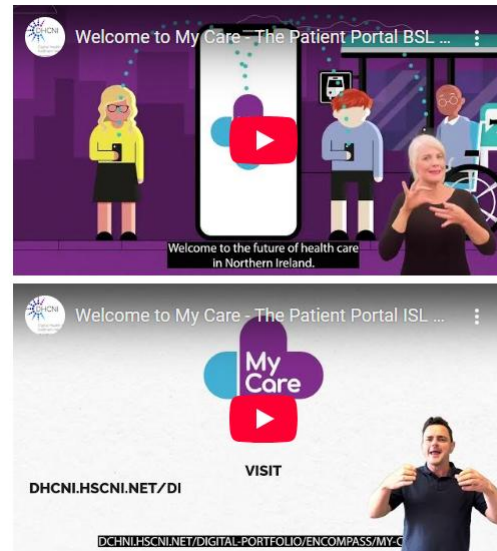
2	Staff awareness and understanding of the Regional Interpreting service.	Trust staff have access to BSO training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working well with Interpreters Interpreting online booking system 'How to book' 	Improved staff awareness of the barriers people face when English is not their first language, and enable staff to provide the required support.
3	Access to Oliver Magowan Training.	Online access to Oliver Magowan Training for all Trust staff.	Ensures staff have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability.
4	Staff awareness and understanding of neurodiversity.	A workplace neurodiversity group established to identify barriers and develop supports to assist staff and managers.	An opportunity for Trust staff to hear someone else's story to deepen understanding of neurodiversity.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Improved communication for difficult information.	The Trust has a contract to translate information to easy-to-understand formats.	This promotes overall better communication especially with an improved understanding of difficult information. This format also supports individuals to make informed choices and be more independent in terms of their health care.
2		The Trust has access to inclusive technology and literacy, such as	The software available to all our staff who require support. It is

	Communication support for online information	Read&Write, Dragon text to speech, Zoomtext etc to support staff. Staff requirements are supported through the HR and IT Department.	particularly supportive to staff who have difficulties with reading and writing online e.g. neurodiverse staff, staff with a visual impairment, staff whose first language is not English and staff with anxiety.
3	Supporting staff to provide more accessible communication.	Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit available for staff on Staffnet. Various online resources available for staff under the Equality Unit section on Staffnet, including the regional resource 'Making Communication Accessible for All' – providing staff with knowledge on how to communicate more effectively with people who have a disability or communication support need.	Equality Unit staff provide ongoing advice and support to staff to ensure communication is accessible.
4	Video support for Sign Language users to access electronic health care records through MyCare App.	British Deaf Association (BDA) produced videos, available on the Trust intranet and on the external website. <u>My Care - your patient portal - Northern Health and Social Care Trust</u> It is also on the Trust sharepoint <u>My Care - Available Resources</u>	Enhanced accessibility to individual health care records via the MyCare app.

Image 1: BDA produced support videos



2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Making a Difference Training - Mandatory Equality Training.	<p>The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme is mandatory and compliance is monitored.</p> <p>New staff complete mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training as part of their Induction.</p> <p>Training must be completed every three years and is part of the mandatory training matrix.</p>	<p>Ongoing promotion of Disability Equality Training and associated training resources.</p> <p>Equality Unit team provide advice and support on a daily basis to enhance staff awareness and encourage staff to address the needs of all individuals.</p> <p>Human Rights Training – application of the FREDA principles.</p>

2	<p>Supportive resources and toolkits available.</p>	<p>Resources and toolkits available to promote and support reasonable adjustments and to provide more accessible communication.</p> <p>Video support for Sign Language users to access electronic health care records through MyCare App.</p> <p>The delivery of a range of HR Clinics during the year to support staff and managers. A key theme since the development of our Reasonable Adjustment Plan is raising awareness through these clinics on disability equality and the reasonable adjustment duty in the workplace.</p>	<p>Improve staff awareness and ensure staff have the right skills and knowledge to support people with a disability.</p>
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3	<p>Availability of Involvement opportunities.</p>	<p>Ongoing participation through Involvement Network. Members are regularly invited to take part in a wide range of activities, including service improvements projects, training, and co-production initiatives. The Trust holds a consultation database of over 1100 people/organisations.</p> <p>Engagement Advisory Board, made up of carers and service users, are a board of service users who provide guidance to trust staff on effective public engagement. The Board is chaired by a service user. Currently introducing members of the EAB to sit on Trust Board to ensure lived experience informs decision-making at the highest level.</p> <p>Trust <u>Involvement Plan</u> provides a structured framework to ensure regular, accessible, and meaningful opportunities are available to service users and stakeholders. It outlines clear objectives, actions, and methods for engagement, helping us coordinate activities across the Trust and widen participation.</p>	<p>This year, we shared over 63 opportunities with the network. We have provided training for service users, equipping them with the skills and confidence to take part meaningfully in discussions, planning, and decision-making process.</p> <p>In the past year, we've consulted not only with service users but with a wide range of stakeholders, including, community and voluntary sector groups, advocacy organisations, MLA.s and political representatives. These engagements have informed strategic planning, service design, and policy development. For example, the Transformation of General Surgery Services, and the pilot of body worn cameras in the Emergency Department, Antrim Area Hospital.</p> <p>This year the Engagement Advisory Board have been involved in many opportunities, including help shape the Trust Corporate Plan, Quality Strategy and engagement regarding the Vision for Causeway. The Board</p>
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			<p>also provided pre-engagement advice on the General Surgery Consultation and the consultation of the pilot of Body Worn cameras in the Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital.</p> <p>In the last 12 months, 101 involvement projects have taken place. These included a range of methods and levels of involvement. An example of impact involved introducing new service design or quality improvements.</p>
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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Support to those with neurodiversity.	Please refer to Appendix 2 (DAP).	

