

Policy Code: BHSCT/HR (14) 2025
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Title:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy		
Policy Author(s)	Samantha Whann, Senior HR Managers Samantha.Whann@belfasttrust.hscni.net		
Responsible Director:	Gillian Somerville, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development		
Policy Type:	Regional Policy		
Does this policy have Workforce implications? Y		Date: 02 May 2024	
Approval process:	Policy & External Guidance Assurance Committee Executive Team Meeting	Approval date:	04/03/2025 11/03/2025
Operational Date:	October 2025	Review Date:	October 2025
Version No.	5	Supercedes	V4 August 2018 – August 2023
Key Words:	Equality, Diversity, Equality Opportunities, Discrimination		
Links to other policies	Harmonious Working Environment Policy Conflict Bullying & Harassment Policy Disability Equality Policy Work Life Balance Policy Gender Identity & Expression Policy Observing & Celebrating of Events Policy		

1.0 INTRODUCTION / SUMMARY OF POLICY

1.1 Background

The policy outlines the Trust's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within the workplace and aims to promote equality and prevent unlawful discrimination. It sets out how the policy will be managed, communicated, implemented and monitored

1.2 Objectives

There must be no discrimination, victimisation or harassment against any applicant, potential applicant or employee on grounds of their age, dependent status, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), marital/civil partnership status, political opinion, race, religious belief, community background and sexual orientation

2.0 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all staff and covers recruitment, promotion, training, transfer, and other benefits and facilities including conduct at work related events.

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Director of Human Resources is responsible for monitoring, co-ordinating and developing the policy under the direction of the Chief Executive.

3.2 Managers at all levels will ensure that staff for whom they are responsible are aware of and abide by this policy.

All staff employed by the Trust have a responsibility to accept their personal involvement in the application of this policy.

4.0 KEY POLICY PRINCIPLES

4.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and advice to staff and managers on the promotion and implementation of Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

This policy recognises the Trust's diverse workforce and is concerned with the promotion of equality of opportunity and the prevention of unlawful discrimination. The policy applies to all staff and covers recruitment, promotion, training, transfer, and other benefits and facilities including conduct at work related events. Managers and Supervisors must be seen to be impartial in dealing with staff and ensure their conduct at all times accords with this policy. All employees are bound by this policy.

4.2 See Appendix 1: Regional Policy Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

5.1 Dissemination

5.1.1 This policy should be disseminated throughout the Trust as it applies to all Belfast Trust staff.

5.2 Resources

5.2.1 Training on this policy will be provided via Mandatory Equality Training Sessions. Details of training events are available on the Loop or you can complete the training online via [LearnHSCNI | Sign in](#).

5.3 Exceptions

5.3.1 There are no exceptions as this policy is applicable to all staff within the Belfast Trust.

6.0 MONITORING

6.1 The HR Department will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

7.0 EVIDENCE BASE/REFERENCES

This policy complies with legislative requirements and good practice.

8.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

External and Internal groups and Trade Unions were consulted.

9.0 NURSING AND MIDWIFERY STUDENTS

Nursing and/or Midwifery students on pre-registration education programmes, approved under relevant 2018/2019 NMC education standards, must be given the opportunity to have experience of and become proficient in and aware of equality, diversity and inclusion where required by the student's programme. This experience must be under the appropriate supervision of a registered nurse, registered midwife or registered health and social care professional who is adequately experienced in this skill and who will be accountable for determining the required level of direct or indirect supervision and responsible for signing/countersigning documentation.

Direct and indirect supervision

- Direct supervision means that the supervising registered nurse, registered midwife or registered health and social care professional is actually present and works alongside the student when they are undertaking a delegated role or activity.

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- Indirect supervision occurs when the registered nurse, registered midwife or registered health and social care professional does not directly observe the student undertaking a delegated role or activity. (NIPEC, 2020)

This policy has been developed in accordance with the above statement.

Wording within this section must not be removed.

10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 2 Overview of Anti-Discrimination Legislation, Definitions and Time Limits for Complaints.

11.0 EQUALITY SCREENING

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Trust has a legal responsibility to undertake an equality screening of all policies. To fulfil this duty an equality screening template must be completed by the policy author.

To complete an equality screening use this template: (LINK)

For support with completion of the template go to: **Equality Screening Toolkit**

In line with duties under the equality legislation (Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998), Targeting Social Need Initiative, Disability discrimination and the Human Rights Act 1998, an initial screening exercise to ascertain if this policy should be subject to a full impact assessment has been carried out.

