



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together

Paper Ref. Num. P153-
2025 A

*Note:- To be completed
by HQ meeting organiser*

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Meeting Template Sheet

Purpose of paper

For Approval

If other purpose please specify

Please enter text here

Meeting TB Public

If other meeting please specify

Please enter text here

Presenter

Alastair Campbell

Enter Other Presenter
Name Here

Date of meeting

7 September 25

Title of paper (Maximum of 300 characters)

Annual Progress Report to Equality Commission for NI with updated Equality and Disability Action Plans.

Background (Maximum of 1500 characters)

This is the Trust's 18th Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission for NI and outlines the extent of work undertaken by Belfast Trust to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The Trust is statutorily required to prepare this report each year to provide assurance to Trust Board and the Commission on how we comply with the requirements in our Equality Scheme. The report also provides the opportunity to showcase how the Trust adopts a pioneering and proactive approach with regard to equality, good relations, human rights and disability.

Date considered at Exec Team (If Applicable)

28th July 2025

Options for consideration (Maximum of 1500 characters)

Please enter text here

Recommendations (Maximum of 1500 Characters)

Trust Board are asked to consider the content of the annual report progress report for onward submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Proposed Onward Consideration

Choose an item.

If other

Note:-

Any papers accompanying this template should not exceed 10 pages in length.

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Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

Please ensure when submitting papers that

- (1) Orientation of paper is set so that the content of the paper can be read**
- (2) Embedded documents should be [provided a separate attachments**
- (3) Append any papers to this coversheet starting on the next page**

Insert/Copy/Paste any additional information from this point



Summary of Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission

This is the 18th Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI) on the Trust's compliance with its statutory duties in regard to Section 75 of the NI Act 1998, its Equality Scheme and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act (NI) 1995 and its Disability Action Plan.

The report highlights compliance with the Trust's Equality Scheme including details on Screening and Equality Impact Assessments, Consultation, Training, Information Provision, Access, Monitoring and Complaints.

Internally, this 18th Annual Progress Report contributes to Trust accountability arrangements. It is an integral part of the Trust Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework for Trust Board and Executive Team members. The report not only identifies how legislative duties are complied with in relation to public sector equality, good relations and disability duties, but it also indicates how the Trust regularly goes beyond compliance to achieve best practice. Being Belfast, we are committed to delivering safe, effective and compassionate care by mainstreaming equality, good relations and disability considerations in all that we do and across all of our functions – service provision, employment and procurement. This summary report is subject to Trust Board's approval on 4th September 2025– subject to which, it will be submitted to the ECNI and made available on the Trust's website.

Regional direction

The summary first outlines the regional priorities provided by Programme for Government and the most recent strategic direction for transformation in [Hospitals- Creating a Network for Better Outcomes](#). It articulates the Trust's commitment to ensuring this transformation is rooted in equality and human rights principles. Working towards, all individuals—regardless of background, location, or personal circumstance—being able to access timely and high-quality care. This is fundamental in addressing health inequalities. The promotion of preventative approaches will improve health outcomes, enhance quality of life, and help alleviate pressure on our Health and Social Care system.

Corporate Plan

In terms of corporate priorities, the Trust is currently developing a new corporate plan, outlining our key goals to provide high-quality health and social care to the people of Northern Ireland. The focus remains on improving the health and well-being of the communities we serve. This plan is directly linked to Northern Ireland's Programme for Government. This plan will help ensure that our work supports the overall vision of a healthier and more equal society. The Trust is committed to improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities in care, and ensuring social inclusion. By working closely with individuals, carers, families, staff and trade unions, local communities, and other organisations, we aim to achieve the shared goal of improving the quality of life for everyone.

Integrated Care System – AIPB

The report goes on to detail the development of the shadow Area Integrated Partnership Board in Belfast, under the new Integrated Care System in NI. This will focus on locality-based collaboration between health and social care providers, local communities, and service users to improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities, and deliver more person-centred care. As part of the implementation of the shadow Belfast AIPB, the Trust welcomed



the provision of a Health Profile of the Belfast population, developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA). This confirmed that health inequalities in Belfast are prevalent and reflect significant disparities in health outcomes, with Belfast being over-represented in both the most and least deprived Super output areas in Northern Ireland.

encompass

Encompass is an HSCNI initiative established to deliver sustainable, long-term digital transformation for health and social care services and part of the [Digital Strategy – DHCNI](#). This was launched on 6th June 2024 in Belfast Trust. Its implementation was subject to a thorough equality screening as was the management of proxy access through the MyCare app. The Trust deems these screenings as live documents which will be reviewed, updated and monitored on an on-going basis every 6 months for a period of 2 years post-implementation. This will enable the Trust to monitor the impact of the proposals to ensure that the impact is not more significant than initially anticipated and that appropriate mitigations are undertaken.