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Ongoing promotion of 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.	The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme – which includes disability equality training - is mandatory for all HSC Staff. The Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights training manual is available online, as a resource to compliment the training and to act as an aide memoire for staff. The Northern Trust Disability Consultation Panel co-produced and co-delivered a Disability Equality Training video. The video is disability led, highlighting various disability equality issues including language, etiquette and customer care. View video here	Increased visibility of disabled people and disabled staff, including those with hidden disability.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
2	Mark and celebrate allocated disability –	Ongoing promotion and celebration of special	Increased staff awareness of disability equality.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

	related days to raise awareness at a local and regional level.	<p>dates. In March 2025, to celebrate Sign Language Week, introduction of hearing support lanyards. The lanyards can be used as a discreet signal to staff that the wearer is d/Deaf, hard of hearing or a lip reader, and that they may need additional support. In December 2024 as part of our celebrations of International Day of Persons with Disabilities we launched a Reasonable Adjustment Plan to support employees with a disability or long-term health condition in the workplace. The plan had been developed in December 2023 and piloted across the Trust during 2024. The Plan will be incorporated into the new HSC Attendance Policy which will be launched later this year.</p>		
3	Review staff training programmes and ensure that training is co-produced, reflects lived experience and	<p>Training available for all staff on Learn HSCNI.</p> <p>Delivery of a range of HR Clinics during the year to support staff and</p>	Increased awareness of disability duties.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

	includes information on disability equality and the disability duties and promotes the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.	managers. A key theme since the development of the Reasonable Adjustment Plan is raising awareness through these clinics on disability equality and the reasonable adjustment duty in the workplace.		
4	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.	<p>Information from Trusts is available in alternative formats.</p> <p>The Trust regularly work in partnership with service users, carers and local community to promote inclusive engagement, build trust, and ensure that lived experience informs decision making.</p> <p>Regular meetings take place with the Engagement Advisory Board and the Disability Consultation Panel.</p> <p>The Trust Involvement Team actively promote service user involvement and Care Opinion with staff and service users.</p>	Increased awareness of Trust Involvement Teams and involvement opportunities with disabled people and representative groups.	<p>Development of a specific database of disabled people and hard to reach groups / organisations and determine the best way for them to be involved.</p> <p>Increased usage of the involvement section on the Trust website and the Public Health Agency (PHA) “Engage” website and sharing of links with disabled people and representative organisations.</p>

		Consultee database reviewed and updated annually.		
5	Work in partnership with relevant key organisations and individuals to identify advocacy services.	Connect North developed and published a publicly available online directory of services. The need for which was clearly outlined during multiple engagement sessions with service users, carers and service providers. The Directory includes key advocacy services and organisations.	Increase awareness of support available.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan, as requires annual review.
6	Work with representatives from the Regional Disabled People's Forum on disability equality issues.	Equality Lead representative attended annual meeting with members of Regional Disabled People's Forum - December 2024.	Partnership working and support of co-production on disability equality issues.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
7	Review the membership of our user forums, and where necessary work to increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations.	Following successful recruitment for new members, the Disability Consultation Panel recruited 3 new members and 4 new members were recruited for the Engagement Advisory Board. These partnerships ensure an effective network for ongoing stakeholder	Increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations to guide decision making.	Ongoing through the lifetime of the plan, as requires regular review. Support available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement Strategy • Involvement Network • Involvement training • Staff Guide to Involvement resource

		involvement and co-production in our work.		
8	Ensure all consultations are inclusive, targeted and use appropriate methods to ensure participation of a wide range of disabled people.	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 e.g. ensured changing places are available, various consultation methods are used including face to face, online meetings etc.	Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy makers.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
9	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.	<p>Regular staff communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Deaf Awareness posters highlighted and reissued.</p>	<p>Regional consistency and equity of access to communication support for people who are d/Deaf or have hearing loss.</p> <p>Improved access to communication support for people who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing.</p> <p>Increased awareness of HSC staff of need to provide communication support.</p> <p>Reduction in complaints about lack of communication support available/provided.</p>	<p>British Deaf Association (BDA) videos disseminated via staff broadcast.</p> <p>Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.</p>