The outcome of the Equality screening for this policy is:

No impact.

For any queries and/or to obtain approval contact the Planning and Equality Team contact: equalityscreenings@belfasttrust.hscni.net or 028 95 048734

Equality Screenings are public documents and previously completed documents can be viewed at [Equality and Human Rights Screening | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust \(hscni.net\)](#)

12.0 STATUTORY RURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT DUTIES

The Trust has a legal responsibility to have '**due regard**' to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, and when designing and delivering public services. For more information go to [Rural Needs Duties](#)

To satisfy this '**due regard duty**' Trust staff must consider the impact of any policy, proposal or decision on the social and economic needs of people who live in a rural

community. For Belfast Trust, this is particularly so when the policy/proposal/decision impacts regional services.

Please tick the box to indicate that you have paid 'due regard' to the social and economic needs of the rural community when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services and that a rural impact assessment is not required.

OR

Please complete a Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template if there is an impact on the social and economic needs of people who live in a rural community.

Please go to the: Rural Impact Assessments Toolkit for HSC NI to find out how to undertake a rural impact assessment.

Contact Estella.Dorrian@belfasttrust.hscni.net for further advice

Wording within this section must not be removed.

13. STATUTORY EQUALITY DUTIES – MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) the Trust has a statutory duty to **make reasonable adjustments** in respect of disabled patients/service users/carers/visitors. This includes making all communication (in person, by phone, via email) *and* any information provided (in writing, verbally) accessible using alternative formats. The aim of the reasonable adjustment duty is to reduce or remove any barrier a person with a disability faces when accessing or using goods, facilities and services. This is a non-delegable duty.

Accessible/ Alternative formats can include, for example, information translated into Easy Read format or into Audio format - when a patient/service user/carer/visitor has a learning disability or is visually impaired.

In addition, if a patient/service user/carer/visitor does not speak English as their first language or has poor English, the Trust has a statutory duty **to provide an interpreter** and to **translate written information**. This facilitates informed consent, better understanding and greater independence.

For information, advice and guidance about these duties contact the Trust Planning and Equality Team equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Please tick the box to indicate that you have developed the policy in accordance with the Trust's legal equality duties and that all staff will make reasonable adjustments and information accessible as appropriate.

SIGNATORIES



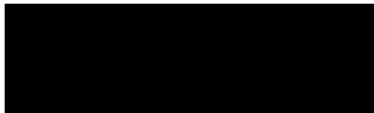
Date: 4th April 2025

Gillian Somerville
Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development



Date: 4th April 2025

Maureen Edwards
Interim Chief Executive



Samantha Whann
Policy Author

Date: 13 October 2025

Appendix 1:

1.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

1.1 General Policy Statement

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to creating and sustaining an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of its staff and service users. The Trust aims to be truly representative of the community it serves and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Trust is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity for all employees regardless of gender including gender identity and expression¹, religious belief, political opinion, marital, civil partnership or family status, race, age, sexual orientation, disability and whether or not they have dependants. Selection for employment and advancement will be on the basis of ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work.

1.2 Purpose

This policy is concerned with the promotion of equality of opportunity and the prevention of unlawful discrimination. However, the existence of the law cannot itself ensure that any policy of non-discrimination will work effectively. The Trust recognise that this will only be achieved if management and staff at all levels examine critically their attitudes to people and ensure that no trace of discrimination is allowed to affect their judgement. The Trust will endeavour to ensure that all staff are aware of the forms which unfair discrimination can take, guard against them and avoid any action which might influence others to discriminate unfairly. The Trust recognises its obligations under the anti-discrimination legislation, The Human Rights Act 1998 and the NI Act 1998.

1.3 The Trust will have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Section 75 Northern Ireland Act (1998). The Trust's Equality Scheme shows how the Trust will fulfil its statutory duties as outlined within the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

1.4 It is the Trust's intention to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of all of the legislation detailed above. The current definitions of discrimination, victimisation and harassment relating to anti-discrimination legislation are

¹ The Trust recognises a range and diversity of gender identity and expression including those who identify as Transgender and those who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. For further information please refer to the Trust's Gender Identity and Expression Policy

contained in Appendix of this policy.

1.5 Scope and Objectives

This policy applies to all staff and covers recruitment, promotion, training, transfer, and other benefits and facilities including conduct at work related events. The Trust will positively promote and rigorously observe the objectives and principles set out in the statement and is committed to implementing policies to promote equality of opportunity and fair participation within the Trust.