Accountability

The summary paper provides assurance on the robust accountability structures within the Trust to ensure that the work relating to the fulfilment of Section 75 duties and commitment and awareness of the duties is known across the Strategic Leadership Team in the Trust. The Involvement Steering Group is part of the Trust Assurance and Accountability Framework which provides Strategic Leadership, holds to account, unblocks and assists with problem solving, seeks assurance, provides challenge and leadership and escalates risks to appropriate Trust Board Committees. Quarterly reports from a range of committees including those for Disability, Carers, Volunteers, Involvement and Healthy Relations Committees are provided to the Involvement Steering Group chaired by the Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics. The group includes service user and carer representation.

Belfast Trust Disability Committee

Our Disability Committee has been in situ since 2008 and continues to meet on a quarterly each year. The Group is an effective partnership, maximising opportunities for co-production across the Trust and disabled people's representative organisations and disabled people. The group is co-chaired by the Trust's Interim Co Director of Planning and Equality and the Chief Executive of Disability Action. Membership includes representatives from across the Trust, community/voluntary organisations that represent disabled people and people with disabilities. Key objectives of the group include:

- To ensure and promote commitment at a corporate and strategic level working in partnership and collaboratively with disabled people.
- In partnership, to provide leadership, direction and commitment in the development, implementation and evaluation of Trust's Disability Action Plan.
- To provide the necessary support, resources and infrastructure to ensure an integrated and cohesive approach is undertaken in the development, promotion, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a range of initiatives as set out in the Disability Action Plan.
- To equip staff with the relevant skills and knowledge to identify, remove or reduce barriers faced by people with disabilities in terms of accessing services / employment.
- Promote, support and encourage a human rights based approach to service delivery.

Good Relations

Our 3rd generation Good Relations Strategy [Healthy Relations for a Healthy Future 3](#) maps out a clear strategic direction for the Trust in regard to Good Relations. It is based on the three pillars of the regional co-designed Good Relations Statement of:

- Actively addressing and challenging racism and sectarianism
- Treating each other fairly, with respect and dignity
- Making sure our spaces are shared, welcoming and safe.

Implementation and monitoring of the strategy is undertaken by members of the Trust **Healthy Relations Committee**, which comprises representatives from Belfast Trust Planning & Equality, Employment Equality, Community Development, Health Improvement and Chaplaincy teams with representatives from Trade Unions, BHSCT Ethnic Minority Steering Group and the Community Relations Council. The group meets 4 times per year. During Good Relations week in September 2024, the Trust was the first Health Trust to be awarded the prestigious status of Trust of Sanctuary.

Supporting Staff in Response to Racist Attacks during Summer 2024

During the unprecedented events over the summer months, HR worked in partnership with a range of key stakeholders including staff, managers, Psychology Services, Trade Unions, PSNI and NIPEC to implement immediate support and guidance for ethnically diverse staff and their managers affected by a spate of racist, hate crimes. HR worked with managers to co-ordinate immediate, bespoke and holistic support including counselling, transport to work, localised risk assessments and utilisation of our comprehensive suite of Work Life Balance Policy. We held regular briefing sessions with PSNI and affected services working in front line areas affected by civil unrest whereby we enabled support of our front line staff to care for patients and service users. The series of Trust wide drop in events with PSNI afforded our staff the opportunity to share their concerns, have reassurance from Community Police personnel and obtain confidential advice and signposting to a range of services and guidance about personal safety.

Trust Governance and Assurance Framework: [Policy Standards & Guidelines](#)

In terms of policy development, Belfast Trust has developed a range of assurances to ensure that leaders, policy makers and decision makers are aware of our Section 75 and wider equality duties. No policy can be approved at Policy Committee without a completed screening template.

Compliance: The following screening outcome reports were published. In total, 94 screenings were undertaken.

[Equality and Human Rights Screening - Apr to Jun 24](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Screening - July to Sept 24](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Screening- Oct to Dec 24](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Screening - Jan to Mar 25](#)

One Equality Impact assessment and subsequent outcome report on implementation of the closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital were developed and published during this period.

Equality and Disability Action Plans (2024-2029)

The 6 HSC 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. The plans have been developed regionally and the actions therein will be carried out over a 5 year period.

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 to **promote positive attitudes towards disabled people** and to **encourage participation by disabled people in public life**. The Equality & Disability Action Plans have been transcribed into easy read format to ensure maximum accessibility and are located on the Trust website and staff intranet.

An update has been provided in the full report in regard to each of the actions in both the Disability Action Plan and the Equality Action Plan. In regard to the Disability Action Plan, two of the actions are fully achieved whilst 20 are partially achieved and 1 has not been achieved in the reporting period, however this action is still aligned to the specified timeframe within the plan, and due to start in 2026.