		<p>Equality Lead reps attended SPPG meeting (Dec 24) with Trust IT reps, Sign Language provider to discuss issues and concerns.</p> <p>Sign Language Week 2025 - introduction of hearing support lanyards, providing a discreet signal to staff that the wearer is d/Deaf, hard of hearing or a lip reader, and that they may need additional support.</p> <p>In March 2025, staff survey issued to seek feedback from staff in relation to using Sign Language Interactions.</p>		
10	Scope the availability of Changing Places and new facilities will be added in accordance with legislation.	Trust Equality Lead continue to liaise with Estates/ Strategic Capital Development teams.	Improved access to HSC services for disabled people.	Scoping of all facilities not completed.
11	Co-produce guidance for staff on how to effectively engage with disabled people in decision making processes.	Guidance is co-produced with members of the Trust Disability Consultation Panel.	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.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

	These guidelines will provide practical information to support staff to address the barriers to meaningfully involvement.		Improved participation of disabled people in health and social care decisions.	
12	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.	A Task and Finish Group is being established to co-produce a masterclass. Format and content to be discussed and agreed at the next meeting of the Disability Consultation Panel in September 25.	Effective participation and influence of disabled people and representative organisations.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
13	Review staff Disability Equality Policy in line with best practice to ensure it remains fit for purpose and relevant.	Disability Equality Policy and Reasonable Adjustment Toolkit reviewed during 2024 by the regional working group.	Update policy to ensure appropriate and effective.	Currently awaiting final sign off by the regional joint negotiating committee. Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
14	Engage with disabled staff to ensure they have a voice and influence the support we provide.	This will be progressed at a regional level and local implementation.		Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

15	Work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to review our employability schemes and placement schemes to enhance employment opportunities.	Work ongoing regionally with BSO Recruitment Shared Services to improve accessibility and signposting to disabled applicants.	Improved opportunities and availability of our employability and placement schemes.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
16	Work to reduce barriers to recruitment in health and social care for disabled people.	<p>Work ongoing regionally with BSO Recruitment Shared Services to improve accessibility and signposting to disabled applicants.</p> <p>A workplace neurodiversity group established in May 2025 to identify barriers and develop supports to assist staff and managers.</p>	<p>Barriers to recruitment in health and social care identified in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations.</p> <p>Development of actions, in line with the legislative provisions and supported by equality data, to improve access to employment for disabled people.</p>	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
17	Provide an alternative way for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs until the current HSC jobs website is replaced by the new system.	<p>A Guide has been produced regionally re accessibility for the HSCRecruit website. Applications are accepted in alternative formats.</p> <p>Community and Voluntary groups and applicants can liaise with HR staff.</p>	<p>Alternative Method for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs available.</p> <p>Better communication with disabled applicants who require adjustments or support with their application.</p>	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

		Reasonable adjustments in place.		
18	Work towards Disability Positive Accreditation for all Trusts.	To be progressed.	Increased awareness among disabled people of HSC jobs available.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
19	Continue to work with ENCOMPASS to ensure that the communication support needs of service users are captured.	Continue to work with Encompass and monitor service user feedback.	Improved communication and access to services.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.
20	Support the involvement of disabled people and representative organisations in the roll out of Encompass.	Engagement process with disabled people in the roll out of Encompass.	Increased awareness of accessibility challenges with encompass and improved influence over decisions.	Action ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Review and update Disability Toolkit	The Disability Toolkit is not due to be reviewed until 2025/26

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

- Ongoing engagement and forums with disabled people and carers

(b) Quantitative

- n/a

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

The Trust may review Oliver McGowan training to ensure it reflects NI HSC.

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

No, not at this point.

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

**Inside this
issue**



Equality News

Equality Unit
Team

Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion

Involvement

Carer Support

Training

Interpreting and
Translations



Welcome

Welcome to the twelfth edition of our Equality Newsletter. We are delighted to share with you news of the great work that is ongoing across the Trust to ensure our services are welcoming, person-centred and accessible for everyone. We hope you enjoy reading about what we have been working on during 2024/2025 and a special thanks to our service users, carers, communities and our staff for their role in supporting us to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do.

Kelly McBride
Head of Equality

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a foundation stone of our #team NORTH culture and the Trust is committed to working together to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all staff regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, community background, religious belief, political opinion, race, disability, dependent status and marital or civil partnership status.