- 1.6** There must be no discrimination or victimisation against any applicant, potential applicant or employee on grounds of their gender including gender identity and expression, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation, community background, political opinion, religious belief, race, age, disability, family status or whether or not they have dependants.
- 1.7** Care must be taken to guard against more subtle and unconscious forms of discrimination which may not be immediately obvious. This may result from generalisations about the capabilities, characteristics or interests of particular groups which influence the treatment of individuals or groups e.g. preconceptions about their suitability for a particular post, level of management, location, training course or other development opportunity etc.
- 1.8** There must be no discrimination in the form of harassment of any individual or group. This may constitute unlawful discrimination. **Appendix 1** provides definitions of discrimination, victimisation and harassment as defined under the relevant pieces of employment legislation.
- 1.9** The Trust will promote a supportive, good and harmonious work environment free from material or behaviour likely to be offensive, provocative or intimidating or in any way likely to cause apprehension to any Employee. In accordance with this principle the Harmonious Working Environment Statement/Joint Declaration of Protection has been agreed with the Trade Unions and Staff Organisations and drawn to the attention of all staff. In addition the Trust has established a policy on conflict bullying and harassment and outlined the procedures to be adopted following a complaint.
- 1.10** Managers and Supervisors must be seen to be impartial in dealing with staff and ensure their conduct at all times accords with this policy. They must take appropriate action to deal with any difficulties arising from a lack of impartiality by any member of their staff and any other breaches of this policy within their area of responsibility.
- 1.11** All Employees are bound by this policy to ensure that their behaviour at all times accords with the principles set out in this policy and in the Harmonious

Working Environment Statement/Joint Declaration of Protection. Breaches will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

- 1.12** There must be no discrimination against office holders such as Board members, contract workers, agency and trainee workers, students on work placements or former employees.
- 1.13** The Trust will obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or recruitment agencies that they will comply with this Policy.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Management Arrangements

The Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development is responsible for monitoring, co-ordinating and developing the policy under the direction of the Chief Executive. Key actions deriving from this employment policy will be co-ordinated through the Trusts' Employment Equality and Diversity Plan. This Plan brings together the employment focused actions of the Trust's statutory Equality Action Plan, Disability Action Plan and Affirmative Action Plan as well as the Trust's Good Relations Strategy.

Managers will ensure that staff for whom they are responsible are aware of and abide by this policy. The policy will be adopted at all levels of management. All staff employed by the Trust have a responsibility to accept their personal involvement in the application of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The Trust will ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

2.2 Communicating the Policy

This policy will be publicised throughout the Trust and will be available to existing staff via the Trust's intranet and drawn to the attention of new recruits

2.3 Monitoring Positive and Affirmative Action

The composition of employees, applicants for employment and appointees will be monitored on the basis of gender, age, religious belief, community background, political opinion, race, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, marital status and dependants. The purpose of regular monitoring is to provide the information required to measure the effectiveness of this policy and provide an objective view on the existence and progress of equality of opportunity. To this end, an information system has been established and staff are encouraged to provide accurate and up-to-date information in line with GDPR and data protection principles.

2.4 Policies and procedures in respect of employment and advancement will be periodically reviewed to maintain a system where individuals are treated solely on the basis of their merits and abilities.

2.5 The Trust will take such positive and affirmative and positive action as is deemed lawful, appropriate and necessary to ensure equality of opportunity. Goals and timetables, where appropriate, will be set to measure progress which can reasonably be expected as a result of affirmative action.

3. RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION

3.1 The Trust will ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are fair and based upon the principle of appointing the best person for the job. Advertisements will not indicate, or appear to indicate an intention to discriminate in selection for recruitment, promotion or training. Advertisements will not be confined unjustifiably to areas or publications, which would exclude

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or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular group. Advertisements will include an Equal Opportunities Statement and a Welcoming Statement.

- 3.2 Opportunities to obtain information on careers in the Trust must be available to existing and potential employees and all interested parties.
- 3.3 Eligibility criteria for recruitment or advancement must be related to ability to do the job and will be non-discriminatory.
- 3.4 Applications must be submitted via HSCNI Jobs (HSCNI Jobs) on official application forms and appointments will be made following a selection process which provides for short-listing and interview panels.
- 3.5 Tests used in selection, recruitment, promotion or training will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are related to job performance and do not unlawfully discriminate. The results of these tests will be monitored in order to identify any issues of concern or patterns which may suggest direct or indirect discrimination.
- 3.6 Staff involved in the selection process should consult the Trust's Recruitment and Selection Procedure and Guidelines. Decisions relating to the selection process and the reasons for such decisions will be recorded at each stage of the selection and promotion process. These will be kept for a minimum of 12 months after appointments have been made.