5 actions have been completed in the EAP, whilst 21 are ongoing. One has not progressed on advice of DOH in regard to developing best practice guidance for inclusion for people who are LGBTQ+, until an audit is undertaken.

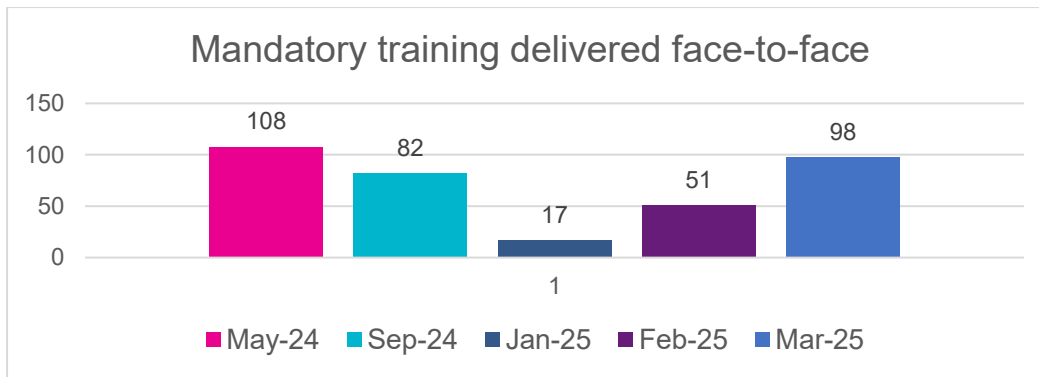
Joint HSC Forum on Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations

The Joint Forum comprising the Equality Leads from each of the 6 HSC Trusts and the Department of Health continued to meet with representatives from the Equality Commission, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and the Community Relations Council. The purpose of it is to provide a regular forum to enhance communication and collaboration between Health and Social Care and the respective Commissions and Council to our mutual benefit and to better optimise outcomes for people covered by the relevant legislation.

Staff Training

The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: 'Making a Difference' Programme has been rolled out across the Trust and compliance is monitored. Staff in Belfast Trust must complete this training every five years and is part of the mandatory training matrix.

5170 staff undertook online mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training during the reporting period, and the Planning and Equality team delivered the following face-to-face sessions.



During the reporting period, Planning & Equality team delivered facilitated online (mandatory equality human rights and good relations, disability awareness, human rights) as part of our HSC Learn portfolio. Bespoke sessions are also delivered when requested.

Accessibility

The full report also provides full detail on the work to promote accessibility for disabled people – including Shopmobility at the Royal, Accessable, the Sighted Guide Scheme and a number of initiatives entitled Every Customer Counts to improve access and experience for disabled people.

Team FREDA

To mark World Human Rights day on 10 December 2024 the Trust produced and shared a new training resource for staff. The short animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach, by ensuring all that we do and say is guided by the human rights FREDA values – **Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity** and **Autonomy**. The Trust is utilising this animation as part of our training programme on Human rights that we deliver to our staff. The [Team FREDA Animation: A human rights approach to healthcare](#) is accompanied by an advice manual. [Guidance for HSC Staff: A HRBA to Services](#).

Celebrating Pride 2024

As a Health and Social Care provider and employer, the Trust is committed to ensuring that its services, facilities and workplace are inclusive and welcoming to everyone equally regardless of who they are or who they love. Belfast Trust delighted in marking Belfast Pride and activities included walks, singing, artwork and attending a festival! The theme this year was **Love Your Mind**. Two lunchtime walks for staff were organised on a number of Trust sites. The Trust shared a recording of QUIRE, a choir with its roots firmly set in the LGBTQ+ community, on the intranet as some of our talented staff are choir members.

Trust Domestic & Sexual Abuse/Violence Supports for Staff

Belfast Trust has in place an extensive range of activities (noted below) to directly and indirectly support staff who may be experiencing domestic and/or sexual abuse/violence. Regrettably Northern Ireland has the highest rate of domestic homicides across all of Europe. The Trust and Trade Unions work together to offer a support service for staff who are experiencing domestic and sexual abuse and/or violence. The confidential support service (accessed via a dedicated email/phone number) involves volunteers (both male and female) from across the Trust completing a training programme involving a range of

organisations including Women's Aid, The Rainbow Project and Nexus, to provide emotional support, practical help and to signpost to other sources of help internally (HR) and externally (Women's Aid One Stop Shop & 24 Hour Helpline). During this reporting period, training was provided for new support officers from Nexus and Women's Aid.

The full report also provides detail on other support provided to staff – in terms of those who have caring responsibilities, those who are ethnically diverse, those who are disabled, those who are ageing and further measures to improve health and wellbeing. The Trust achieved accreditation as a Disability Confident Employer with the UK Government (Department of Work and Pensions) sponsored scheme for employers.