Michelle Morris
Senior Human Resources Manager



Meet The Team

Equality Team



**Jillian Smyth,
Equality Officer**

Involvement Team



**Veronica
Meenan,
Engagement
Manager**



**Lynda Elliott,
Involvement Co-ordinator**



**Sarah Arthur,
Patient Client Experience Facilitator**



**Jan Taylor,
Administrative Officer**

Carer Hub



**Claire Campbell,
Carer Co-ordinator**



**Louise Feeney,
Carer Support Worker**

Disability Consultation Panel



The Trust's Disability Consultation Panel is a disability led, user advisory group, that works in partnership with the Trust to support, and guide the planning, and delivery of Trust services. Panel members include Trust staff, representatives from the community and voluntary sector, and people who have lived experiences of disability, who can provide the Trust with feedback and insights into issues they face.

Following a recent recruitment drive, we have successfully recruited new panel members and we are excited to see the fresh perspective and expertise that our new panel members will bring.

We are looking forward to a productive future with our expanded panel.



Equality Screening and Rural Needs



Northern Trust is one of the largest geographical Trusts in Northern Ireland, providing health and social care services to a population of approximately 479,000 people. The Trust area spans four Council areas and over 40% of Northern Trust's residents live in rural areas.

The population profile indicates that the Trust has the largest older population and the largest child population, when compared to other Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

To ensure the needs of people in rural areas are considered when designing and delivering services, the Equality Unit provide advice and support to Trust staff with equality screenings.

During 2024/25, we held **101** one to one clinics to support staff on Section 75 Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessments relating to specific policies, projects and services.



Further advice and staff resources, including our Screening and Rural Needs Toolkits, are available on [Staffnet](#)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



The Trust is committed to maintaining a safe and positive working environment for ethnically diverse staff and the elimination of racial discrimination for employees and patients. We recognise that, in order for every individual to reach their full potential, there must be no fear of discrimination or prejudice and a belief that career opportunities or experience of work is not predetermined by ethnicity, nationality or colour.

In August 2024, the new Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion strategy was launched. The three year strategy sets out a series of actions that aim to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our staff with a strong emphasis on the need to embrace a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion.



Good Relations Week

In September, the Trust celebrated Good Relations Week, the annual celebration of the work that goes on all year round to build peace and good community relations - this year's theme is '*embracing Oppor**UNITY**, a call to action to create a brighter, inclusive future for all.*' We took the opportunity to highlight our support for this campaign as a reminder of the importance of working together to help build a stronger shared society and to support the breaking down of barriers to create a positive future for everyone.

As a public authority, we have been promoting good relations as part of our duty as an employer and service provider since its inception under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

We are proud of our staff's commitment to Good Relations, supporting the Trust to ensure everyone is treated fairly with respect and dignity across all of our services and in all of our facilities.

Regional Good Relations Statement



Working together we will promote good relations between people of different race, religion or political opinion

This means that we:

- Will actively address and challenge racism and sectarianism in all its forms
- Will treat each other fairly, with respect and dignity
- Will make sure our spaces are shared, welcoming and safe.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



LGBTQ+ Equality

In 2024, the Trust was proud to support Pride, attending both the Belfast and Portrush events. During the summer months, we also hosted and participated in a number of events across Trust sites to promote LGBTQ+ equality awareness to highlight the variety of resources and support available to all staff including the HSC staff forum.

Race Equality

In February 2025, the Trust celebrated the **Race Equality Week**, focussing on addressing barriers to race equality in the workplace. The theme was #ListenActChange, highlighting the importance of bringing everyone together to focus on listening to the challenges people may face, taking action to drive change and to make a positive difference.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

"Progress" Development Programme for Ethnically Diverse Staff



The Trust supported the second year of this regional programme that recognises the low numbers of ethnically diverse staff availing of development programmes through the HSC Leadership Centre. The programme was piloted in 2023 with successful programmes completed in 2024 and early 2025. A further programme is planned to commence in September 2025.

Civil Unrest - Summer 2024

We worked with PSNI and other stakeholders to develop supports for staff during the time of civil unrest in the Antrim area. Owen Harkin, Deputy Chief Executive and Chair of EDI Steering Group, and Stephanie Greenwood, Trade Union Side Chair issued a video statement condemning the attacks and signposting staff to this support. EDI Steering Group members facilitated drop-in clinics across Antrim, Causeway and Ballymena sites.

Cultural Competency Framework



Regional Health and Social Care colleagues worked collaboratively to develop a Cultural Competency Framework to help reduce inequalities in health experienced by ethnic minority populations and patient groups across the region.



Mike Nesbitt, Health Minister attended the launch to hear from the Trusts who presented on areas of best practice and to discuss the importance of this work with staff and service users.

The new regional framework will help health and social care staff to improve their confidence and competence in engaging with and providing services to people from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds. The framework, which is underpinned by staff training and resources, including the 'Little Book of Cultural Competence', is designed to promote equity and also enhance patient care.