4. TRAINING

- 4.1 All Trust staff are required to complete Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights training every five years during the course of their employment.
- 4.2 Staff involved in selection and appointment panels will be trained in the Trust's Selection and Appointments Procedure and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy including the current legislation and guidance on avoiding discrimination. This aspect will also be included as appropriate in all management and supervisory development programmes so that those with managerial and supervisory responsibility perform their duties with a full knowledge of the implications of the equality legislation.
- 4.3 All staff will be encouraged to take advantage of the training and career development opportunities available to enable them to develop the necessary skills and provide the opportunity for them to achieve their full potential.

5. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

- 5.1 Personal Performance Review within the Trust will be based solely on an objective assessment of the individual's performance against agreed

objectives which link to the Trust's corporate objectives. Staff will also be developed against the Knowledge and Skills Framework with all staff being required to have a Personal Development Plan (PDP). Reviews must not reflect an assumption or prejudice of the reviewer about the individual being reviewed. This could be discriminatory and as such must not be tolerated

6. WORK LIFE BALANCE

- 6.1 The Trust recognises the importance of flexible working to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to the retention of staff. The Trust Work Life Balance policies and range of support services will be widely promoted across the organisation.

7. COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION

- 7.1 The Trust will treat seriously and take prompt action on any grievance concerning discrimination, harassment, victimisation or maladministration raised under the Grievance Procedure or Harassment Policy as appropriate. Every effort will be made to resolve issues, e.g. mediation, without affecting individual's right to lodge proceedings.
- 7.2 Those who perceive they have been discriminated against may seek help and advice from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Those who feel they have suffered an injustice as a result of maladministration have access to the Commissioner for Complaints. The time limits for making a complaint to various statutory agencies are outlined in the **Appendix 1**.
- 7.3 Staff who make a complaint in respect of alleged discrimination or harassment will be protected from victimisation. Acts of discrimination, victimisation or harassment perpetrated by an employee of the Trust against any other employees will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

8. AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This policy has been agreed by the Trust and, in so doing, the Trust affirms its full support for the principles of equality and diversity and the implementation of the Employment Equality and Diversity Plan. The Trust is determined that everything possible will be done to ensure its full and effective implementation.

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with Trade Unions and Staff Organisations.

The Trust also recognises the support of Trade Unions and Staff Organisations for the principles of equality and diversity and their commitment to the content and implementation of this policy statement.

Appendix

Overview of Equality Legislation:

- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (as amended),
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Orders 1976 and 1988 (as amended)
- Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970 (as amended),
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (as amended),
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended),
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003,
- Employment Equality Age Regulations (NI) 2006,
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998

Definitions:

Direct discrimination occurs where one person treats another person less favourably than others in the same or similar circumstances and the reason for that treatment is based on one of the statutory equality grounds.

Indirect Discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied which has the effect of putting people of a particular protected group at a disadvantage and which cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim.

Harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual/sectarian/racial/disability nature or conduct which is based on gender, age, religious belief, political opinion, race, disability, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, which adversely affects the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct.

Victimisation occurs where one person treats another person less favourably than another person is, or would be, treated because the person has exercised, or sought to exercise, his or her rights under the equality laws, or has assisted another person to do so.

Disability-Related Discrimination occurs where, for a reason related to a disabled person's disability, a person treats the disabled person less favourably than he treats, or would treat, other persons to whom that reason does not apply, and he cannot show that the treatment in question is justified.

Failure to Comply with the Reasonable Adjustment Duty

Disability discrimination in employment can also occur where an employer fails to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments in respect of a disabled job applicant or employee. The reasonable adjustment duty is placed on an employer where a provision, criterion or practice is applied by the employer, or the physical features of the employer's premises places the disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to persons who are not disabled.

Time Limits for Complaints:

If your complaint is about an employment matter, you normally have three months from the date of the incident to register your complaint with the Office of Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunals (OITFET). Please refer to the [NI Direct](#) or [Equality Commission for NI](#) websites for detailed guidance.