In the report, the Trust is asked to provide detail on how it assess S75 compliance:

- **Mainstreaming**

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 Trust's Involvement Group reports directly to the Trust's Assurance and Improvement Group, which reports through the Executive Team to Trust Board. All Annual Progress Reports and EQIAs and Equality screening reports are passed through these mechanisms to provide assurance. S75 duties are mainstreamed within the Trust. The Trust's Planning and Equality Team provides staff with the information, training and resources to support staff to have the appropriate level of knowledge, expertise and skill to mainstream S75 duties. The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme is mandatory and compliance is monitored twice each year.

- **Assurance**

The Trust prepares and submits an annual progress report to the ECNI and this is featured in the Trust's own Annual Report. The Annual Progress Report is supported by "Equality Bites" Newsletter to ensure updates available in a more accessible format. Belfast Trust produces 2 bi-annual bulletins - Equality Bites Newsletter and Good Relations Bulletin. Both proactively disseminated to all staff and approximately 600 on Section 75 consultee list. They are available on the Belfast Trust website [Publications | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website \(hscni.net\)](https://www.belfast-trust.nhs.uk/publications). In the reporting period 2024/2025 **4 bulletins** were drafted, promoted and disseminated.

- **Consultation**

The Trust ensures compliance and best practice in regard to consultation by reviewing and updating its consultee list reviewed and updated regularly. Trust Board received a specific session on consultation responsibilities session for Trust Board was delivered by the Directorate of Legal Services during this reporting period. Co-production webinars are promoted throughout Divisions to develop capacity in partnership working and collaboration. The Trust continues to work regionally to ensure consistency on when to consult.

During the reporting period, the Trust screened 94 policies and proposals including 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) outcome report completed during reporting period. This related to Belfast Trust Implementation Plan to close Muckamore Abbey Hospital. The associated consultation recognised the importance of engaging and involving people with significant lived experience, and the scope focussed on how to implement the closure of

Muckamore Abbey Hospital, through resettlement of the patients and management of staff in the best way for all concerned.

- **Monitoring**

The Trust continues to monitor staff by Section 75 categories. This has been enhanced by HRPTS. Self-Service functions and by continually asking staff to update / provide this data.

During the reporting period, this monitoring information was assessed for S75 screenings.

- **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 NI.

Information is provided in alternative formats on request

Ongoing provision of communication support (verbally and in writing) facilitated through contracts with:

- o NIHSC Interpreting Service
- o The Big Word Telephone Service
- o Sign Language Interactions
- o Regional Communication Support Service (RCSS)
- o Flex
- o Sign Language Interactions (contract managed by SPPG)
- The Trust's website has been designed to ensure accessibility.

The newly drafted Disability and Equality Action plans have been transcribed into easyread and also signed in British and Irish Sign language.

Read&write is available to all staff. It is Assistive Technology software that provides supports staff with regard to reading and writing online. It has 14 features which not only beneficial staff who are neuro-diverse, are visually impaired, find concentration difficult due to anxiety etc. The software delivers benefits for service users who require information in audio format, whose first language is not English or who prefer easy read format.

The Trust is asked to provide 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:

- Monitoring of the Implementation of encompass and the management of MyCare App resulted in the development of several encompass resources to enable Deaf service users to access YouTube information guides on using the My Care platform.

The British Deaf Association (BDA) has been working closely with encompass over the last year to translate encompass resources to enable Deaf service users to access YouTube information guides on using the My Care platform.

With encompass now launched across all Trusts, Belfast Trust's Planning & Equality team is encouraging staff to be aware of these resources to help inform patients and service users who use British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language to log-in and use My Care

- o Welcome to My Care - The Patient Portal BSL Version
- o Welcome to My Care - The Patient Portal ISL Version
- o How to Log In to The Patient Portal - My Care ISL Version
- o How to Log In to The Patient Portal - My Care BSL Version
- o My Care - How your data is managed ISL Version
- o My Care - How your data is managed BSL Version

Belfast Trust has an annual contract with TILII Translates to translate information into 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.

Additional guidance added to Trust website relating to the renovation work within BCH site's car parks, including information and advice for those visitors requiring accessible spaces.

Complaints

In regard to Section 75 complaints, the Trust did not receive any Section 75 complaints during this reporting period. The Trust Complaints Team ensure that the Planning and Equality Team have sight of any complaints which allege discrimination to provide advice or recommendations to the service group. Equality of access to information will feature significantly going forward in the new Model Complaints Handling Process and this will be welcomed.

Looking forward

Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review: **2028**

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

- Screening, Consultation (relating to e.g. Body Worn Cameras and on any reconfiguration of services), training and access to information

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):
 - Transgender access following Supreme Court ruling in 2025

- Potential for age discrimination to be extended to outside of employment
- Any potential reconfiguration of services