Human Rights Training

Staff Guidance 'A Human Rights Based Approach in HSC

On Human Rights Day, the 10th of December 2024, the Trust launched the new regional Human Rights staff training animation.



Working collaboratively with regional colleagues we developed a training animation with accompanying guidance, which takes you through each one of the five FREDA principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care.

The animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach, based on the FREDA principles.

FREDA stands for *Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy*.

Both training resources are available for staff to view on Staffnet and have been shared widely across the Trust.

Let's work together to ensure the human rights of our patients, service users, carers and staff are protected, promoted and supported.

Mental Health Seminar



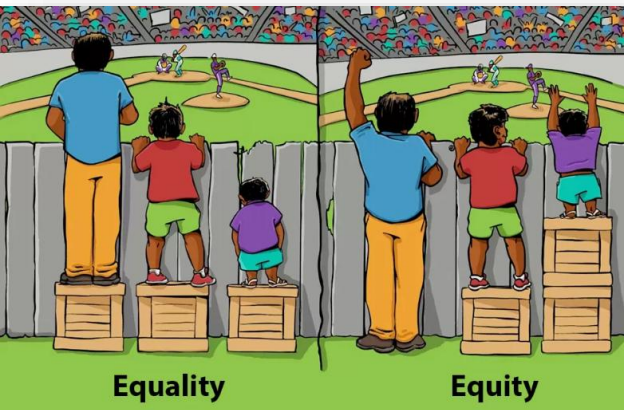
Northern Health
and Social Care Trust



Stronger
Together



In May 2024, the Trust held a Mental Health Seminar '*addressing health inequalities*' in partnership with Inter-Ethnic Forum and Stronger Together for our ethnically diverse communities.



Keynote speakers included Selena Ramsey, Trust Health and Wellbeing Manager, and Deborah Mullan, Counsellor and Psychotherapist from 'Tree and Tide' along with colleagues from the Northern Area Community Partnership, Inter Ethnic Forum / Stronger Together, who shared knowledge on their various roles and ongoing vital work within the Mental Health field.



The seminar was well attended and provided participants with information on early intervention and prevention in relation to Mental Health, mindfulness and the emotional benefits of nature.



Oliver McGowan Training on Learning Disability and Autism



The Oliver McGowan Training on Learning Disability and Autism is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for Health and Social Care (HSC) staff to have better training. The training is aimed to help save lives by ensuring the HSC workforce have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability. The training is available for all HSC staff, with two tiers, depending on the job role.

The training will educate and train HSC staff, at the right level for their role, to provide better health and social care outcomes for people with a learning disability and autistic people. The Oliver McGowan training is the government's preferred and recommended training programme and is now available on LearnHSCNI for health and social care staff.

All Trust staff can access the Oliver McGowan Training (part 1) on Learning Disability and Autism via LearnHSCNI.





AccessAble

Your Accessibility Guide



The Trust and AccessAble have been in partnership since 2020, providing detailed accessibility information to patients, visitors and staff, ensuring that everyone can navigate Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital with ease and confidence. There is ongoing collaboration to ensure the guides are up to date, including providing facts, figures and photographs to help people plan their journeys to and around the hospital, covering everything from parking facilities and hearing loops, to walking distances and accessible entrances and toilets.

Following some recent development work, full-screen size images are now available on the AccessAble website, along with 360 images including accessible toilets, accessible bathrooms and Changing Places. AccessAble have been focusing on updating the existing Guides for Causeway Hospital to enhance user experience and work is in progress for the same in Antrim Area Hospital.

This is a valuable tool for our patients and visitors.

In the last 12 months, 28,807 people have used Northern Trust's Access Guides.

[View the Detailed Access Guides for the Trust here](#)

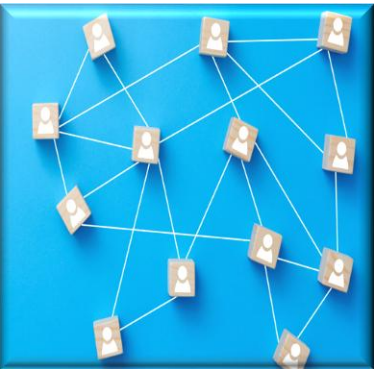
Interpreting and Translations

During 2024/2025 the Northern Trust made a total of **15,541** requests for interpreters through the Northern Ireland Regional Health and Social Care Interpreting Service. The top three languages requested during the year were **Polish, Romanian and Arabic**.



Trust staff have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and understanding of the BSO HSCNI Interpreting Service and learn of the dangers of using untrained interpreters or family members.

During 2024/25, 22 staff attended 'Working Well with Interpreters Training' and 125 staff attended the BSO Interpreting 'How to Book' training session – both available via LearnHSCNI.



During 2024/2025, the Northern Trust processed a total of 213 translations. The top languages were **Polish, Arabic, Bulgarian and Romanian**.



Are you deaf aware?

**Deaf
Awareness
Week**
5th – 11th May 2025

During 2025, to highlight the impact of hearing loss on everyday life and to increase visibility and inclusion of d/Deaf people we celebrated Sign Language and Deaf Awareness Week, including the announcement of hearing support lanyards. This initiative aims to improve communication and provide greater support for individuals who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or who lip read, when accessing our services.

The idea for the lanyards was sparked by feedback from a patient who described the communication challenges they have faced while in hospital. We contacted them to tell them about the concept and they said, *“I am delighted with the introduction of the lanyards, it will hopefully prompt staff to establish my preferred method of communication. I hope this will be of benefit to others.”*

For more details or to request a lanyard, please contact the Equality Unit on equality.unit@northerntrust.hscni.net



**Staff member
Sarah Cochrane
wearing her
lanyard.**



Sign Language Interpreting



During 2024/2025, **935** Trust appointments were supported with sign language interpreters through **Sign Language Interactions**.

Sign Language Interactions (SLI), provide face to face and remote sign language interpreting services to people who are d/Deaf, d/Deaf-blind and hard of hearing using health and social care services.



All Health and Social Care staff can book a sign language interpreter directly with Sign Language Interactions.

Service users can text Sign Language Interactions on 07520 645 246 to check an interpreter has been booked.

The service is free for service users and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including out of hours.

BOOKING A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER**Staff Notice**

A Sign Language Interpreter **must** be organised by Trust staff for any Deaf service user, patient or carer that uses British or Irish Sign Language. This is a **legal duty**.

Using an interpreter assists with **informed consent, privacy** and reducing **missed appointments**. Please **do not** ask family or friends to interpret.

Registered Interpreters can be booked to interpret face-to-face or remote/online.

Face-to-Face Interpreter

This means the interpreter attends the appointment to support better communication. Such Interpreters should be used if preferred and for complex/difficult conversations.

To Book:

- ✓ **Telephone:**
0333 344 7712 (available 24/7)
- ✓ **E-mail:**
bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com
- ✓ **Web:**
signlanguageinteractions.com/hscni

Remember!

- ✓ Pre-book an interpreter, as early as possible, as there are a limited numbers available.
- ✓ Tell the Deaf person that an interpreter has been booked.
- ✓ To avoid costs always cancel a booking if not needed.
- ✓ To contact a Deaf person either text, email or phone 0333 344 6012 (BSL user) 0333 305 1143 (ISL user)

Online/Remote Interpreter

This means the interpreter is online or on the telephone and is **only** used if face-to-face is not possible.

To Access:

- ✓ **Log** into the 'HSC_Guest' Wi-Fi & accept the T&Cs
- ✓ **Scan** the QR Code below & select either British or Irish Sign Language

Remember!

- ✓ Close all other websites/apps on your device.
- ✓ If connection is poor, turn off & retry!
- ✓ Limit movement as this can upset connectivity.
- ✓ Make sure your device has a camera and a microphone

Scan here to
access an
online/remote
interpreter

**SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING**

British Sign Language (BSL) & Irish Sign Language (ISL)

**Health & Social Care professionals,
make sure you book an interpreter
for appointments with Deaf people**

Face-to-Face / In-Person

Emergency Departments (ED), Appointments,
Clinics, GP Surgery, Assessments... etc.

Online / Remote

On-demand, Pre-booked
Remember to use HSCT Wi-Fi for best results

AVAILABLE 24/7

One Number - One Email - One Form

Telephone: 0333 344 7712

Email: bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com

Webform: signlanguageinteractions.com/hscni

**It is the responsibility of Trust
staff to book a Sign Language
Interpreter, if required.**

Deaf Awareness Posters



People who are Deaf, have hearing loss or communication support needs rely heavily on visual clues for effective communication, including body language, facial expression and lip reading.

Not everyone's communication needs are the same. If you don't know, ask them how best you can communicate with them.

Top Tips on how to be Deaf aware



Speak in a well lit environment.



Ensure minimal background noise and get their attention before you speak.



Face the person making eye contact, speak clearly. Avoid moving and turning.



Speak clearly, not too slow or too fast. Don't shout. Use clear, plain language. Repeat / rephrase when necessary.



Give important information in writing and provide a Sign Language Interpreter if required.

Be Patient! A person with hearing loss will know what works for them, let them help and guide you.







Do you know your Assistance Dog Etiquette?







Assistance Dogs need to concentrate on their job to keep their owner safe. If you break that concentration, you could be putting the dog and its owner in serious danger!

Please respect Assistance Dogs and their owners by following this simple etiquette guide

DO ✓

-  Speak to the owner first, not the dog.
-  Allow the dog to work without distraction.
-  Respect that the dog is working.
-  Allow the dog to rest undisturbed.
-  Let the dog owner know if the dog approaches you as this may be unwanted behaviour that needs correcting.

DO NOT ✗

-  Approach, touch or speak to the dog without the owner's permission as this can be a distraction.
-  Offer the dog food.
-  Allow other pets to interact with the dog.
-  Be offended if the owner does not want to answer questions or says no when you ask to pet the dog – they may be in a hurry to get somewhere.



If you think a handler needs help, remember to ask before acting!

Accessible Communication

The Trust continues to promote best practice advice and guidance to ensure everyone understands the information they are given about their health and care. We know that some people need information in a different format, or help to communicate. For example, in large print, braille, easy read or by email. There are a range of different disabilities that need to be considered when making information accessible.



The guide Making Communication Accessible for All provides advice to help staff communicate more effectively with people who may have a disability or communication need. The guidance is available on our website and Staffnet and we continue to highlight the importance of accessible communication during training.

Remember everyone has different needs and their needs can change. Always ask people for their required information formats and their communication needs. Don't forget to review these on a regular basis.

By making the small effort to become better at communicating, you will make a big difference to the lives of people with communication difficulties.

Carer Support

According to the 2021 Census, there are 17,500 carers under the age of 25 in Northern Ireland, however Carers NI estimate that number is much closer to 30,000. Many young carers aren't identified as or don't see themselves as carers and miss out receiving the help and support they need. **If you are a young person who cares for others or you are worried about a young carer, please get in touch with Barnardo's Young Carers service on 028 79 631344.**



If you would like to know more about what supports are available throughout the year, please contact the Carer Hub.

The Hub is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on 02827661210 or via email at Carer.Hub@northerntrust.hscni.net

Carer Support



In August 2024, a group of Young Carer Champions from Barnardo's NI met with Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt at Stormont, to discuss the legislation changes they would like to see implemented in Northern Ireland, to ensure young carers here have access to the same support and resources as their peers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said, *"I was delighted to meet the young carers and I commend the incredible dedication and resilience they demonstrate every day. Their commitment to supporting loved ones is inspiring, and it is important that they have their voices heard and their needs addressed. I understand that the lack of specific legislation for young carers in Northern Ireland is a concern. My Department will actively explore how we can strengthen support for young carers. There is still work to be done, but I want to be clear that the wellbeing of young carers is a priority for me and my Department."*

Involvement Network



The Involvement Network is made up of service users, carers and representative organisations who work in partnership with the Trust to develop health and social care services. The Network is a key resource to help shape and design services, and contribute to the development of service information. Over the year our Involvement Network have been busy, members have received **63 involvement opportunities and 375 members**

have taken part in more than 35 engagement events. In November, we carried out a survey with our members to hear about their experience of being involved, helping us identify any barriers that our service users/carers are experiencing, and to hear of any training needs that may be required.

What happens when you become a member?

We may be in contact with you to help us plan and review services or when we are thinking about developing support information, such as leaflets or service user information packs. We will ask for your input on the content, layout, colours and advice on accessibility and format. You will also receive information via email about support available in the local area and any upcoming training opportunities.



Join the Network

If you would like more information or to become a member of our Involvement Network, please contact

Email: InvolvingYou@northerntrust.hscni.net or **Telephone:** (028) 2766 1377

Service User Involvement



Service User Involvement Training

The Trust is committed to providing training to make sure staff have the skills and expertise to involve service users and carers effectively. This year a total of **924** staff members took part in our involvement training programme. To build capacity, we also provide advice clinics to support staff on how to involve service users and carers. This year we provided **30** advice clinics.

What has been happening

This year we had **101** involvement activities take place throughout our Divisions. Our service users have been involved in the co-design of the Macmillan Information and Support Centre. Members of the MEM Service User Engagement Panel have co-produced a patient information leaflet for the Discharge Lounge. Service users and carers have also been involved with the 'My Journey' Project, which support services find a different way to provide information and education to patients via their care pathway in Northern Trust, in the form of videos, podcasts and webinars.

Engagement Advisory Board

The Engagement Advisory Board (EAB) ensure that the Trust is approaching engagement in a way that meets the needs and interests of all communities, with a focus on targeting the most hard to reach groups. We have recently recruited 4 new members to represent the communities we serve. This year members have helped us shape the Trust Corporate Plan, Quality Strategy and engagement regarding the Vision for Causeway. They have also provided pre-engagement advice on the General Surgery Consultation and piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department Consultation.



The EAB members became Community Connectors with Connect North

Care Opinion is an online platform where patients, relatives and carers can anonymously share their experience of our health or care services. All feedback helps us to make things better for everyone – we like to know what is working well and what we can improve on.

Over the past year, Care Opinion has published **1102 stories** relating to healthcare experience within Northern Trust, shared by patients, service users, their families and carers.

[Tell Your Story](#)

Care Opinion offers a safe and simple way to share your story online and see other people's stories too. You can see how stories are leading to change. Working together, we can all help make care better.



Staff Training Available



The Equality Unit provide a range of training and resources to help staff develop their knowledge and skills to ensure everyone is treated with respect and dignity, service users and carers are involved in their care and service improvements. Below are some examples of staff training available.

Equality Matters:

- Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights 'Making a difference' E-Learning
- Disability Equality Training online video
- Working Well with Interpreters Training

Involvement:

- Involving Service Users, Carers and Communities
- Engage and Involve E-Learning Programme
- Citizen Space Training
- Facilitation Training
- Care Opinion Responder Training
- Appreciative Inquiry Training

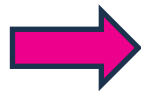
Carer Hub:

- Carer Assessment Training

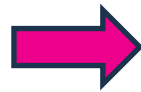
**Promoting
Equality**

Additional resources are available on Staffnet.

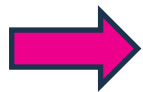
For any queries, please contact equality.unit@northeastrntrust.hscni.net



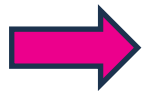
Good Relations Week: w/c 13 October 2025



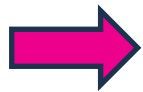
World Quality Day: 13 November 2025



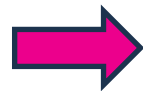
Carers Rights Day: 21 November 2025



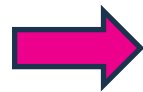
International Day of Persons with Disabilities: 3 December 2025



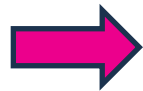
Human Rights Day: 10 December 2025



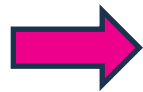
Race Equality Week: w/c 5 February 2026



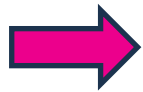
Sign Language Week: March 2026 (exact dates to be confirmed)



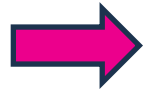
Deaf Awareness Week: w/c 4 May 2026



Carers Week: June 2026 (exact dates to be confirmed)



Learning Disability Week: w/c 15 June 2026



LGBT Pride Month – June 2026

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to read our Equality Newsletter and a special thank you to all the service users, patients, carers and staff who worked with us this year.

If you have any queries, suggestions or issues related to this newsletter or the work that we do, please contact the Equality Unit on the details below.

Phone: (028) 2766 1377

Email: equality.unit@northerntrust.hscni.net

Text: 078 2566 7154

Web: www.northerntrust.hscni.net





Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Email: raise@education-ni.gov.uk

5 September 2025

Dear Stakeholder,

RAISE PROGRAMME UPDATE – PUBLICATION OF RAISE STRATEGIC AREA PLANS AND CALL FOR LOCALITY LED PROJECTS

I am writing to provide you with an update on the RAISE Programme and to draw your attention to the publication of some important information.

Today I am delighted to advise that the RAISE Strategic Area Plans for all 18 localities have been published and are available on the Department of Education's website. I would like to acknowledge the significant work of the Locality Reference Groups in developing these plans.

We have updated the RAISE area of the Department of Education's website - [RAISE programme | Department of Education](#) and each of the plans, along with a range of other information, can be found here. The website now contains different areas including one for RAISE localities where each locality has an individual page. [RAISE Localities | Department of Education](#)

Alongside the publication of the RAISE Strategic Area Plans, the first call for Locality Led Projects is also now live.

To propose a Locality Led Project organisations will be required to complete a Locality Led Project Identification Template. The *RAISE Locality Led Projects – Identification of RAISE Locality Led Projects and RAISE Locality Led Project Identification Template Guidance Notes* document is available [here](#).

Project proposals are invited from organisations with experience of successful working in the locality, schools serving those pupils who live within a RAISE locality or area identified within the locality's Strategic Area Plan (excluding independent and preparatory schools), early years providers, colleges and appropriately constituted community groups and

voluntary organisations. Examples of which include Associations, Trusts, Companies limited by Guarantee, Community Interest Companies, Charitable Incorporated Organisations or Industrial and Provident Societies. Proposals from Churches will also be considered.

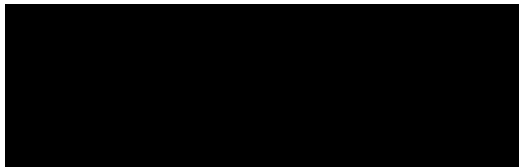
As one of the key objectives of the RAISE Programme is raising aspirations through a whole community approach to education, collaborative/ consortium proposals will also be welcomed.

All project applications must be submitted via the online platform **by 2.00pm on 30 September 2025**. Late applications will not be accepted.

I would be grateful if you could share this information with your networks.

The RAISE Team and I look forward to continuing to work with you as we move forward with this next phase of the Programme.

Yours sincerely,



CLAIRE MCCLELLAND
RAISE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR