PART A

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2025 - 2026

This report presents progress in relation to our statutory Equality, Good Relations and Disability Duties and in relation to our Equality Scheme, our five-year Equality and Disability Action Plans and our Good Relations Strategy commitments.

• Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme • Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	Name:Orla Barron: Interim Co-Director: Planning & Equality Telephone: 028 9504 6567 Email: orla.barron@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at	Publications | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website (hscni.net)
Signature:	

Committed to inclusion and reducing/removing barriers to communication this report is available in alternative formats on request.



PART A

Introduction

This is the **19th Annual Progress Report** prepared by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) for submission to the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (ECNI).

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 19th Annual Progress Report contributes to BHSCT 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 by Belfast Trust in relation to public sector equality, good relations and disability duties, but it also indicates how Belfast Trust regularly goes beyond compliance to achieve best practice.

This report was approved by Executive Team and Trust Board members on the 24th September 2026 and will be available on the Trust website.

Background

Who we are and What we do

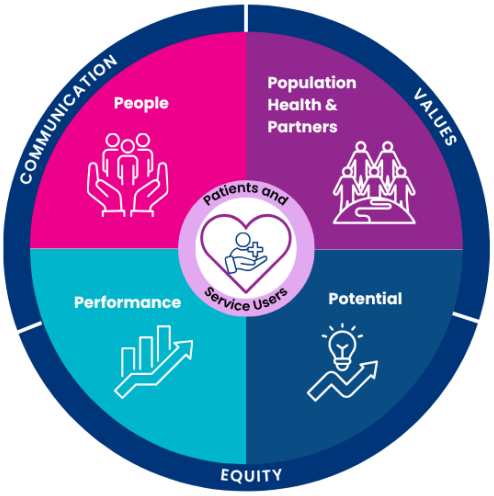
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is the largest integrated health and social care Trust within the United Kingdom. We serve the population of Belfast and Castlereagh of over 350,000 people, as well as providing regional and specialist services to 1.9 million people across all of Northern Ireland.

Our five priorities outlined in our Five-Year Corporate Plan 2026 - 2031 demonstrates our commitment to deliver safe, effective and compassionate treatment and care by mainstreaming equality, good relations and disability considerations in all that we do, both as an employer and service provider and across all our functions – service provision, employment and procurement and acute and community sites. The Trust has engaged internally and externally to help develop this plan,

Click on this link to hear from Jennifer Welsh, our Chief Executive about the new corporate plan.

Patients and Service Users	Being safe, caring and open
People	Being kind, professional and respectful
Population Health & Partners	Being collaborative and inclusive
Performance	Being effective and efficient
Potential	Being curious and embracing innovation

Image 1: Trust Strategic Priorities



Our strategic framework has Patients and Service Users at the centre of all that we do. Surrounding this are our four other priorities: • People • Population • Performance • Potential

Our services are delivered across 4 acute hospital sites and more than 100 community facilities within Belfast. The Trust is supported by our dedicated 22,000 staff who are employed across a range of service and corporate directorates (see organisational structure below). In addition to this, the Trust also comprises the major teaching and training hospitals in Northern Ireland and work closely in partnership with the two leading universities in the region. We are known for our specialist staff who have expert training and experience, and due to this, are home to more than 90% of regional specialist services in Northern Ireland.

Belfast Trust comprises a range of service and corporate directorates, who work together to deliver safe, high quality and compassionate services.

Image 2: BHSCT Organisational Structure

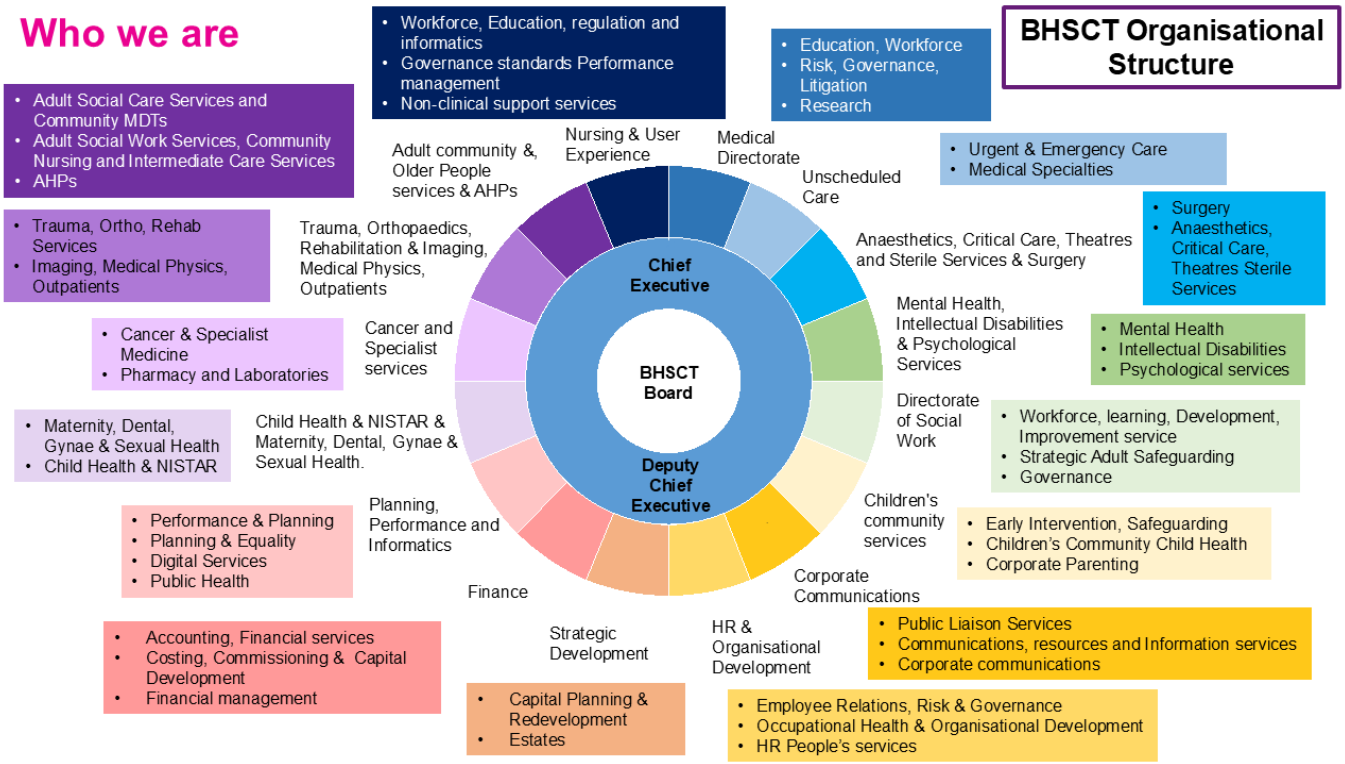


Image 3: Belfast Trust Annual Activity for 2025/26



Belfast Trust is proud to have an internationally diverse staff, with circa 2300 overseas sponsored workers working across a range of professions. We are indebted to them and to all our people for the invaluable service they collectively provide. 76% of our 22,200 total workforce are female, with 50% of our overall workforce being aged 40 years+

Table 1: Workforce split per job type as at 31/3/26

Job Type	Number
Administrative and Clerical	3,735
Medical and Dental	1,281
Nursing and Midwifery	7,927
Professional and Technical	4,115
Social Services	2,811
Support Services	2,120

HSC & Trust Values

Everything we do in the Belfast Trust is about people and for people.

Our **Trust Values** of Working Together, Excellence, Openness and Honesty, and Compassion underpin our commitment to provide safe, effective, compassionate and person-centred care.

Our patients and service users are central to everything we do, and we are committed to providing compassionate, person-centred care. To ensure that Belfast Trust is a place where people feel confident and satisfied with the health and social care they receive, our patients and service users are fully embedded into our service through involvement. They help us to ensure that everyone who accesses our service has the best possible experience and outcome.

Image 4: HSC and Trust Values and Being Belfast logo





Our People and Culture

To support our values, we developed our 'People & Culture' priorities within our **Being Belfast** framework to show staff what it means to be a leader in Belfast Trust.

The priorities were developed following large-scale listening sessions with staff and means that all staff are accountable for ensuring that acceptable standards of care, delivery and practice are adhered to.

The framework and priorities links in with and is aligned to the Department of Health's 'Being Open' Framework officially launched on 19th February 2026. The framework is intended to create a regional approach to a culture of openness, honesty, and transparency within Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland. It aims to ensure that all individuals in contact with Health and Social Care organisations are treated in an open, fair, and compassionate manner. It emphasises the importance of listening to patients and their families, supporting staff through engaged leadership, and creating safe spaces for learning and improvement.

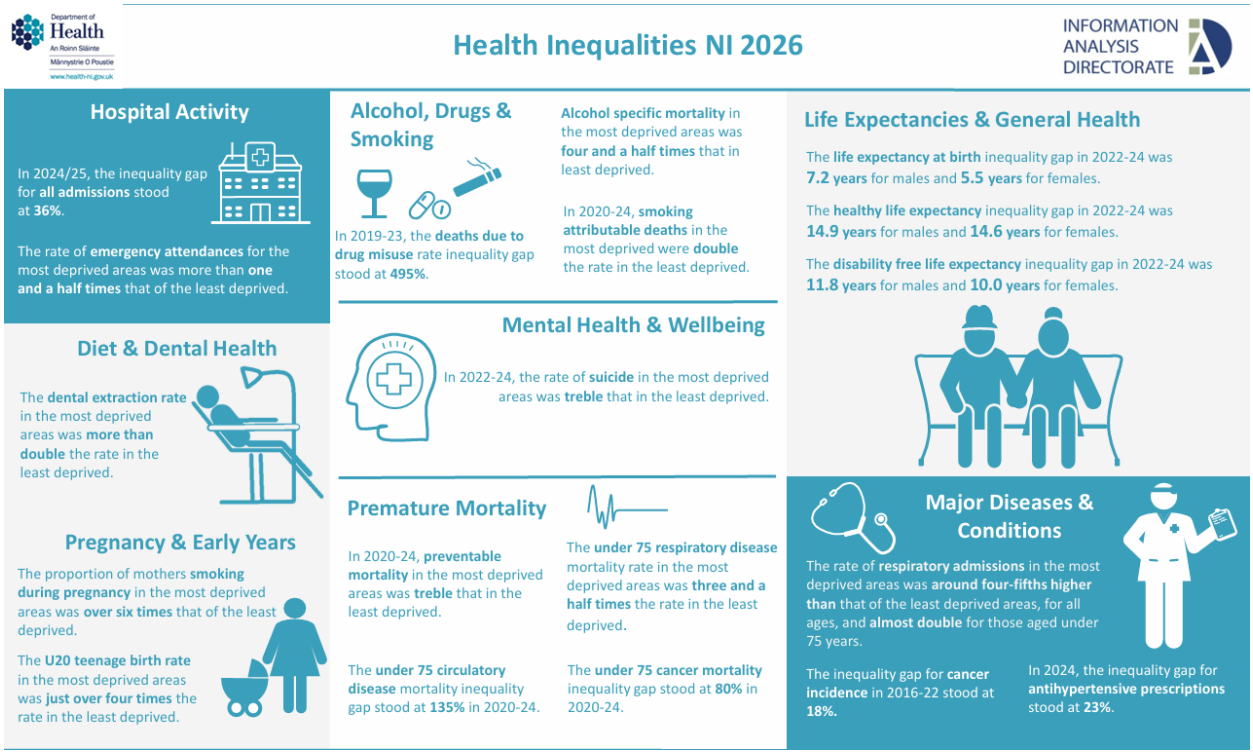
Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is one of six health and social care Trusts in Northern Ireland (including NI Ambulance Services). Health and social inequalities persist in Northern Ireland and across the communities to whom we deliver health and social care, with many stark inequalities affecting the population of Belfast.

In March 2026, Northern Ireland Research & Statistics Agency (NISRA) published new official statistics in the Health Inequalities Annual Report 2026, a product of the NI Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System (HSCIMS).

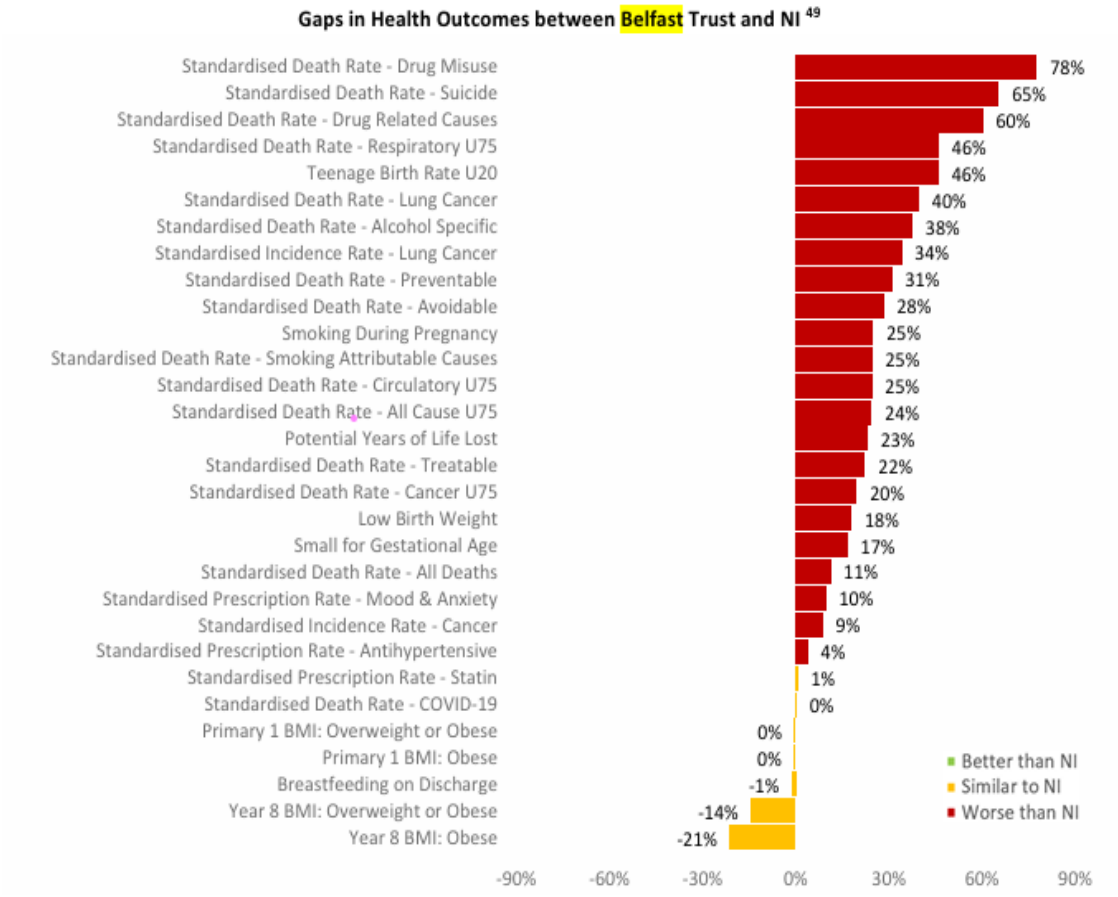
Findings from the Health inequalities annual report 2026 | Department of Health indicate that deprivation related inequality was most prominent in indicators relating to alcohol, drugs, self-harm, smoking during pregnancy and teenage births, which were among the largest inequality gaps for the majority of Health Trusts.

Image 5: Health Inequalities in NI 2026



The report reaffirmed that health inequalities in Belfast are prevalent and reflect significant disparities in health outcomes. Belfast had no health outcomes that were better than the NI average, and of the 34 health outcome indicators measured, 27 were worse than the NI average. The report also details the gaps in health outcomes between Belfast Trust and NI, depicted in the graph below.

Image 6: Gaps in Health Outcomes



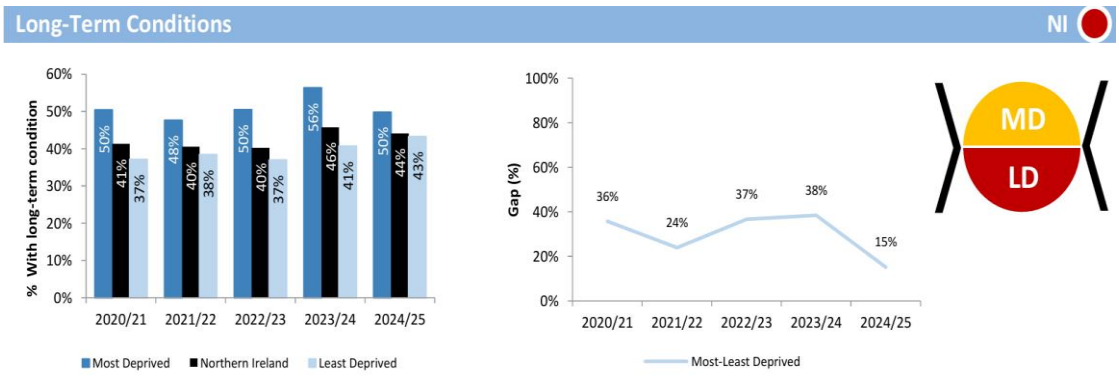
Specifically:

- Male and female life expectancies were lowest in the Belfast LGD (76.5 years and 80.5 years respectively).
- The largest inequality gap in female life expectancy was seen in the Belfast Trust area (4.7 years).
- Drug misuse mortality was the largest inequality gap in Belfast, Northern and Western HSC Trusts, where the rates in the most deprived areas were almost two and a half times (132%, 124% and 130%) their respective Trust averages.
- Large inequality gaps for alcohol related admissions also exist in the majority of Trusts. The rates in the respective most deprived areas for the Belfast Trust were around double the Trust average.
- At 25.9%, Belfast has 5% higher proportion of people with a limiting health condition or disability than the general population of Northern Ireland. Almost a quarter of women in Belfast, compared to 1 in 5 men, report a disability or a long-term health problem that affects their day-to-day activities
- The largest inequality gaps within Belfast Trust exist in terms of Drug Misuse Death Rate (132%); Drug Related Death Rate (130%); Drug Related Admission Rate (118%); U75 Respiratory Death Rate (104%); and Alcohol Related Admission Rate (96%).

Table 2: Life expectancy: Population of Belfast compared to Northern Ireland

Life Expectancy (2022 – 2024)	Male	Female
Belfast Trust average	77.1	81.1
Most deprived areas in Belfast Trust	72.0	76.4
Norther Ireland average	78.8	82.6

Image 7: Long-Term Health Conditions in NI



Living in areas of deprivation and poverty are linked to higher rates of chronic diseases, greater likelihood of mental health conditions and poorer health outcomes overall. This is particularly evident in specific groups.

- **Older Adults**: Older people, particularly in areas of deprivation, often experience isolation, mobility issues, and a lack of adequate care, all of which contribute to poor health outcomes.
- **People from Ethnically Diverse Communities and Migrant Backgrounds**: People from ethnically diverse communities and migrant backgrounds may experience health inequalities due to factors such as: language and communication barriers, cultural differences, and challenges in accessing health services, highlighting the importance of accessible and culturally appropriate support.

Efforts to reduce health inequalities in Belfast including our Northern Ireland New Entrants Service (NINES) services, use of Vasco translator devices, and our extensive public health initiatives targeting smoking cessation, physical activity, and access to healthy food. However, tackling the root causes of these inequalities, will require multi-faceted interventions, and cross agency partnerships. It is hoped that the new neighbourhood model and work of the Shadow Belfast AIPB, working with other agencies and communities will reduce health inequalities albeit there is government wide and societal wide recognition that this is a mammoth task.

NI Assembly and Department of Health Strategic Plans

Programme For Government

Within the priorities laid out within the 2024-2027 Programme for Government Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most there are specific objectives on Reducing Health waiting times and Ending Violence against Women and Girls. There is also a renewed focus on Reforming Public Services, including Health and Social Care.

Image 8: Programme for Government 2024 - 2027



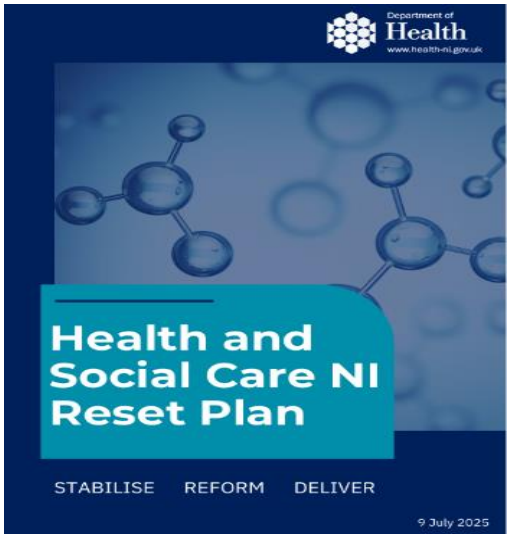
Image 9: Immediate Priorities from Programme for Government 2024



Transformation in Health & Social Care

In line with the wider reform of public services, the Department of Health continues to progress key strategic initiatives, including the HSCNI Three-Year Plan (Stabilise, Reform, Deliver) and the HSC Reset Plan (July 2025). These provide a framework for stabilising services while accelerating transformation.

Image 10: HSCNI Reset Plan



The Reset Plan supports a shift towards a neighbourhood-centred model of care, strengthening primary and community services and enabling care to be delivered closer to home. This approach aims to improve access, reduce variation, and better meet the needs of individuals and communities, particularly those who may face barriers to accessing services.

Health and social care necessitate a comprehensive, system-wide approach, with shared goals across hospital, community organisations and voluntary sector. This approach will support the delivery of patient-centred care, at the right time, in the right place.

BHSCT will continue to embed equality considerations across all aspects of service planning and delivery, including ongoing engagement with service users, communities and representative groups, and participation in local and regional consultation processes.

The Trust operates in line with its Equality Scheme, ensuring that equality considerations are integrated into policy development and decision-making. This includes undertaking equality screening and EQIAs where appropriate, to identify and address potential adverse impacts, promote equality of opportunity, and ensure transparency and accountability.

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

1 In 2025-26, 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.

Collaborative Approach

Increasingly, regional strategies and drivers emphasise the importance of partnership working between Trusts, primary care, community and voluntary sectors, service users and carers to ensure a more integrated, coordinated and patient-centred model of care. Regionally, Belfast Trust engages with equality colleagues from the other Trusts and has membership on various Provider Collaboratives and other groups to take forward regionwide projects.

Committee In Common

The Committee in Common in Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) is a collaborative leadership group comprising the Chairs and Chief Executives of Northern Ireland's regional health and social care provider organisations and Trusts

Its inaugural meeting took place last year, and it has been set up to enable Trusts to take shared decisions on a ‘whole system’ basis and to allow them to come together to solve regional challenges and facilitate collaborative decision-making.

Establishing the committee was one of the delivery outcomes arising from the new Reset Plan for Health and Social Care in NI. It helps Trusts respond to the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing a system-wide HSC reset.

BHSCT recognises that working in partnership enables better use of shared resources, supports consistency in service delivery, and strengthens the ability to respond to population need. This collaborative approach is fundamental to delivering a neighbourhood-based care model, tackling health inequalities, and achieving long-term, sustainable reform.

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.

Regional HSC Equality Leads Forum

Equality leads from across each of the 6 HSC Trusts including NIAS meeting bi-monthly to discuss ongoing and upcoming issues, to share good practice and learnings and to ensure consistency in approach in terms of fulfilling all aspects of the Equality and Good Relations Duties eg equality screenings.

Regionally, Belfast Trust engages with equality colleagues from the other 4 Trusts and has membership on various Provider Collaboratives and other groups to take forward regionwide projects.

Our Culture

This is an area of particular focus for the Trust. Our People and Culture Steering Group provides oversight and strategic direction to work that is designed to improve the safety and quality of care through workforce initiatives designed to improve staff experience, wellbeing and capacity. The Belfast Trust is in the process of developing a People and Culture Strategy and has commenced engagement with staff in March 2026 via a staff-wide survey.

The People and Culture Strategy will outline our commitment to making the Trust the best possible place to work and to receive care. It will describe:

- *What we commit to **protect** and build upon*
- *What we need to **improve***

Four work streams report through the People and Culture Steering Group, they are:

- **Organisational Workforce Capacity**: Work that optimises workforce capacity amidst significant labour market challenges and severe financial constraints.

- **Staff Experience and Wellbeing:** Work that focuses on staff engagement and wellbeing to improve how it feels to work here and to optimise attraction and retention.

- **Enhancing Leadership:** Work that reflects the strategic importance that leaders and managers have in crafting the right workplace culture and in maximising organisational effectiveness.

- **Open Just and Learning Culture:** Work to embed a culture that enhances safety, promotes learning from excellence and from harm, and that creates the conditions for openness within the organisation.

Trust Governance & Assurance Framework

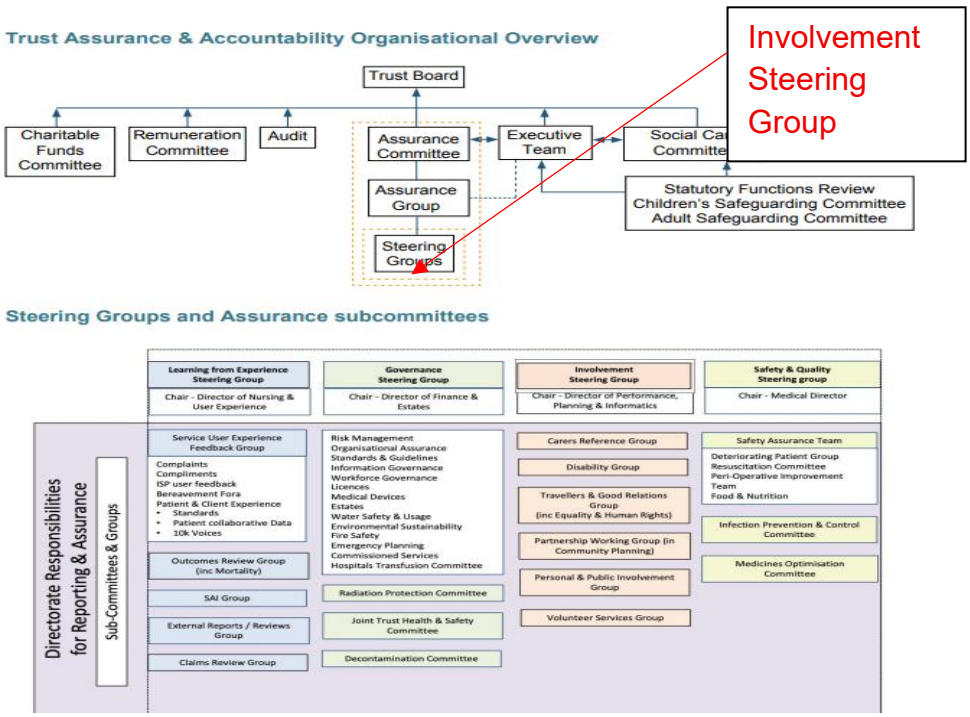
Involvement Steering Group

Robust accountability structures within the Trust 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.

Image 11: Trust Assurance & Accountability Organisational Overview



This means that the Trust has established an oversight group for committees and work in regard to equality, disability, good relations, carers, community development, people seeking asylum and refugees, and personal and public involvement activity.

Policy Assurance Framework

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. These assurances include:

- Policies considered and approved by Belfast Trust Policy Committee and Policy and External Guidance Assurance Committee (formally known as the

Standards and Guidelines Committee) provided they have been subject to an equality screening.

- All equality screening templates require a minimum of 2 signatories i.e., the policy lead plus the equality manager *or* employment equality manager reviewing the screening. Some screenings may require a tripartite signature from *all* of these persons
- All of our completed and approved equality screenings are uploaded quarterly and are available on the Trust website.
- Our Policy template and 'How to Write' a policy guidance are all available on the staff intranet 'The LOOP' contains explicit reference to the need for an equality screening.

Belfast Trust Committee Structures

Belfast Trust has an extensive range of committees all of which are mindful of wider Equality duties however two Committees contributes to the Trust's governance arrangements relating to Equality duties through the provision of assurance, monitoring of action plans, risk oversight and annual reporting. Both Committees report regularly to the Involvement Steering Group.

Belfast Trust Disability Committee

Our Disability Committee has been in situ since 2008 and continues to meet on a quarterly basis 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 Committee 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 the 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.

Belfast Trust Healthy Relations Committee

The Trust Healthy Relations Committee meets quarterly and provides strategic leadership and oversight for the implementation and monitoring of the Trust Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan. The Committee supports the Trust in meeting its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Committee promotes a coordinated and proactive approach to meeting the health and wellbeing needs of all communities in a culturally sensitive and accessible way, helping to ensure that Trust services and facilities are welcoming and inclusive. Its work encompasses people from ethnically diverse communities, migrants, people seeking asylum, refugees, Irish Traveller and Roma communities, and individuals from different religious and political backgrounds.

Membership includes representatives from across Trust services, Human Resources, Planning and Equality, Community Development, Chaplaincy, Maternity Services, Trade Unions and external partners including Belfast City Council Good Relations Team and the Community Relations Council. Key functions of the Committee include:

- Providing strategic leadership for the implementation and evaluation of the Trust Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan.
- Monitoring progress and providing assurance through the Trust's Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework.
- Promoting the delivery of coordinated responsive and accessible services.
- Supporting the involvement of communities in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Trust services.
- Identifying gaps in service provision and opportunities for improvement.
- Promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity across the Trust through training and resource development.
- Fostering partnership working and collaborative approaches with statutory, community and voluntary sector organisations.
- Supporting the Trust's work in relation to the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS).

Strategic Service Delivery Reconfiguration Projects

Equality and Good Relations considerations are mainstreamed in strategic projects relating to the reconfiguration of services across the Trust. In the reporting period a number of projects demonstrate this commitment.

Outpatient Modernisation

The purpose of the Trust's Outpatient Modernisation Project Board is to modernise outpatient services across the Trust to enable more patients and service users to receive the right care in the right place at the right time. The Trust is also part of the Regional Outpatients modernisation group.

With planned outcomes to reduce waiting times for 1st and review appointments the group have developed the following 4 key work streams:

- Modern Models of Care
- Digital Optimisation
- Communication
- Maximising Clinic Utilisation

Achievements to date in 25/26 include:

- 11.8% improvement overall on Outpatient Attendances
- 30% reduction in the number of patients requiring an appointment in dermatology.
- Development of Patient Initiated Follow Up (PIFU) initiative. To support a more personalised, efficient and sustainable outpatient model PIFU focuses on care where and when it adds most value. 26 services in BHSCT operate PIFU, with 41 pathways and 8,524 patients supported through this pathway during the reporting period.

Unscheduled Care Improvement Programme Board

Unscheduled Care pressures continue to be one of the top issues for the Trust, though most visible in the Trust Emergency Departments, the pressures are felt across all operational services.

The purpose of this Programme Board is to provide a clear space in which the actions required to mitigate pressures can be discussed, progress against key indicators can be measured, and issues can be unlocked that require decisions across multiple service areas. Task and Finish Groups include:

- Hospital Discharge Planning
- Improving Community Capacity
- Support to Care Homes
- Same Day Emergency Care
- Ambulatory Pathways

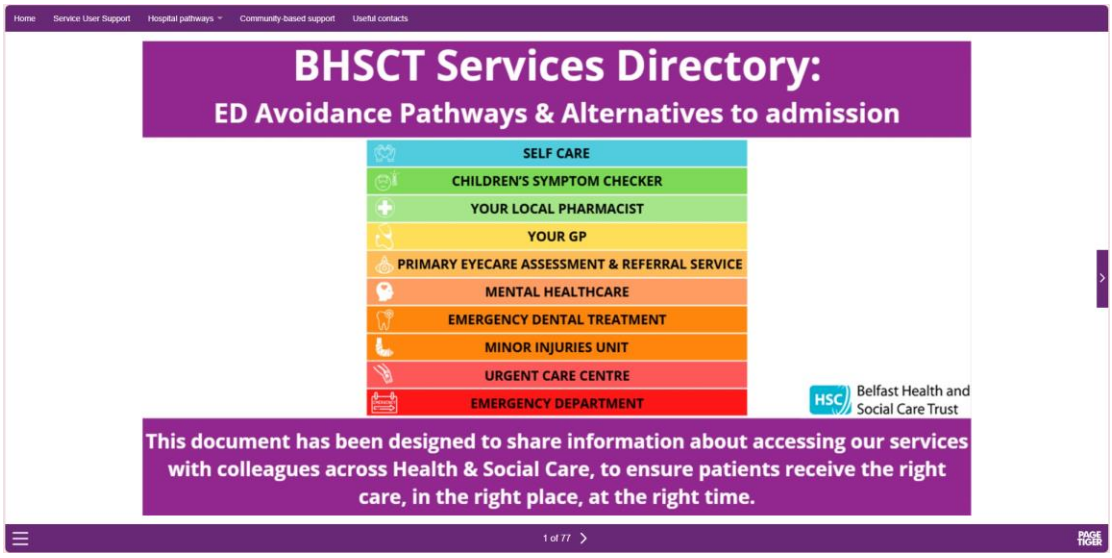
The overall objective is to deliver alternatives to Emergency Departments when appropriate, either keeping people well at home, or providing alternative pathways for people to reach the care they need. This will also help protect access to emergency care for those people that need it.

Development of Direct Rapid Access Pathways Resource:

A number of services within Belfast Trust offer rapid access pathways and Emergency Department (ED) avoidance routes, where appropriate.

Belfast Trust's Planning & Equality Team developed a PageTiger resource for BHSCT and primary care colleagues. This resource aims to support ED Avoidance by detailing the direct / urgent access pathways offered by various services within the Trust, how to access these pathways, and who they can be accessed by.

Image 12: BHSCT PageTiger Services Directory for ED Avoidance



Virtual Wards

Belfast Trust will be the first HSC Trust in NI to pilot Virtual Wards. Scoping work began in late 2025, led by the CCIO/Deputy Medical Director. A Project Team was established to drive forward this initiative with an intended Go-Live of October 2026.

It is hoped that Virtual Wards will bring with it benefits for service users, carers, and the wider HSC system. The aims of the pilot include:

- To ensure **clinical effectiveness** and **patient safety**, providing hospital level care at home with multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) aiming to prevent admission, reduce inpatient stays and trolley waits
- To maintain and optimise capacity, maximising our resource utilisation and support urgent and emergency care recovery
- **Enhancing patient experience and choice**, offering patient centred, timely convenient care at home, aiming for high patient satisfaction
- Provide technology enabled care as the service develops to integrate digital platforms and remote monitoring to support decision making and patient – clinician communication
- Support equity of access, addressing potential barriers
- Sharing best practice internally and with regional colleagues

An equality screening and extensive engagement with staff and service user groups have will inform the pilot. It is anticipated that Virtual Wards will promote equality of opportunity, good relations and support the Trust in meeting its Disability Duties and human rights obligations through:

- Giving patients the opportunity to receive consultant-led care from the comfort of their own homes - which may be particularly helpful for older patients, disabled patients, or those with mental health challenges
- Removing limitations on carers that they would normally experience e.g. hospital visiting times, lack of privacy

- Reducing the number of patients on corridor beds - supporting patient dignity
- Improving patient experience and expected improvement in patient outcomes as a result of familiarity, better rest, access to own food, and less likelihood of developing hospital-related infections.

Encompass: MyCare App

Image 13: MyCare logo

Colleagues from Belfast Trust's encompass team supported the development of accessibility features within MyCare for blind and visually impaired people, in partnership with RNIB.

Features resulting from this collaborative work include:

- VoiceOver and Zoom are supported in all features on the MyCare app for iOS devices
- All significant information appears in appropriate colours and contrast ratios for users who are colourblind or those with moderately low vision on iOS device app
- All features are supported by Screen Readers when using MyCare via a desktop browser
- TalkBack is supported in all features, and all features are optimised for use with TalkBack on the MyCare app for Android devices
- Most information appears in appropriate colours and contrast rations for users who are colourblind or those with moderately low vision on Android device app.

Section 1: Equality and Good Relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

2 Please provide examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/ measures in 2025-26 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Good Relations Focus

Belfast Trust Good Relations Strategy

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.

Image 14: BHSCT/HSC Good Relations Strategy 23-28



The Trust has also provided leadership at a regional level, with agreement from the other Health and Social Care Trusts to use the Belfast Trust Good Relations Strategy as a prototype for the development of Good Relations approaches across the HSC system. This reflects recognition of the strategic value of the Trust's work and supports a more consistent regional approach to promoting good relations.

The Strategy provides a framework for promoting inclusion, respect and positive relationships across Trust services and with the diverse communities we serve.

Celebrating Good Relations Week 2025

Good Relations Week 2025 took place from 13th – 19th October with the theme of ***"Connect,"*** focusing on the links between People, Planet, and Prosperity.

To celebrate this important week Belfast Trust organised something each day including hosting a powerful **story telling event.** The event provided Belfast Trust staff with the opportunity to hear real life stories and lived experiences from service users and staff from a wide range of communities.

Image 15: Good Relations Week event 2025



Our Chief Executive Jennifer Welsh opened the packed event and reminded us that whilst this week is dedicated to celebrating Good Relations, *"Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common. Let's celebrate it every day."*

Estella Dorrian, Planning and Equality Lead said *"It was humbling to listen to the real-life stories and experiences of the various storytellers and the range of experiences that they had in Northern Ireland due to their ethnicity. We had young mothers, who told of their really positive experience in our maternity services which were very different to their countries of origin. We had Trust staff, who worked in community liaison roles, nursing and social work all of whom spoke of their pride in working in Belfast Trust. There were also some of the storytellers who told us of the racism and discrimination that they had faced in other countries and regrettably at times in Northern Ireland"*

The audience (including Trust senior staff and the Community Relations Council Chairperson) were reminded of the importance of fostering meaningful connections and that when we come together with a shared purpose, we create workplaces and services that are fairer, more respectful, and welcoming to all.

Throughout Good Relations Week 2025, Belfast Trust staff were reminded that as an employer, service provider, and proud Trust of Sanctuary, that the Trust is committed to not only tackling racism and sectarianism and reducing health inequalities but to also proactively ensuring that

everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and that our places or work and where we deliver care and treatment are welcoming and inclusive places.

Design of 'Let's Connect' Poster

During the Good Relations Story Telling event our artist in residence, captured with colour and emotion the stories shared by staff and service users at the Girdwood event.

With the theme *"Let's Connect"*, the artwork (poster) reflects how we connect every day across the Trust with each other, our patients/service users, carers and our communities. It highlights our ongoing commitment to making our workplaces and services inclusive, welcoming, and shared spaces.

This artwork has been professionally printed, framed, and displayed across a number of Trust departments, including Maternity and Social Work Services and our Non-Clinical Building, which houses the Trust Headquarters. It has also been disseminated widely online to Trust staff.

Image 16: Good Relations 2025 Poster



BHSCT 'Good Relations' Bulletins

Over the reporting period, Belfast Trust has continued to promote Good Relations through the publication of its **22nd and 23rd Editions** of our Good Relations Bulletin.

The bulletins serve as an important communication tool to raise awareness of Good Relations responsibilities, share examples of positive practice, celebrate diversity, and encourage inclusive behaviours across the Trust. As both an employer and a Health and Social Care provider, the Trust uses the bulletin to reinforce its commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive and accessible environment for all, regardless of race, religious belief or political opinion.

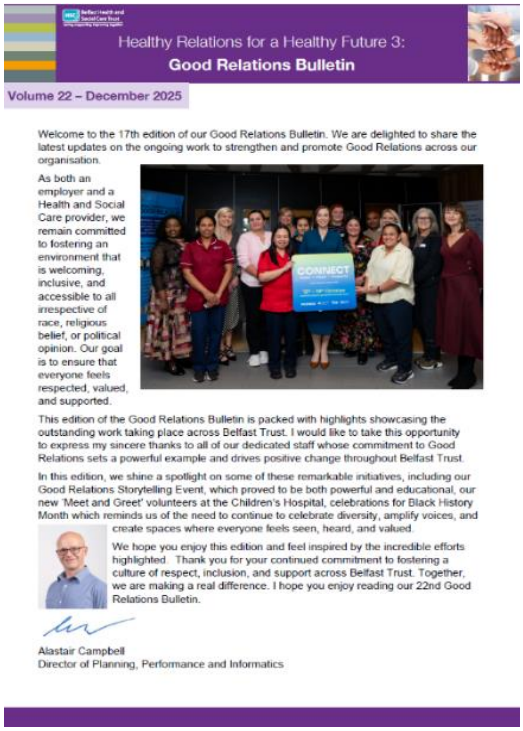
The Good Relations bulletin were proactively disseminated to **all Trust staff and to over 650 statutory voluntary and community organisations including Trade Unions and MLAs.** The bulletins highlight key initiatives, events, training opportunities, partnership activity and examples of good practice that support the aims of the Trust's Good Relations Strategy.

The bulletins continue to provide a platform for recognising the contributions of staff and volunteers, sharing learning from across services, and promoting greater awareness of equality, diversity and Good Relations issues. Feedback from contributors and participants has been positive, reinforcing that it has helped increase visibility of Good Relations activity across the organisation and encouraging wider engagement.

"What an impressive range of important work."

"This bulletin is great and we'll be utilising some of the advice and implementing some of the great ideas into our charitable work."

Image 17&18: BHSCT Good Relations Bulletin



Healthy Relations for a Healthy Future 3:
Good Relations Bulletin

Volume 22 – December 2025

Welcome to the 17th edition of our Good Relations Bulletin. We are delighted to share the latest updates on the ongoing work to strengthen and promote Good Relations across our organisation.

As both an employer and a Health and Social Care provider, we remain committed to fostering an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all irrespective of race, religious belief, or political opinion. Our goal is to ensure that everyone feels respected, valued, and supported.

This edition of the Good Relations Bulletin is packed with highlights showcasing the outstanding work taking place across Belfast Trust. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all of our dedicated staff whose commitment to Good Relations sets a powerful example and drives positive change throughout Belfast Trust.

In this edition, we shine a spotlight on some of these remarkable initiatives, including our Good Relations Storytelling Event, which proved to be both powerful and educational, our new 'Meet and Greet' volunteers at the Children's Hospital, celebrations for Black History Month which reminds us of the need to continue to celebrate diversity, amplify voices, and create spaces where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

We hope you enjoy this edition and feel inspired by the incredible efforts highlighted. Thank you for your continued commitment to fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and support across Belfast Trust. Together, we are making a real difference. I hope you enjoy reading our 22nd Good Relations Bulletin.

Alastair Campbell
Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics



Healthy Relations for a Healthy Future 3:
Good Relations Bulletin

Volume 23 – July 2026

Welcome to the 23rd edition of our Good Relations Bulletin, in which, we are shining a spotlight on what Good Relations means for us as a Trust. This ranges from our legal responsibilities to the everyday actions that help create a respectful, inclusive environment for everyone.

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

As both an employer and a Health and Social Care provider, we have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across all communities. As with previous editions, you will see how this comes to life through recent events, initiatives and the work taking place across our services.

We have also included some practical ways each of us can play our part, through small everyday actions. As an accredited Trust of Sanctuary, we can all contribute to building a welcoming and inclusive Trust with shared, safe and respectful spaces for everyone.

Thank you to all our staff for your continued commitment. Your work makes a real and lasting difference to colleagues, patients, service users, carers, families and the communities we serve.

I hope you enjoy this edition and feel encouraged by the positive impact made across Belfast Trust in terms of promoting good relations.

Alastair Campbell
Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics

Meeting our Duties through a Focus on Staff Safety and Wellbeing

During 2025/26, the Trust continued to promote a safe, welcoming and inclusive working environment where all staff are treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The Trust remains committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religious belief.

During the recent civil unrest and riots, the Trust undertook a range of proactive measures to support the safety and wellbeing of our internationally diverse workforce and continues to do so. We recognise and value the significant contribution that international staff make across our services and are indebted to the invaluable work they do as part of our dedicated workforce. To reinforce this commitment, a decisive and timely statement of support was issued by HSC Chief Executives, underlining their support for every member of the Health and Social Care workforce. It was issued on 10 June 2026 and read as follows:

We are deeply concerned and appalled at the violence which we are witnessing in our communities. It is completely unacceptable that our international staff, who provide an invaluable service, should be intimidated or feel too frightened to come to work.

The current unrest is having a profound impact on all of our services, which are already under enormous strain. All the Trusts are trying to operate as normally as possible but the disruption is making this increasingly difficult.

As Chief Executives, we value every single member, our staff, who are trying to care for vulnerable people, both in our hospitals and in the community every day. The safety of our patients, service users and our staff is paramount.

It is imperative that everyone who works across our Health and Social Care Service, including Care Homes, Community Pharmacies, Home Care and Primary Care, are able to provide essential care to everyone that needs it, without fear or intimidation.

We would like to sincerely thank all our staff for their continued dedication, in really difficult circumstances.

In addition, the Trust promoted its hate crime information poster to raise awareness of reporting mechanisms and available support. The resource provided staff with clear information on how to report hate crime and hate incidents, highlighted the support services available to those affected, and outlined the role of managers in supporting their teams. Staff were encouraged to report incidents and were reassured that they would be fully supported throughout the reporting process. This work reinforced the Trust's zero-tolerance approach to hate crime and discrimination.

Image 19: BHSCT Hate Crime Information Poster



Looking ahead, the Trust will continue to promote a culture of inclusion, respect and belonging for all staff. We will build on existing awareness initiatives, strengthen communication of reporting pathways and support services, and work collaboratively with staff, managers and key stakeholders to ensure that everyone feels safe, valued and supported within the organisation.

We will work in partnership with the Community Relations Council, the City of Sanctuary and other statutory, community and voluntary organisations to promote good relations and foster a culture of welcome, and inclusion for all.

Roma Community Project

Belfast Trust Roma Health Project continues to deliver a holistic approach to family services to enhance the health outcomes of Roma communities.

Working in close partnership with Sure Start South Belfast the project works to improve trust in the community, promote inclusion, increase access to literacy and education, raise health awareness, reducing health inequalities, tackle isolation, provide advocacy and signpost to services.

Having been ten years in existence, an independent evaluation of the Roma Project was undertaken to review its impact and continued relevance for Roma communities in Belfast. The evaluation provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements to date, identify areas for improvement, and engage communities and stakeholders in shaping future priorities. The findings of the evaluation will support the ongoing development of a responsive, community-informed approach to addressing the needs and aspirations of Roma families.

Image 20: Participants in the Roma Project



Traveller Projects

Traveller Early Intervention Projects

The Trust continues to commission 3 organisations to provide early intervention and support for Traveller communities as follows:

- **Barnardos** provide early years and school transition age support to Traveller families.
- **HEART Project Healthy Living Centre** supports people from the Traveller communities to access health improvement services in healthy living centres. The project provides significant support to Travellers to access other health and social care services including registration with GPs.
- **Community Restorative Justice** uses restorative justice methods to provide conflict resolution support to individuals and families. Personal development programmes and support have been delivered with particular reference to coping mechanisms, anger management and drugs and alcohol.

The Trust also continues to pilot a variety of different initiatives including a **Traveller Youth Voice Project**, a **Traveller Family Support Hub** and capacity building opportunities for the Traveller community.

Traveller Action Plan

The Traveller Voices engagement process undertaken in 2025 brought together Travellers and service providers to explore health and wellbeing inequalities, identify gaps in services, recognise existing strengths, and agree priorities for improvement. The resulting discussions have informed the development of a **collaborative 3-year Traveller action plan** focused on improving outcomes and ensuring that future activity is informed directly by community experience and leadership.

Staff Awareness Initiatives

Traveller awareness activity throughout the year focused on increasing understanding of Traveller culture, heritage and lived experience among professionals and community stakeholders. Through awareness events, panel discussions and online training sessions, participants explored Traveller identity, culture, traditions, family and community structures, as well as barriers experienced in areas such as education, health, housing and employment. These initiatives also created opportunities for partnership building and strengthened commitment to improving outcomes for Traveller communities.

Image 21: Traveller Awareness



'Make My Voice Heard' Project

A research project was commissioned by the Department of Health, through the Belfast Trust, who led a regional steering group in partnership with five HSC Trusts, the Public Health Agency and the Office for the Mental Health Champion Northern Ireland.

The project sought to engage directly with **women seeking international protection** on their experiences of accessing Health and Social Care services, specifically Maternity Services, Public Health Nursing, Social Services and Mental Health Services, in relation to their own experience or the experience of accessing for children. The focus was placed on women and children as there was an identified gap in the knowledge base for this group and a recognition that they face barriers when accessing services.

A total of **19 engagement sessions** took place across Northern Ireland, engaging **167 women** from **15 different nationalities** with a number of sessions held within the Belfast area.

The voices of those that were involved in the engagement sessions created **six recommendations** that have the potential to enhance experiences and access to health and social care services for people seeking international protection. Th recommendations include:

1. Audit of best practice across Trust areas.
2. Co-ordination and consistency of support services across Trusts
3. Promoting best practices in interpreting services and translations
4. Cultural competence framework embedded across HSCNI
5. Provision of a centralised resource
6. Building Health literacy

The work resulted in the development of the ‘Make my Voice Heard Report’. and is a much-needed addition to the literature and evidence base regarding the health needs of women seeking international protection in Northern Ireland.

Image 22: Make my Voice Heard launch event



Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt, launched the report at an event in Parliament Buildings in May 2025 and said: *"Health and Social Care plays a critical role in supporting safe immigration and integration journeys. What many may consider to be the most straightforward of processes can be an overwhelming experience for someone who has just arrived in Northern Ireland. This report is a much-welcomed addition to the conversation on how we can collectively support integration in Northern Ireland. It will provide a significant evidence base as we move forward to commission support services and tackle health inequalities for those who have chosen to make Northern Ireland their home."*

VASCO Handheld Language Translator Devices

Language barriers continue to be one of the most significant challenges affecting individuals and families whose primary language is not English when accessing Health and Social Care (HSC) services across Belfast.

In response to this need, Belfast Trust secured funding to pilot 33 VASCO translation devices with the intention of providing staff in **emergency unscheduled care** with them to improve communication.

A VASCO device is a handheld, two-way speech translator that provides fast, accurate communication across many languages. It is a practical, reliable tool capable of supporting real-time communication until an interpreter can join.

Image 23: BHSCT PageTiger Services Directory for ED Avoidance



When disseminating the devices, staff were reminded that the Vascos **do not** replace professional interpreting services such as the BSO Regional Interpreting Services or The Big Word telephone interpreting. They are a temporary, interim communication aid to be used until a qualified interpreter is available. Staff were also reminded that patients and service users continue to have the right to access interpreting services either in person or via telephone and that the introduction of the VASCO devices does not change or reduce that entitlement.

Pilot results showed VASCO delivers high-quality, reliable translation, works offline and reduces delays in urgent care while supporting staff until a qualified interpreter can join.

Staff reported that VASCO:

"Allowed treatment to proceed without rescheduling" (Community & Emergency Dental).

"Enabled urgent care while waiting for interpreters" (Maternity Services).

"This should be available in every clinic, we would really miss our VASCO now."

Building on the success of the pilot, the Trust secured funding through Charitable Funds for an additional 25 devices. The devices will be introduced across Emergency and Unscheduled Care services, extending the reach of the programme and increasing access to services for patients and service users.

Belfast Trust Interpreting Card

Belfast Trust successfully launched its co-designed Health and Social Care Interpreting Card to support patients and service users who do not speak English as their first language.

Developed by the Equality and Planning Team in partnership with iAssist NI, the Roma Health Project and people with lived experience, the card helps staff quickly identify an individual's language needs and arrange appropriate interpreting support.

Image 24: BHSCT Interpreting Card



The initiative was developed in response to feedback received during engagement on the Trust's Good Relations Strategy, which highlighted language and communication barriers as significant challenges in accessing health and social care services. The card also includes a QR code providing information in a range of languages and links staff to interpreting guidance and resources.

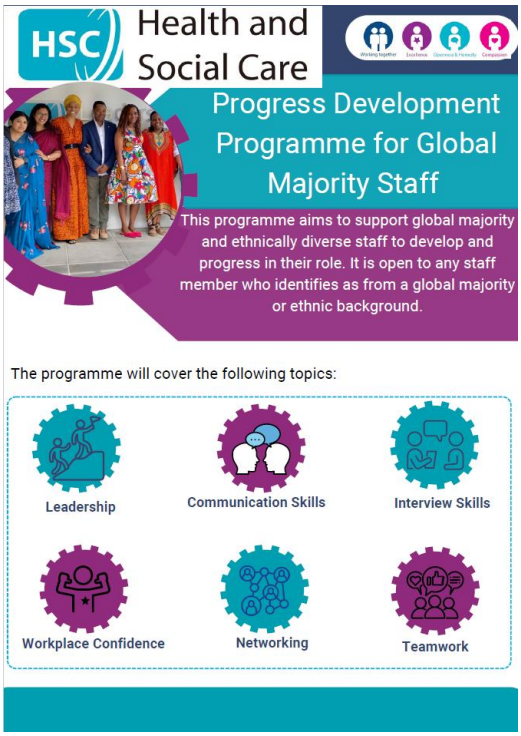
By improving access to interpreting services, the initiative supports more effective communication, informed consent and equitable access to health and social care services for newcomer and ethnic minority communities.

Progress Development Programme for Global Majority Staff

This regional programme is led by the HSC Leadership Centre. It is a blend of in-person and virtual meeting groups. Key topics include leadership, communication skills, interview skills, workplace confidence, networking, teamwork.

- Feb 2025 - June 2025 - 11 BHSCT participants
- Sept 2025 - Feb 2026 - 31 BHSCT participants (total 82 across the region)

Image 25: Progress Development Programme Poster



At the closing event on 23 February 2026, senior nursing and HR colleagues from across the region attended to meet with staff who completed the programme, hear their views and provide a forum for opportunity to discuss issues such as career development, access to further and higher education and recognition of international qualifications. At this event they also enjoyed a shared lunch of multi-cultural food representative of the culturally diverse backgrounds of our colleagues.

Trust of Sanctuary Award

Building on Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's achievement of receiving the *Trust of Sanctuary* Award in September 2024, the Trust has continued during the reporting period to progress initiatives that promote a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of background, ethnicity or country of origin. The award recognised the Trust's commitment to inclusion, with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust remaining the only Health Trust in Northern Ireland and across the UK to receive this award.

SANCTUARY AWARD
Welcoming People Seeking Sanctuary

Image 26: Sanctuary Award logo

The Sanctuary Awards recognise and celebrate organisations who go above and beyond to welcome people seeking sanctuary. This award is recognition of our staff's commitment to deliver

inclusive treatment and care across both hospital and community sites, all of which are shared spaces where everyone is welcome and treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

Belfast Trust staff continue to work tirelessly to tackle inequalities and make sure that all of our service users who are seeking sanctuary have the best possible opportunity to succeed in life and can feel at home in our society. We continue to work closely with City of Sanctuary Belfast to build on this achievement and further develop services that support refugees, asylum seekers and other marginalised communities.

Examples of ongoing work include international recruitment and support for international staff, the Cultural Liaison Midwife role in maternity services, our Inequalities and Inclusion Team who provide support to people seeking asylum and refugees in Belfast and our continued support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. We also recognise the important role of our Chaplaincy Service, which provides pastoral and spiritual support to people from a wide range of faiths and beliefs, helping to ensure that everyone feels respected, valued and supported.

The Trust continues to work closely with City of Sanctuary Belfast through our Planning and Equality Team to improve access to Belfast Trust services for people seeking sanctuary and other minority communities.

This work supports the Trust's Good Relations Strategy by helping to remove barriers, promote inclusion and ensure that services are accessible, welcoming and responsive to the needs of all communities. Together, these initiatives help to make Belfast Trust a place where everyone feels welcome, included and able to access the support they need.

Image 27: BHSCT Trust of Sanctuary Award



People Seeking International Protection: Refugee Resettlement Scheme

The Trust Community Development Team, continue to undertake an extensive range of work with ethnically diverse communities across Belfast Trust including the Refugee Resettlement process for families.

Targeted community intervention work has been advanced by staff to strengthen community supports. This has been a key area of work during this period, and we are working to proactively connect and establish positive relationships with People Seeking International Protection (PSIP) resettling in Belfast.

The Trust's Community Inclusion Officer (CIO), is a temporary funding post to engage with PSIP to help them navigate and access Health and Social Care services. Using a community development approach, people are supported to engage with local communities and navigate voluntary services to support integration into local communities.

The CIO delivers a place-based neighbourhood model of care approach with community hub sites based across North, South, East and West Belfast including:

- The Ashton Centre (New lodge Youth centre)
- International Meeting Point
- Anaka (North Belfast)
- Conway Education Centre (West Belfast)
- Mornington Community Centre/ IMP (South Belfast)
- The suitcase project (East Belfast)

New resources have been developed to promote the CIO role and access to health and social care services. These resources have been translated into the top 10 languages in the Belfast Trust area.

Image 28 & 29: CIO Role & Service Access Posters





Through this work, the CIO has developed strong partnerships with community and voluntary organisations and clinical services to deliver place-based, needs-led workshops that respond to identified community needs. One example is the delivery of Sexual Health Team workshops at the Anaka Women's Collective Centre in North Belfast.

People Seeking International Protection (PSIP) Integration Funding

Through collaboration with the Family Support Hubs, led by community and voluntary sector organisations across Belfast, targeted intervention programmes were funded by Belfast Trust through four hubs in North, South, East and West Belfast. This enabled the delivery of much-needed, tailored support for PSIP, particularly those most in need, helping them to access essential services including healthcare, education and housing. The support provided promotes equitable access to services, enabling individuals and families to meet their basic needs, maintain a good quality of life, and realise their potential.

This investment will help to improve local access to services, promote social inclusion and access to employment, and deliver supportive activities that enhance the physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of PSIP. Feedback from funded organisations, which received grants of up to £5,000, and from service users engaged through these projects, has been overwhelmingly positive. Organisations have delivered a range of early intervention and community cohesion initiatives, including cultural Cook IT Programmes, women-only physical activity sessions, conversational English classes and art therapy programmes.

The project supported over 135 beneficiaries directly, with a further 100 individuals attending the International Women's Day Cultural Inclusion Celebration hosted by the Ashton Centre in North Belfast.

Image 30: International Women's Day Cultural Inclusion Celebration







Cultural Competency Framework

The Trust continues to deliver Cultural Competency Training through both face-to-face and e-learning formats to support Health and Social Care staff in providing more inclusive and equitable services.

As part of the regional Cultural Competency Framework, the training encourages staff to reflect on their own practice, increase their understanding of cultural diversity, and strengthen their confidence in working effectively with individuals from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

The programme forms part of ongoing efforts to reduce health inequalities and improve engagement with ethnically diverse communities across HSC services.

Image 31: Practitioners Toolkit



Training completed by staff in the reporting period included:

- 105 staff attended face to face sessions
- 1948 staff completed e learning modules

As part of wider regional work to improve culturally responsive services, Belfast Trust led a regional piece of work to redevelop the **Ethnic Minority Mental Health Toolkit.** The Practitioner's Toolkit was launched on Good Relations Week 2025 to support culturally competent practice across services. Developed as a set of visual, easy-to-use posters, the resource provides concise reminders on communication, barriers to access and available supports, with QR codes connecting staff to more detailed guidance, community resources and referral pathways.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Belfast Trust has responsibility for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) aged 15 – 21+ years. There is a regional forum for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children which ensures sharing of good practice.

Once a child is identified as being separated or unaccompanied, an immediate referral is made to ensure that an appropriate assessment of the child's needs is undertaken.

The Trust is mindful of the difficult journey each of the young people have been on, each young person is supported in a person-centred way. For example:

- Accommodation needs
- Communication – the need for interpreters
- Legal representation
- Advocacy
- Physical health needs i.e. access to a health assessment, NINES and GP, potentially consideration of a forensic medical examination if the young person has been trafficked
- Emotional/mental health – referral to therapeutic services or potentially sexual assault referral centre, discussions around cultural differences and acceptable behaviours in the UK
- Education – assessment undertaken regarding appropriate education provision

Bespoke training has also been developed for staff working with these children/young people. It was co-produced with VOYPIC and the young people. This training is for all staff who work directly or indirectly with unaccompanied and separated children, including Social Care Workers, Social Work Assistants, Personal Advisors, Student Social Workers, AYE Social Workers, Social Workers, Senior Practitioners, Managers and Principals.

Family Help Clinic

The Family Help Clinic provides a family-centred, holistic service for families seeking international protection. The clinic brings together a range of key services through a multi-disciplinary team (MDT), including Specialist Health Visiting, Specialist Midwifery, NINES Screening, Sure Start, Barnardo's, the Education Authority, the Trust's Inclusion Officer, and Sexual and Reproductive Health services.

Newly arrived families are offered an appointment at the clinic, with a professionally qualified interpreter arranged where required. Families are seen by the relevant services during a single visit and leave with tailored information, resources, contact details, and an agreed plan of ongoing support and care.

This coordinated approach has significantly improved access to services for asylum-seeking families with a pre-school child or a pregnant woman within the family unit. The time taken to access key support services has reduced from approximately six months to six weeks, helping to reduce vulnerability and strengthen safeguarding arrangements.

In response to service user feedback and identified need, the clinic has also adapted its delivery model by relocating services closer to where families live. Clinic venues have included the Bradbury Wellbeing Centre (South Belfast), Ashton Youth Centre (North Belfast) and St Comgall's (West Belfast).

Additional Progress

- NINES contributed to the working group for the *Make My Voice Heard* Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) project, which was launched in May 2025.
- NINES completed two site visits to observe and learn from service provision for people seeking international protection, including the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) Hub and accommodation facilities in Glasgow.
- The NINES team completed bespoke Trauma-Informed Practice training to further enhance service delivery for vulnerable groups.
- NINES participated in the Big Community Information Fair organised by Queen's University Belfast, providing information and raising awareness of available services and support.

Image 32: NINES at Big Community Information Fair



Inclusive and Welcoming Chaplaincy Team

Meeting all Spiritual Needs: New Quiet Room with Wudu at RVH

The RVH Quiet Room has undergone a full refurbishment and redecoration, with the addition of two Wudu stations in the washroom.

Wudu is a Muslim cleansing ritual performed before prayer. Having Wudus in our Quiet Room is an important step in creating a space that meets the spiritual needs of our diverse workforce and service users, a space where everyone feels respected, accepted and included.

Image 33: Quiet Room & Chaplaincy Service



Celebrating Spiritual Care Week

During Spiritual Care Week (13–17 October), the Chaplaincy team set up informative displays across multiple sites to raise awareness of the service and provide helpful resources to anyone who needed them. In addition, Chaplains offered a 'Blessing of Hands' to those who requested it - a meaningful gesture that reflects our commitment to holistic care and support for staff and service users alike.

Multifaith and Belief Staff Training

During Good Relations 2025, the Chaplaincy team facilitated a Multifaith and Belief Training event at Belfast City Hospital, featuring representatives from Chaplaincy, Jehovah's Witnesses, Humanist and non-religious perspectives, as well as members of the Chinese community.



The session provided valuable insights into diverse spiritualities and cultural practices, helping staff enhance their understanding of holistic care.

BSO Regional Interpreting Service

Training

Belfast Trust works alongside BSO's Regional Interpreting Service to deliver various training opportunities for staff to support their awareness and understanding of working with language interpreters. Between March 2025 – April 2026 approximately 70 staff attended a variety of sessions including

- How to Book an Interpreter
- Working Well with Interpreters
- Interpreting Service Awareness Session

It is hoped that following the training participants will have a greater understanding of the NI HSC Interpreting Service, the role of Community Interpreters, the importance of professional interpreting in promoting equality of access, the risks of using untrained interpreters, and the skills required to work effectively with interpreters in practice.

BHSCT Interpreting Requests

Table 3: Requests 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

HSC Organisation	Requests	Cancellations	Non provisions	Out of Hours
Belfast Trust	**54725**	6366	2801	954

Image 34: Interpreting Requests Regionally

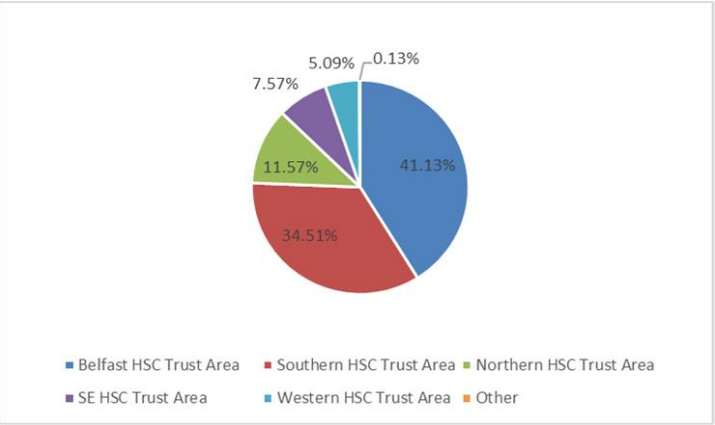
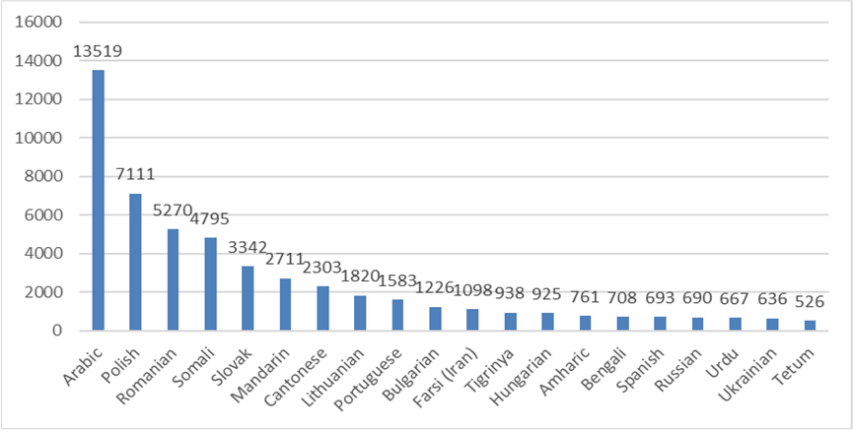


Table 4: Belfast Trust Top 10 Languages 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

1. Arabic	13519
2. Polish	7111
3. Romanian	5270
4. Somali	4795
5. Slovak	3342
6. Mandarin	2711
7. Cantonese	2303
8. Lithuanian	1820
9. Portuguese	1583
10. Bulgarian	1226

Image 35: Language Requests through BSO NI HSC Interpreting Service



Equality Focus

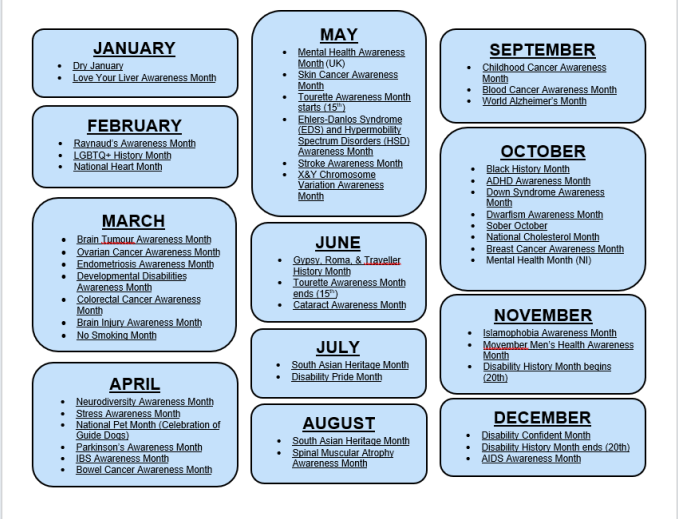
New Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Calendar for 2026

Belfast Trust's Planning & Equality Team launched a new calendar for 2026, outlining various celebrations and events taking place throughout the year related to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

This interactive calendar includes links for each event/celebration/date highlighted so that staff can delve deeper into learning more about what the occasion signifies. Teams can use the calendar to keep track of upcoming events throughout the year and decide among their teams should they wish to mark these in some way in accordance with the Trust's Observing and Celebrating Events policy

Image 36: 2026 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Calendar





Equality Bites Newsletter Reimagined

The Belfast Trust's "Equality Bites" newsletter has reached its 16th edition. The newsletter underwent a review in late 2025, to redefine the objectives behind the newsletter. Some key stakeholders were asked for their feedback about what they would like to see, and what they would find helpful in the newsletter.

In this reporting period, our Equality Bites Newsletter has been reimagined with the aim of promoting good practice, encouraging action, and celebrating partnership working and opportunities to promote equality, diversity, and inclusive practice. The first edition of the new format was relaunched in July 2026. The newsletter is available to all staff and is shared with some 600 stakeholders via our newsletter mailing list and is published on the public website. Alternative formats can be made available on request

Image 37 & 38: BHSCT Equality Bites Newsletter Editions 15 & 16

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Every Customer Counts Campaign Extended

Belfast Trust is a signatory of the Every Customer Counts' – a campaign spearheaded by the Equality Commission for NI 'campaign. Using this framework, the Trust has undertaken a number of projects aimed at improving the accessibility of services, buildings and facilities for anyone who is disabled, whether a visitor, carer, patient or service user.

Services currently engaged with this initiative are,

- **Bridgewater Suite** - Belfast City Hospital Tower Block. This facility is an outpatient department with a day treatment unit for those undergoing cancer treatment.
- **Emergency Department**- Royal Victoria Hospital. This team provides immediate and life-saving care for serious injuries and health conditions.
- **Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) clinic**- Royal Victoria Hospital. This department specialises in sexual health, providing tests and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

Shopmobility & Sighted Guide Services @ Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH)

Our Shopmobility and Sighted Guide services are available to anyone who requires support to access buildings and services across our largest acute site at the RVH.

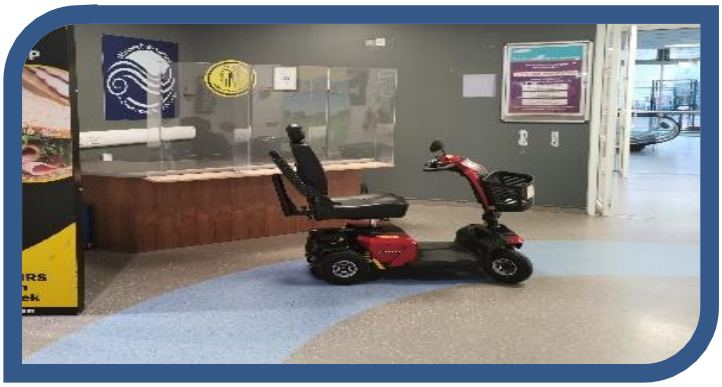
Both services are located within the main foyer of the RVH and continue to experience growing demand.

Image 39 & 40: Shopmobility & Sighted Guide Service Logos

In partnership with Shopmobility Belfast, electric scooters and manual wheelchairs are provided free of charge to patients, service users and visitor who require them. This gives many disabled people greater independence when attending appointments, visiting a loved one or when being admitted or discharged from hospital. The contract is monitored and reviewed annually to ensure it continues to deliver value for money and positive outcomes for those that use the service.

Our Shopmobility service was historically only available from the main RVH carpark, however it now has a more visible and accessible presence in the main foyer on the RVH site.

Image 41: Shopmobility Scooter



Since relocating from the RVH carpark to main hospital foyer there has been an increase in activity across the service, reflected in higher levels of equipment and sighted guide bookings, advice giving, assessments and reassessments. This has also had a positive reduction on pressures on portering services by enabling more patients and visitors to access independent mobility support.

In addition, our Sighted Guide Service for service users attending the RVH site can be booked via Belfast Shopmobility at the RVH and is a tangible demonstration of Belfast Trust's continued commitment to delivering accessible services to disabled people.

Throughout the reporting period posters and flyers were co-produced with members of the Disability Committee to promote this valuable service. The posters and flyers supported a variety of awareness raising activities with staff and service users including awareness days, pop-up stands and information sharing on the Trust's Intranet.

Image 42 & 43: Shopmobility & Sighted Guide Service Poster



Activity for Shopmobility@RVH in the reporting period April 2025 – March 2026 includes:

- Equipment Hires = 493
- Sighted Guide Bookings = 795
- Advice Giving/Sign Posting Calls = 2547
- Assessments/Reassessments = 166

Demand by Clinical Area:

- Wards: 24%
- ENT/Eye Clinics: 6%
- Cardiology: 11%
- Respiratory: 4%
- Acute Pain clinic: 3%
- Diabetic clinic: 10%
- Other: 41%

Renewal of AccessAble @ RVH Project



Image 44: Alistair Campbell Director of Performance, Planning & Informatics, Ellen Ilot from AccessAble, Conor O'Kane and mum who are Outpatient Service Users at Royal Victoria Hospital, Orla Barron and Estella Dorrian Planning & Equality Team and David Porter Director of Capital Re-Development.

£23k of funding was secured to finance the three-year renewal of a significant AccessAble project on the RVH site. Renewal means that the 150 digital access guides available to the public which improve wayfinding and accessibility across this busy and complex acute site will be improved and will be hosted, reviewed and updated by access auditors from AccessAble.

Currently, Belfast Trust Detailed Access Guides cover those facilities, wards and departments which the public can access at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) and the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. The new contract will be extended to the Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital.

The Detailed Access Guides are available to the public via Belfast Trust and AccessAble's website and AccessAble's website.

AccessAble guides are online resources that help people reach specific destinations within the hospital. Each Detailed Access Guide describes the patient journey and gives a disabled person, carers and those with long-term health conditions the information required to plan their visit in advance. The Guides include photographs and detailed directions and cover everything from arrival on the RVH site, to the facilities throughout the hospital, including lifts, stairs, reception areas, consultation rooms or wards and accessible toilets.

In the reporting period, **Belfast Trust RVH AccessAble Guides** were viewed **48,252** times by **31,163** users.

In addition to the online guides for the public, best practice guides and a low-cost improvement matrix and RAG status matrix were produced to assist and prioritise Belfast Trust Estates and Capital Development Teams.

Image 45: AccessAble logo



TILII Translates: Easy Read Translation Service

The Trust has an annual contract with TILII Translates as part of its range of Day Opportunities for people with a learning disability. TILII Translates is an easy read translation service involving men and women with a learning disability

Image 46: TILII Translates logo

Through this translation service, TILII Translates have been transcribing information for Belfast Trust into easy-to-understand formats so that people with a learning disability understand complex information, and can make informed choices and are more independent in terms of health and social care.

The key to easy reads is the use of simple words, avoiding jargon, using short sentences to explain key messages and pictures to help explain what is being said. The Trust have recently benefitted from the easyread version of the corporate plan, which TILII transcribed into easyread.

Belfast Pride

Belfast Trust is committed to ensuring that its services, facilities and workplace are inclusive and welcoming to everyone. In 2025, Belfast Trust marked Belfast Pride through a number of activities.

Stride for Pride

To promote both physical and mental health and wellbeing, 2 staff walks were organised across 2 Belfast Trust sites. Staff were also encouraged to take independent walks as part of Stride for Pride if they were unable to attend the organised events.

Rainbow Badge Initiative

Belfast Trust launched the hugely successful Rainbow Badge initiative for staff in 2022 as part of its Pride celebrations. Staff have the opportunity to request a rainbow badge, which can be proudly work in support of diversity, equality, and inclusion relating to LGBTQ+ awareness. The badge is an outward sign that wearers are open to listening and can signpost to resources appropriately. To join the Rainbow Badge initiative, staff were asked to sign the online pledge.

Badge-wearers shared some of their reasons for doing so in 2025:

""*I believe every person I come into contact with on a daily basis deserves to be seen for who they are. Nobody should feel marginalised by myself or my colleagues, especially within a vulnerable environment such as a hospital or care setting."*

"*I am a gay man and was involved in supporting LGBTQ+ young people for a long time in my youth work roles. I saw first-hand what it means for LGBTQ+ people of all ages to be able to see an individual in their environment that they can approach to talk to about issues affecting them. Visibility is important to everyone*."

"*I've had too many colleagues and friends not bring their true selves to work and have seen the stress, pain and fatigue in hiding part of their life."*

Belfast Trust Support for Unpaid Carers

The Belfast Trust Carer Support Service has **strengthened its services** for support for unpaid carers during 25/26 both through its operational delivery, strategic focus and regional work on improving services to ensure they are carer-focused.

"What to expect when someone is in the last days and hours of life": Information for families and caregivers" booklet:

Palliative care teams across Belfast and Northern Health Trusts collaborated to develop the booklet "What to Expect When Someone is in the Last Days and Hours of Life: Information for Families and Caregivers." The resource was co-produced with people with lived experience to provide clear, compassionate and accessible information for families and informal carers supporting someone approaching the end of life, regardless of care setting.

Available in both digital and print formats, the booklet promotes equality of access to information by supporting the different communication and information needs of patients, families and carers.

Image 47 & 48: What to expect when someone is in the last days and hours of life: Information for families and caregivers" booklet





Belfast Trust Carer Strategy – Caring Together in Belfast 2024-2029 and beyond

Belfast Trust launched the new Carer Strategy together with carers, families, the Belfast Trust Carers Network and its partners in the Community and Voluntary Sector in Belfast City Hall on the 24.9.2025. The event led by Patricia Gordon, Interim Chairperson and facilitated by the Lord Mayor gave recognition and value to the work of unpaid carers in Belfast. The event presented the new strategy alongside a series of new educational carer videos. “The Carer Voice – What Matters to me”

Carers’ Stories | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website

180 views have taken place since the 1.10.2025.

Image 49: Carers Stories



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4 priorities identified include:

- Reaching all Carers
- Navigating Carers Support
- Supporting Carer health and wellbeing
- Connecting with Carers

In this reporting period the following **activities** have been achieved:

- 21% (959) increase in carers registered with Carers support service = total of 5953 carers.
- A successful Charitable Funds application has been made for a temporary Senior Peer Carer Support and Information Worker for ethnically diverse communities to improve access.
- A Carers respite event held with ethnically diverse communities in April 25
- Carer Awareness Training Sessions for 489 Staff delivered
- Faith Communities Outreach initiative – Carer Support Service in partnership with Trust Chaplaincy Service.
- Partnership with QUB Widening Participation Outreach Officers to reach young carers
- Take 5 funding secured for a Young Carer event in partnership with Art-Cart and Action for Children Young Carer Service in Feb 26.
- Carer Education sessions for 70 Social Work University Students in QUB delivered by carers and Trust staff
- Carer Information Sessions delivered to 186 Trust staff.

- Carer Information Hubs developed
- A new Carer Network Recruitment Campaign was launched in September 2025. Five information sessions were held in Oct & Nov 25. The sessions have been coproduced and cofacilitated by a Carer from the Carer Network.
- 4300 staff members have viewed the Carer Support Service Loop site.
- 525 Carer contacts were made during 23 Clinics & Health Fairs.
- 3 MyCare Information sessions with 40 attendances.

Image 50: Carer Support



In addition, the following services were delivered to carers by Belfast Trust:

- Carer Counselling
- 1391 Complimentary Therapy Services
- 7 Peer Carer Support Groups alongside advocacy and information services.
- 2482 one-off payments were made to unpaid carers which assisted with deprivation and financial pressures.
- 1637 Carer Assessments were completed.
- The Hello Carers Activity Programme provided 5020 support hours with 2656 attendances.

Image 51: BHSCT Carers Support



Preparation is underway for Carers Week 8-14 June 2026 – the theme is "Building Carer Friendly Communities"

Image 52: Carers Events



New palliative care service for Belfast to support end of life care

23rd January 2026



Image:53 L-R: Clare Marie Passmore (Service User Representative), Paula Heneghan (Marie Curie), Aisling Pelan (Belfast Trust), Colin McMullan (Belfast Trust), Patricia Gordon (Acting Chair, Belfast Trust), Health Minister Mike Nesbitt, Gemma Aspinall (Northern Ireland Hospice), Dr Grainne Bonnar, Dr Joan Regan.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in partnership with Northern Ireland Hospice and Marie Curie has created a new specialist home-based care service for adult palliative and end of life patients in Belfast.

The Belfast Community Palliative Care Hub has cared for more than a thousand patients since it began in April 2025 with the intervention of specialist palliative care professionals ensuring excellent symptom management for patients. This meant avoiding attendance at busy Emergency Departments, reducing stress for their carers, and ensuring dignity and comfort in their final hours.

The Hub is a single point of referral for the Belfast area. It was created following a review of services for patients with Palliative and End of Life Care needs and it means patients are less likely to go to a hospital Emergency Department when experiencing pain or other symptoms.

Palliative care is the active, holistic care of patients with advanced, progressive illness. It aims to improve the quality of life for patients facing serious illness and for their families. It involves a

multidisciplinary approach to patient care, with input from medical and nursing staff, social workers, and other allied health professionals.

The Belfast Community Palliative Care Hub currently accepts referrals from clinical professionals and the potential for patients and their carers to self-refer is currently being explored.

Colin McMullan, Interim Director of Adult Community, Older People's Services and Allied Health Professionals at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust said:

"This project is unique in the region, bringing statutory and voluntary sectors together to provide seamless and coordinated care for the sake of patients in the Belfast area. Courageous, compassionate, and collegiate leadership was displayed by staff of all levels in the three partner organisations who joined as one team to make a difference to the delivery of patient care.

They set out to address the issues that really matter to patients at end-of-life, including confidence that they are in the right system, that the team is fully connected and communicating efficiently, and that they have easier access to expertise.

We have ensured there is easy re-referral, using one telephone number, if the patient's needs increase. We are pleased that we will be able to open the service to self-referral by patients and carers later this year."

Gemma Aspinall, Chief Care Officer for Northern Ireland Hospice said:

"This Hub brings health and social care trust teams and, for the first time, two hospice organisations together to strengthen specialist palliative care for patients and families, shaped by the voice of service users. By sharing expertise, we ensure care is guided by what matters most to each individual, helping people remain at home with dignity and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. I am proud of the staff across Northern Ireland Hospice and our partners for collaborating so effectively.

With over 40 years' experience delivering specialist palliative care in the community, Northern Ireland Hospice is rooted in high-quality, compassionate care as we grow our reach and impact. Collaboration has long driven better outcomes, and this Hub shows how specialist palliative care can work in the same connected way. As demand rises, integrated approaches will be essential, reflecting our shared commitment to keeping patients and families at the heart of everything we do."

Paula Heneghan, Associate Director of Strategic Partnerships and Services at Marie Curie NI, said:

"We are delighted to formally launch the Belfast Palliative Care Hub today, something which has been a long-term ambition of Marie Curie, and which marks a significant advancement for patients and their families. We would like to express our gratitude to all the partners and in particular to the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland, for its support in bringing the vision for the Hub to reality.

This new partnership initiative will enhance the delivery of palliative and end-of-life care by providing a single point of access for essential services. The Hub is designed to enhance the quality and efficiency of palliative care within the community. By adopting a more coordinated

approach to care delivery, we can reduce the reliance on hospital and emergency department visits, ensuring that more patients receive the care they need in the comfort of their own homes.

With the growing demand for palliative care services, the Belfast Palliative Care Hub aims to serve as a model for future initiatives across Northern Ireland. We hope this approach will inspire similar developments, ultimately benefiting even more patients and families."

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said:

"I warmly welcome the Belfast Community Palliative Care Hub, which is helping people spend their final days where most wish to be — at home, surrounded by those they love. It reflects the belief of Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement, that 'You matter because you are you, and you matter to the last moment of your life.'

"This partnership helps reduce the stress of avoidable hospital visits and ensures dignity, comfort and continuity of care. It shows what is possible when the Trust, Northern Ireland Hospice and Marie Curie unite around the needs of patients and families. I sincerely thank all involved for their compassion, innovation and commitment to improving palliative care in Belfast."

Rain Project (Recognise Adjust Include Notify)

This project was co-produced with Speech and Language Therapist Angela Crocker, ALN Kelly Anderson, Clinical Lecturer Dr Teresa Green, Deputy Director of Nursing Clare Shannon, Lead Nurse Neurology Monica Curran, service users, families, and other professionals.

The project was about "improving visibility enabled identification and action, resulting in sustained system-level improvement. Key outcomes from See me, Support me training."

This project has shown an amazing update and improvement assisting in support for people with Learning Disability within Acute Hospitals. This assisted with the development of Communication Packs being compiled and shared across Acute sites; LD encompass flags at 100% within the Trust; highlighting the ALN service across all sites; and additional training.

Image 54: RAIN Project Logo



East CNLD Team Wellbeing Wednesdays

East CNLD Team have commenced Wellbeing Wednesdays within Edgcumbe Day Centre. These sessions happen on a monthly basis, supporting and educating service users with Learning Disabilities in best practice in looking after themselves. It highlights the importance of looking after yourself in supporting your health and wellbeing and serves to empower learning disabled people.

Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children - Cubbie

Healthcare encounters often involve unfamiliar, invasive, or painful procedures that can understandably lead to stress and distress. For children and young people with additional sensory, developmental or disability needs, these experiences can be even more challenging.

Psychological Services in the Belfast Trust worked in collaboration with Little Heroes during the reporting period to prepare for the launch of the Cubbie sensory pod. This work marks another significant step in creating environments that are neuro inclusive and trauma informed. The Cubbie provides an evidence based, personalised calming space using adjustable light, sound, and visual settings. Situated in the RBHSC foyer, the Cubbie is wheelchair accessible and available to young patients attending on an outpatient basis or staying on a ward. The Cubbie officially opened in May 2026.

Evidence consistently shows that when children feel more regulated and less anxious throughout their healthcare journey, assessments are more accurate and outcomes improve. The Cubbie pod adds a child centred intervention that helps young patients settle, feel grounded, and experience a greater sense of safety when interacting with staff.

Although evaluation is still in its early stages, initial findings indicate clear improvements in regulation and overall healthcare experience.

Image 55 & 56: Cubbie Launch



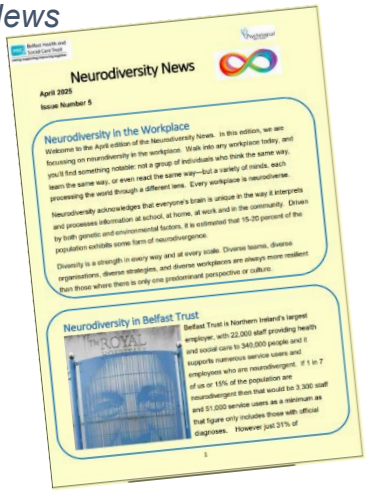


Neurodiversity

In the reporting period, Belfast Trust has done extensive work in the area of Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence. A Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services has been implemented, and they chair the Belfast Trust's Neurodiversity Champion Network. This is a network of over 40 BHSCT staff who have undertaken 3 modules of training to equip them with knowledge around Neurodivergence, different forms of Neurodivergence, and how this differs from Neurodiversity.

The Trust's first Neurodiversity Newsletter was launched in October 2024, with the 7th edition launched in November 2025. The newsletter is a useful tool in sharing information on neurodiversity as well as promoting news, training opportunities, resources and research.

Image 57 & 58: Neurodiversity News





The Champion's Network developed a Neurodiversity Champion's Logo which launched in March 2026 following a competitive process within the Network.

Image 59: Neurodiversity Champion Logo



The Belfast Autism Forum also has representation from BHSCT staff, as well as from Community & Voluntary Sector organisations, SPPG, Belfast City Council and others. This group shares good practice, ongoing areas of work, and highlights areas for challenge/improvements to be made.

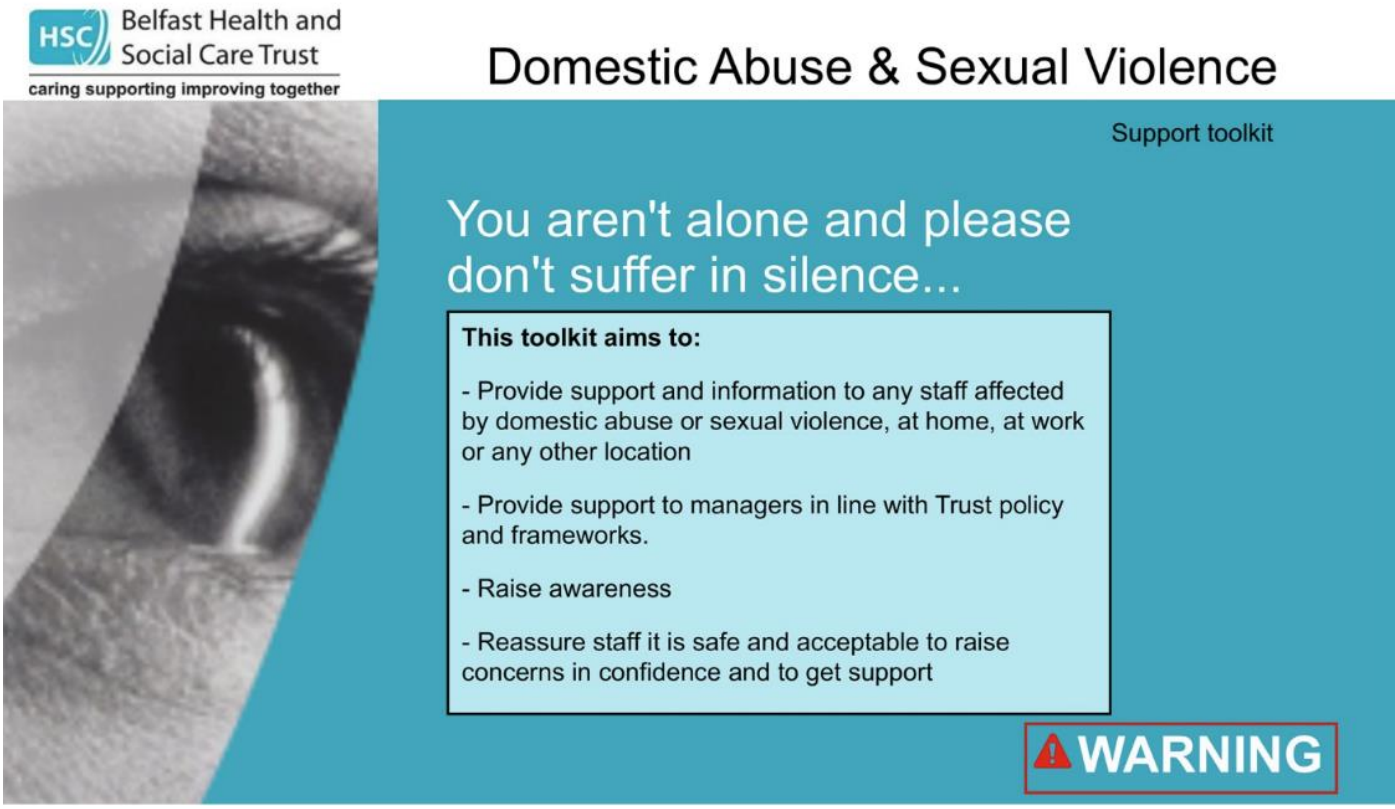
Trust Domestic & Sexual Abuse/Violence Supports for Staff

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 the reporting period, additional training was provided by Nexus for the Trust's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Officers.

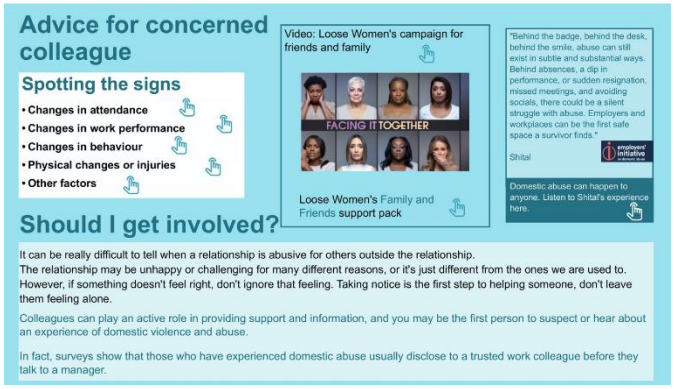
During the reporting period, the Trust's Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit was reviewed and updated by the Planning and Equality Team and Employment Equality colleagues. The toolkit was developed in partnership with the Belfast Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategic Partnership, which provided specialist input and advice. The toolkit provides staff with information on recognising domestic and sexual violence and abuse, accessing support, and signposting to relevant internal and external services.

Image 60: BHSCT Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit



Staff are also supported through the Trust's [Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence-Abuse-Policy-2025.doc] which provides guidance for staff and managers, promotes a supportive and confidential environment, and outlines the practical support available to employees affected by abuse.

Image 61: Advice for Staff



To promote the Domestic & Sexual Abuse Support Service, the Planning & Equality team produce **15,000 branded Annual Calendars each year.** These are distributed widely across the organisation.

Image 62: 2026 DVSA Calendar



In addition, the Trust continues to organise an annual **Christmas Appeal** in support of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and The Welcome Organisation. Working with both organisations, staff from across the Trust donate gifts for women and children affected by domestic abuse, including those staying in Women's Aid refuges or accessing community-based support, as well as people experiencing homelessness who are supported by The Welcome Organisation. Staff continue to show great generosity, with donations including toys, clothing, toiletries, vouchers and financial contributions helping to bring some support and comfort to people during the Christmas period.

The Chief Executive and Finance Officer from Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid, Kelly Andrews and Liz Johnston and Kieran Hughes from the Welcome Organisation came to the Trust to receive the donations.

Image 63: Christmas Appeal Donations



'To the staff of Belfast Trust your generosity has placed joy into the hands of children who need it most. Every toy, every gift, every act of kindness is a reminder that compassion still shapes our communities. Thank you for choosing to support Women Aid'

Kelly Andrews, CEO of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone from the Belfast Trust who donated so generously to their annual Christmas appeal for The Welcome Organisation and Women's Aid. The items donated will be distributed directly to people experiencing homelessness in Belfast over the Christmas period and beyond. The continued support of the Trust staff, who have organised the appeal for many years, is phenomenal. Your generosity has a real and positive impact on our work and in turn on the lives of the people we support."

Kieran Hughes, the Welcome Organisation

Partnership Working to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Belfast Trust participated in the Nexus NI *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Take a Pledge* programme, reaffirming its commitment to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive working environment for staff affected by, or at risk of, abuse. The Trust further strengthened this work through the launch of its first network of 33 trained EVAWG Champions. These champions act as a safe point of contact for colleagues, provide support to those who disclose abuse, promote a positive workplace culture and challenge harmful behaviours. The Trust also continued to support staff affected by domestic abuse through the implementation of Safe Leave arrangements, enabling employees to access paid leave for activities connected to domestic abuse, including legal appointments, relocation and support services.

This work contributes to wider efforts to end violence against women and girls and supports the Trust's aim of creating a safer and more respectful environment for staff and service users.

Image 64: BHSCT NEXUS Pledge



Ensuring Services are Accessible to NI d/Deaf Community

Extensive work has been undertaken by Belfast Trust in partnership with SPPG, Sign Language Interactions (SLI) and British Deaf Association (BDA) to enhance staff awareness around the potential barrier faced by the d/Deaf community and in particular to ensure staff are aware of the Regional Communication Support Service. Specifically, work included:

- Participation in 4 Task & Finish Groups to consider awareness, education, complaint pathways and performance issues.
- Creation of a clear Complaint pathway for service users, interpreters, carers and staff.
- Creation of two posters – one for staff to advise how to book an interpreter and/or other communication support and one for Deaf community in terms of the service. Posters were disseminated across Belfast Trust.
- Regular communications issued via staff intranet regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements.
- Sign Language and Deaf Awareness Weeks celebrated in March and September to raise awareness with staff re legal duty to book an interpreter and how to book an interpreter.
- 4 training sessions organised for approx. 200 staff across Belfast Trust delivered by BDA and Sign Language Interpreter from SLI re Deaf Equality and Good Practice when using an Interpreter and How to book an interpreter.
- Bespoke Deaf Equality Training attended by approx. 120 Belfast Trust Emergency Department Staff with 16 staff funded to complete Level 1 of BSL.
- Coffee morning celebratory event with new Level 1 graduates with members of the Deaf Sign Language Users Forum.
- The Trust in partnership with the British Deaf Association (BDA) developed and launched 3 videos to help raise staff awareness of the barriers d/Deaf community face when

accessing our services and to improve experiences. These videos were disseminated via the staff intranet and are available via the accessible and inclusive communication toolkit created by the Planning and Equality team.

- Continued success and growth of the vibrant Belfast Trust Sign Language Deaf Users Forum.
- Belfast Trust worked with the BDA to identify ways to improve the experience of d/Deaf service users attending Emergency Department in RVH. An initial walkthrough found that there were a number of changes that could be made to tackle some of the barriers that existed. As a result, 120 ED staff undertook training in D/Deaf awareness, and 15 staff have completed Level 1 qualifications in BSL.

Image 65: Sign Language Interactions Logo

Deaf Sign Language User Forum

Belfast Trust co-chairs the Deaf Sign Language User Forum with the British Deaf Association (BDA). The forum brings together Deaf service users, carers and Trust staff.

Biannual workshops lead by the Involvement and Partnership Team in partnership with BDA to ensure the Deaf communities experiences and perspectives help shape service improvements across the Trust. Services engaged with the Forum in 2025/26 include:

- RVH Emergency Department to inform and influence work in ED around better modes of communication and increase staff awareness
- Complaints Team to inform communication methods for people who use Sign Language as their first language

The Forum continues to play an important role in ensuring Deaf people's voices are heard and acted upon, helping to create services that are more accessible, inclusive and responsive to their needs.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)

Belfast Trust continues to work to embed its statutory duty to involve and consult with service users, carers and the public under the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009. Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) empowers and enables service users, carers and the public to inform and influence the commissioning, planning, delivery and evaluation of health and social care services in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them. This work is

undertaken in line with the Trust's Involvement Strategy - 'Involving You from "Them and Us" to "We", which will be reviewed and up-dated in 2026/27.

Involvement Network

The Trust continues to host a virtual Involvement Network, which engages service users and carers who receive regular communications including Newsletters, opportunities to get involved and attend training to support their involvement journey. Recruitment is on-going with 124 service users and carers currently involved. To support service users and carers getting involved, the Team delivered 3 Service user Carer Opportunity to Participate and Engage (SCOPE) training sessions over the year, equating to 31 service users, carers and the public attending to better equip them with knowledge and skills to get involved.

Image 66: Involvement and You



The Trust has 24 Service User and Carer Groups, who get involved to help shape services and includes the Carers Network, Deaf Sign Language User Forum and Prosthetic User Forum.

Learning Disability Forum

The forum continues to meet on a quarterly basis and is a partnership approach between Belfast Trust, service users who have a learning disability and their carers to help improve services. On 18th December 2025 a celebration event took place as part of the Learning Disability Forum and celebrated the launch of three important co-produced resources:

- A Short Breaks Resource
- A resource to support healthy eating for adults with a learning disability
- Two leaflets produced by the Speech and Language service in relation to swallow assessments and communication.

Each resource reflects the significant hard work and commitment of staff, people with lived experience, and carers, who worked together throughout the process. Their collaboration demonstrates the value of co production; creating resources that are meaningful, accessible, and truly shaped by those who use them. The event celebrated these achievements, recognised everyone's contributions, and helped set the direction for future involvement.

Image 67: Learning Disability Forum

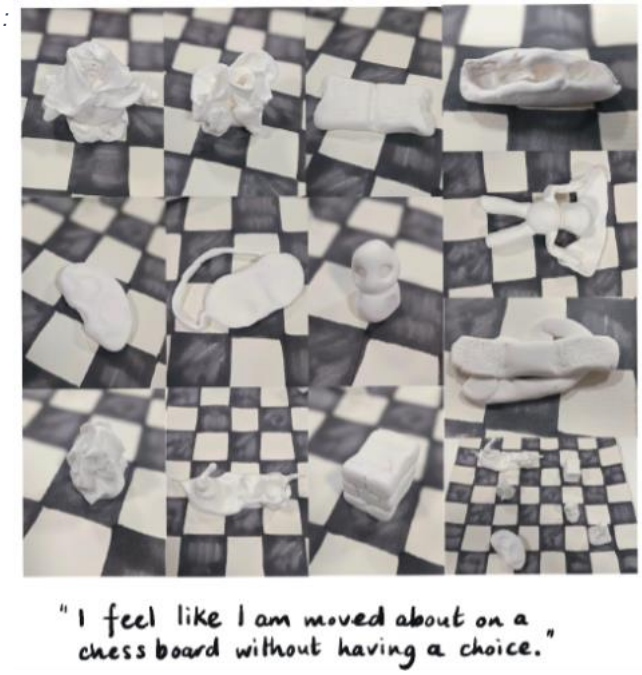


Connected Collective Young People's Group

Connected Collective is a co-produced involvement group for care-experienced young people, providing a safe and creative space where members can share their experiences and influence the development of services. Working alongside Trust staff and the Trust's Artist in Residence, young people have helped shape training materials and awareness resources designed to improve how social work and social care staff involve young people in decisions affecting their lives.

During 2025/26, the group delivered two art exhibitions showcasing the lived experiences of care-experienced young people and produced a series of videos to encourage reflection and discussion among staff. These outputs have supported greater understanding of the experiences of young people in care and promoted meaningful conversations about participation, relationships and practice.

Image 68: Connected Collective Artwork



Trust Reader Panel

The Trust reader panel reviews public facing documents to ensure they are accessible, easy to follow and written in plain English. The Panel has 29 members and received 39 requests during this period to review information including posters, patient information leaflets, videos, websites and booklets.

Image 69: Reader Panel meeting



Involvefest November 2025

The Involvement Team hosted a range of events over the Trust hospital sites to raise awareness of involvement to staff, service users and carers. Over the week, a number of webinars were held to showcase involvement in practice to staff.

Emergency Department Survey

A survey was undertaken to help understand why people were attending EDs. Between 10th-16th November 2025, people attending both adult and children's emergency departments were asked to complete a survey either on-line or via hard copy. Over the week the Trust received a total of 562 responses, (Adults ED Survey – 434 responses and Children's ED Survey - 128 responses). The survey responses for the adult Emergency Departments have been analysed and presented to the Trust Unscheduled Care Programme Board.

Involvement Newsletters

The Involvement Team developed the following newsletters to share work being progressed:

- Involvement and You Issue 13 Summer 25
- Involvement and You Issue 14 Winter 25
- Involvement and You Issue 15 Spring 26
- Reader Panel Newsletter Spring 2025
- Reader Panel Newsletter Winter 2025
- Learning Disability Newsletter Issue 6 Winter 2025

Involvement and Partnership Training and Resources

The Involvement and Partnership team offer a range of training. The Engage and Involve training for staff seeks to build knowledge and skills to undertake PPI. Modules include Introduction to PPI, Getting people to Participate in PPI, Facilitation skills for PPI, Introduction to Co-production for PPI and Plain English. SCOPE is available for and service users and carers to support knowledge and skills development for involvement.

A number of resources have been developed during this period for staff including.



How to plan a PPI event - 1

This resource provides step by step guidance for staff to design and deliver their own involvement events, from small focus groups to lager workshops and conferences. Printable checklist included.



[Venue Guide - 1]

This guide provides staff across the Trust with information on accessible venues across Belfast (Trust and community) that are suitable for involvement events for service users and carers.



[Day Centre Workshops - A Guide - 1]

Building on the successful carer workshop in 2025, this resource was developed to enable other Trust Day Centres to host focus groups or workshop. The guide provides step by step guidance to design and deliver involvement within the day centre setting.

Supporting Staff: The Belfast Way

Staff in the Employment Equality and the Improving Working Lives teams within our Human Resources and Organisational Development Directorate work with staff and managers to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion, to tackle inequalities and prevent discrimination and harassment.

The team achieve this not only by giving advice, signposting and training but also through an extensive range of online and in person resources, initiatives and projects that have been developed with staff, trade unions and colleagues across the Region. An integral part of this work is supporting staff to achieve a balanced work/home life and the promotion of good health and wellbeing. We have developed a comprehensive range of support resources to raise and increase awareness of options available and provide bespoke training to teams.

Image 70: Improving working lives resource pack



As highlighted in the image above, we have an extensive range of virtual, page tiger resources to inform staff about support staff can access to improve their Working Life and to improve their Wellbeing: **Improving Working Lives** Staff are enabled to make healthier lifestyle choices, including financial wellbeing support and signposting to a range of innovative, accessible resources.

Ongoing support for Working Parents

Belfast Trust works in partnership with **Parenting Focus** (formerly Parenting NI) to provide invaluable information for parents and carers on a range of topics from school and education, early year's development, supporting teens, health and childcare. We provide staff with a comprehensive range of information sessions including; parenting your teen, dads' emotional health, digital safety.

Support for our staff as Carers

Image 71: Carer Support Service logo

The Trust recognises the challenges that our staff experience as they combine their employment with caring commitments. We have a wide range of support resources available for carers and this is available on our bWell Website As part of our Carers Framework, the Trust provides monthly, virtual sessions on a range of topics for staff as carers and these are popular and well attended. Recent sessions included, caring for someone with cancer, carers rights and entitlements, and a dedicated self-care session was provided to staff to support their wellbeing. The Alzheimer's Society provided a session to equip staff with the knowledge and skills required and helping staff better understand the challenges faced by a loved one with Alzheimer's.

2025 Summer Childcare Scheme

A successful Summer Scheme ran across four sites from 2nd July to 8th August 2025. 452 children attended the Schemes from 223 families. This socially responsible and affordable childcare scheme continues to be rated as excellent value and a great resource for working parents.

Image 72: Summer Childcare Scheme logo

B-Well Belfast / Here 4 U Support Service for Staff

Belfast Trust has a B Well Belfast programme which delivers popular and free sessions and activities through the Here 4 U support service to improve staff health and well-being.

Image 73: B well logo



Between April 2025 and March 2026, the programme offered a variety of programmes including:

- Boxing classes
- Breathwork sessions
- Staff choir
- Ukelele lessons
- Photography classes
- Football sessions.

Promoting employee wellbeing.

The Trust offers sessions on “How to have a Wellbeing Conversation”. The aim of these virtual workshops is to equip managers and staff with the knowledge and skills to hold conversations about wellbeing. These popular sessions continue to be co-delivered with HSC Leadership Centre.

NI Professional and Education Council (NIPEC) Project Board

Human Resources, Allied Health Professional and Nursing colleagues work collaboratively with NIPEC, as part of a regional ethnic diversity partnership group, to support the progression of equal access to education and leadership opportunities for all.

Supporting our Ageing Workforce

The Trust provides a range of support for our ageing workforce including support for staff as **Carers**. We also work in partnership with external organisations to provide awareness sessions for carers on a range of issues such dementia, mental health etc.

In December 2024, the Trust launched a new **Flexible Retirement Guidance** to include the option for staff to request Partial Retirement. Information sessions for managers and employees supported the roll out of the new arrangements. This initiative is included in the overall suite of available flexible working options for staff.

Regular **pension awareness sessions** are co-delivered with the Leadership Centre & HSC Pensions throughout the year – the sessions are specifically for our ageing workforce and those who are nearing retirement age to increase awareness and signpost to sources of support.

The Trust continues to provide information sessions for staff on **Menopause** that cover a range of topics include menopause and anxiety and menopause and physical activity. Further sessions included the effects of menopause on your feet and the effects of menopause on your skin.

Financial Wellbeing

We developed a virtual resource for staff and managers on how to spot and avoid fraud. Improving Working Lives - Fraud & Scams

Image 74: Fraud and scams resource

Fr



The Trust continues to work in partnership with Money and Pension Services, HSC Pensions, Advice Space and The Consumer Council who provided three, popular online training and information sessions for staff as follows:

- How employees can protect themselves from scams
- Energy Costs
- Consumer Rights

Co-ownership provided an online session to provide staff with information on how they can become a homeowner.

A financial wellbeing fair was held in the Royal Hospital. Information was provided by the Consumer Council, Credit Union, Co-ownership and HSBC bank.

Image 75: 'What is Equality Data' visual aid



Disability Confident Employer

The Trust has maintained its accreditation as a Disability Confident Employer with the UK Government (Department of Work and Pensions) sponsored scheme for employers.

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for assessing our compliance with S75 duties

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 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.

Prepare Section 75 Annual Progress Report (APR) and include section in Trust's own Annual Report.

- Annual Progress Report supported by "Equality Bites" Newsletter to ensure updates available in a more accessible format.

Screenings

- Trust policy development process ensures all Trust policies are screened. All policies approved during the reporting period were subject to S75 screening and appropriate consultation.

- During the reporting period, the Trust screened 109 policies and proposals. One Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was undertaken during the reporting period. The EQIA related to the consultation on the introduction of Body Worn Cameras

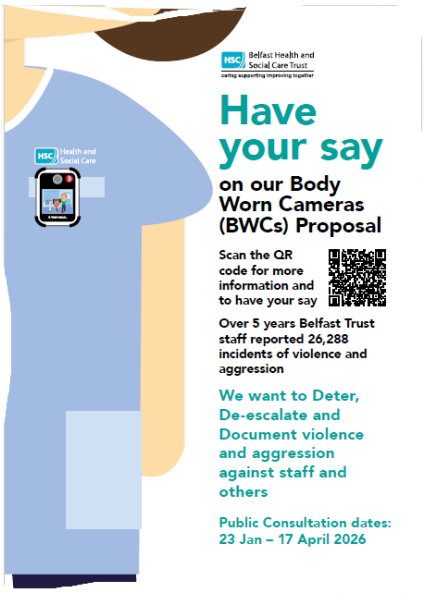
(BWCs) in the two adult Emergency Departments as a pilot with a view to rolling this out across Belfast Trust where appropriate and subject to pilot findings.

A total of 326 people (65% BHSCT staff) provided feedback to the thirteen-week public consultation. Overall, there was strong support (approx. 90%) for the BWC proposal with the majority agreeing that staff need protected and need to feel safe and that a calmer more respectful environment is needed and will benefit everyone.

Support for the proposal though was conditional with many comments relating to the need for clearly defined conditions of activation, need for good governance, staff training and clear accessible public notices and communication.

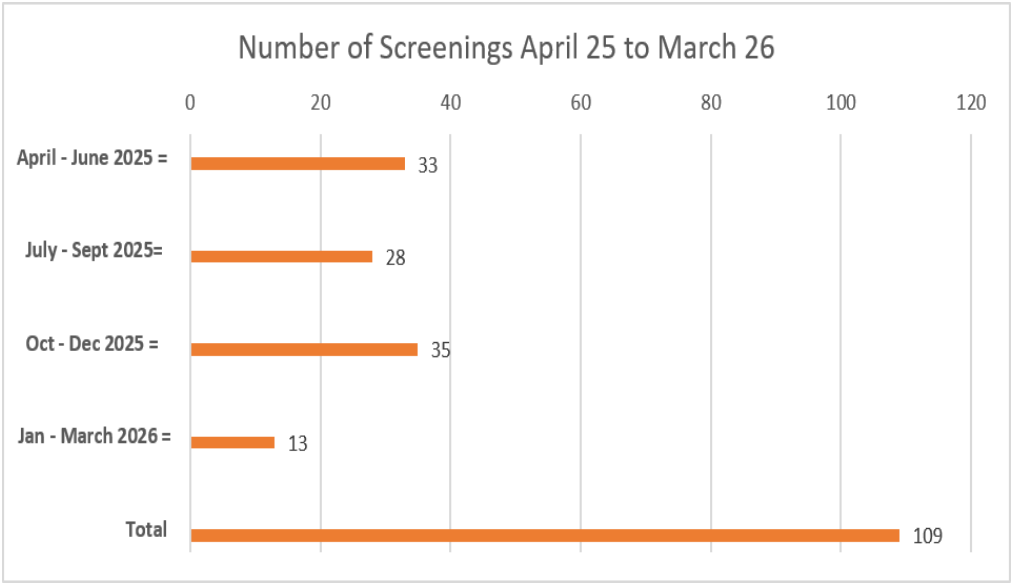
Concerns regarding privacy, usage when the patient lacks capacity were raised together with some feedback that BWCs will help but are not a complete solution to violence and aggression against staff due to system wide and societal issues e.g. alcohol and substance misuse with the need for more security staff also noted to provide real time support. The need for a robust and public evaluation of the pilot to show that BWCs do make a difference was recommended prior to any rollout across other services.

Image 76: BWC Poster



As a result of the public consultation, a robust evaluation plan has been drafted and will be made public as requested by many of those that provided feedback. A detailed draft Standard Operating Procedure with clear guidance on when BWCs may be used, when they must not be used has also been developed. Additional briefing sessions for staff prior to the pilot and enhanced accessible communication to the public during the pilot have also been planned in response to the feedback during the public consultation.

Image 77: Equality Screenings per quarter



- All quarterly reports for the reporting period are made available on the Trust's website

Equality & Human Rights Screening – April to Jun 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – July to Sept 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – Oct to Dec 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – Jan to Mar 26

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.
- New staff complete mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training as part of their 'on boarding' journey.

Image 78: Trust induction resource - Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights



- Planning and Equality Team continued to provide advice and support to Trust staff/project leads
- Human rights training resource FREDA – guidance and animation
- Training sessions for Domestic and Sexual abuse support staff, led by NEXUS and Women's aid.
- Access for staff to HSC Progress development programme for global majority staff.

Image 79: Progress development programme for global majority staff- information



- Training has been developed for staff working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. It supports a bespoke Signs of Safety model

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:
    - BSO Regional Interpreting Service
    - The Big Word Telephone Service

  - Sign Language Interactions
  - Regional Communication Support Service (RCSS)
  - Flex
  - Sign Language Interactions (contract managed by SPPG)

- The Trust's website has been designed to ensure accessibility.
- The Sighted Guide scheme at the Royal offers people with sight loss or who are blind assistance to get to their appointments.
- Shopmobility allows people with limited mobility to get to their appointments safely and independently on the Royal site.
- Library of translated documents available to Trust staff.
- The Trust has a contract with TILII Translates (TT) as part of our menu of day opportunities. TT is a group of people with learning disabilities who translate documents into easyread with support from speech and language staff and ARC NI.
- Information is provided in Braille on request
- The Disability and Equality Action plans have been transcribed into easyread and also signed in British and Irish Sign language.

Any other measures proposed in equality scheme

- The Trust participated in the Regional Equality and Human Rights Steering Group and Regional Equality Leads meetings. The forum met twice during this reporting period and meets in partnership with ECNI, NIHRC and CRC
- This joint forum has helped to facilitate regular communication with the NI Equality Commission and NI HRC
- The Equality Commission is sent any public consultations undertaken by the Trust
- The Trust has been successfully co-chairing a Trust GP Forum for the last 5 years.
- Integrated Care System development, with commencement of Belfast shadow Area Integrated partnership
- Equality Managers have sought to promote best practice and exchange learning with other public authorities

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?

1.

Over the reporting period, the Trust's annual expenditure on telephone interpreting via the Big Word was **£111,312.92**

2025

Table 5: Big Word Expenditure per month

April	£9817.57
May	£8448.67
Jun	£9197.34
July	£8697.58
Aug	£7472.41
Sep	£8763.38
Oct	£10,359.70
Nov	£10,397.53
Dec	£8549.32

2026

Jan	£10,572.14
Feb	£9,273.89
Mar	£9763.39
Total	£**111,312.92**

Any other measures proposed in equality scheme

- More effective use of resources and consistent approach across health and social care
- Regional consistency and better working together with colleagues in Commissions and Council
  Sharing best practice
- Trust Equality Lead has sight of any equality related complaints and provides advice on resolution as required. No S75 complaints received.

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):*

- Consultation on BHSCT Corporate Plan led to more focus on the Neighbourhood Model and clearer identification of partners for collaboration and engagement including carers.
- Screening for the Virtual Wards pilot has informed the criteria of the pilot and alignment to the Neighbourhood Model and Unscheduled Care Improvement Board objectives.
-

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

- The Body-Worn Cameras EQIA led to changes to the originally proposed implementation plan of the pilot, and highlighted changes to the reporting mechanisms post-pilot needed.
- As noted previously changes regarding the implementation of the proposal to pilot BWCs in the Emergency Department have been made following the EQIA and public consultation e.g. the decision to evaluate the pilot with both qualitative and quantitative data from both staff and service users and the decision to make that evaluation public.

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

- Every Customer Counts initiative in Bridgewater Suite resulted in a change to text in patient letters and a text alternative option to a phone call was introduced. The opening hours information on Google for the Suite was also updated.

- Maternity Targeted Engagement: An audit of the experiences of women from ethnically diverse backgrounds in BHSCT Maternity services was conducted in 2025. This found that 46% of women surveyed did not attend antenatal education during their pregnancy, with 46% sharing this was because they did not know how to. Maternity Communication Cards are now provided to ethnically diverse expectant mothers/birthing people to escalate their concerns while waiting for an interpreter. They are available in 25 different languages via the Multi-lingual Maternity Resources Tool.

- Belfast Trust's Cultural Liaison Midwife continues to support women seeking asylum and those from ethnically diverse backgrounds to access maternity services, information and interpretation support. The role helps address well-documented inequalities in maternity outcomes experienced by ethnically diverse women and babies by improving access to care, supporting communication and promoting culturally sensitive practice across maternity services

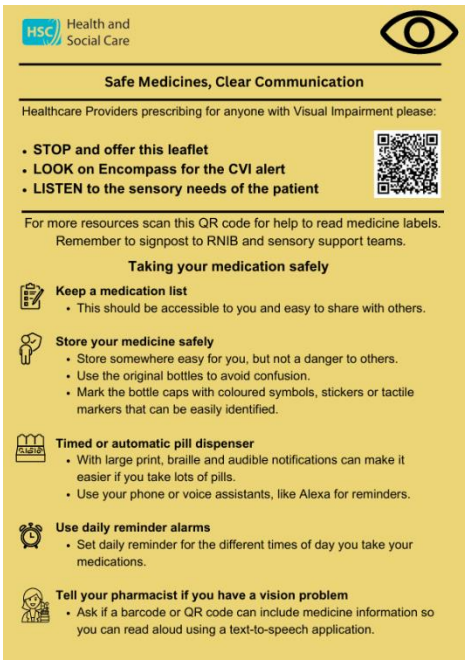
- The creation of posters for staff to educate and alert them to the regional communication support service (sign language interpreters) meant that using and booking sign language interpreters was better understood and services were more accessible to the d/Deaf community. A dedicated QR code was also

created to overcome connectivity and access issues regarding remote interpreting.

- Over 100 staff in our two adult Emergency Departments were trained by the British Deaf Association NI in terms of d/Deaf Equality and Inclusion. Approximately 15 staff successfully completed Level 1 of British Sign Language.

- The Safe Prescribing and Accessible Communication for Everyone (SPACE) Initiative aimed to provide BHSCT hospital teams with the knowledge and skills to optimise medicines for visually impaired patients and to promote accessible medicine information and remove barriers by using a safe approach to medication and the BHSCT's accessibility toolkit. The Safe Medicines, Clear Communication toolkit was developed to highlight the additional needs of visually impaired service users. The toolkit has had 127 site visits to date. This initiative has resulted in a safer approach to medication review.

Image 80 & 81: Safe Medical, Clear Communication leaflet



Health and Social Care

Safe Medicines, Clear Communication

Healthcare Providers prescribing for anyone with Visual Impairment please:

- **STOP and offer this leaflet**
- **LOOK on Encompass for the CVI alert**
- **LISTEN to the sensory needs of the patient**

For more resources scan this QR code for help to read medicine labels. Remember to signpost to RNIB and sensory support teams.

Taking your medication safely

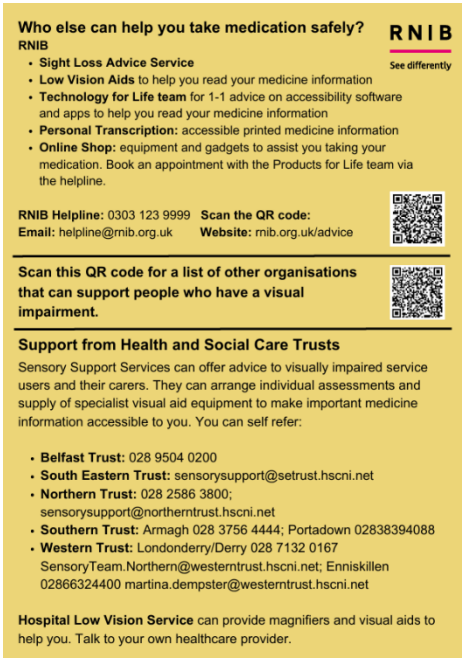
Keep a medication list
- This should be accessible to you and easy to share with others.

Store your medicine safely
- Store somewhere easy for you, but not a danger to others.
- Use the original bottles to avoid confusion.
- Mark the bottle caps with coloured symbols, stickers or tactile markers that can be easily identified.

Timed or automatic pill dispenser
- With large print, braille and audible notifications can make it easier if you take lots of pills.
- Use your phone or voice assistants, like Alexa for reminders.

Use daily reminder alarms
- Set daily reminder for the different times of day you take your medications.

Tell your pharmacist if you have a vision problem
- Ask if a barcode or QR code can include medicine information so you can read aloud using a text-to-speech application.



Who else can help you take medication safely?

RNIB

RNIB See differently

- **Sight Loss Advice Service**
- **Low Vision Aids** to help you read your medicine information
- **Technology for Life team** for 1-1 advice on accessibility software and apps to help you read your medicine information
- **Personal Transcription:** accessible printed medicine information
- **Online Shop:** equipment and gadgets to assist you taking your medication. Book an appointment with the Products for Life team via the helpline.

RNIB Helpline: 0303 123 9999 **Scan the QR code:**
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk **Website:** rnib.org.uk/advice

Scan this QR code for a list of other organisations that can support people who have a visual impairment.

Support from Health and Social Care Trusts

Sensory Support Services can offer advice to visually impaired service users and their carers. They can arrange individual assessments and supply of specialist visual aid equipment to make important medicine information accessible to you. You can self refer:

- **Belfast Trust:** 028 9504 0200
- **South Eastern Trust:** sensorysupport@setrust.hscni.net
- **Northern Trust:** 028 2586 3800; sensorysupport@northerntrust.hscni.net
- **Southern Trust:** Armagh 028 3756 4444; Portadown 02838394088
- **Western Trust:** Londonderry/Derry 028 7132 0167 SensoryTeam.Northern@westerntrust.hscni.net; Enniskillen 02866324400 martina.dempster@westerntrust.hscni.net

Hospital Low Vision Service can provide magnifiers and visual aids to help you. Talk to your own healthcare provider.

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 2025-26 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:

- Employees' job descriptions reflect expected contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the Equality Scheme.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2025-26 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:

- Employees' performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the Equality Scheme, The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review and Post Outlines as part of the Trust's KSF (Knowledge & Skills Framework

6 In the 2025-26 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 corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2025-26 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Trust is currently developing a new corporate plan, outlining our key goals to provide safe, high-quality and compassionate health and social care to the people of Belfast and through our regional services. The Corporate Plan aligns to 5 P's, which can be found in Part A pg 13.

Our 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, three-year plan and DoH Reset Plan. This plan will help ensure that our work supports the overall vision of a healthier and more equal society particularly in areas like reducing waiting times, reducing health gaps, and creating a sustainable health and care system.

We are 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.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2025-26 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed: 5

Table 6: EAP actions complete (including RAG status)

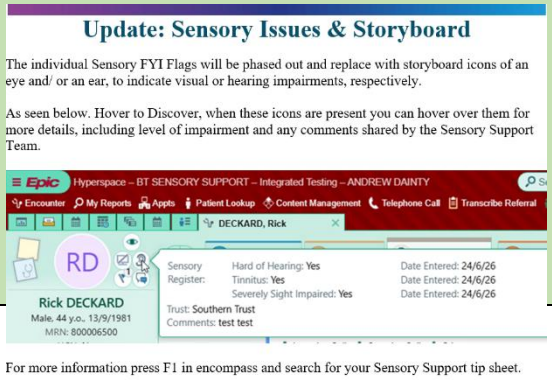
Actions	Update
All Trusts will adopt the Good Relations Strategy and work collaboratively, with our partners, to take forward the actions and ensure consistency across Northern Ireland	BHSCT have shared their 3rd Good Relations strategy with other Trusts to use as a prototype. Belfast Trust continues to implement its actions within its strategy.
We will develop an interpreting card for patients and service users to present when they are in health and social care facilities. The card will indicate that the service user needs an interpreter and include contact details	Belfast Trust launched a Health and Social Care Interpreting Card to help patients and service users who do not speak English as their first language access interpreting support more easily. Developed by the Trust in partnership with iAssist NI, the Roma Health Project and people with lived experience, the card helps staff quickly identify language needs and arrange interpreting support. A total of 10,000 interpreting cards have been co-produced and distributed to Trust staff, voluntary and community organisations, and other statutory organisations to support better communication and more equitable access to health and social care services.
We will develop a Cultural Competency training and	Regional Cultural Competency framework was officially launched on 5 February 25.

awareness programme for staff	Online training and booklet developed to run alongside f2f training for staff
We will develop a human rights-based training programme and guidance for staff providing care for people living in residential settings. We will share and actively promote these resources with Independent Sector colleagues, who may also provide this care.	To mark World Human Rights Day on 10 December 2024 Trusts developed a staff training resource which continues to to be used on the staff intranet to promote World Human Rights Day with staff each year in December by Belfast Trust. The resource is used as part of the menu of equality and human rights training that staff can access. It is also available on the staff intranet to download and review via the Planning & Equality / HR Employment Equality Team sections. The short animation video focuses on the values that underpin human rights namely FREDA and based in the healthcare setting. The accompanying guidance emphasises delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach. The approach help is also aligned with our duty to deliver services that are compassionate and patient/service user focused – one of the HSC values. **Guidance for HSC Staff: A Human Rights Based Approach to Services** **Team FREDA Animation: A human rights approach to healthcare**
We will work in partnership with trade unions to ensure that staff who experience domestic and sexual violence are supported in the workplace.	Continued partnership working with Trade Unions to provide a confidential Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Service for staff. Support Officers received specialist training from Women's Aid and Nexus; an e-learning programme was launched. The Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Toolkit has been updated along with 15,000 awareness calendars distributed to staff. 33 trained EVAWG Champions were established through the Nexus NI programme.

Actions ongoing: 24

PART B

Table 7: EAP actions ongoing (including RAG status)

Actions	Update
We will take active measures to encourage staff to update their equality monitoring information as part of corporate welcome/staff induction and by developing a regional and local campaign to encourage staff to update their equality profile information.	Progressing within Regional Employment Equality Group. Representatives from Regional Employment Equality Group also involved in regional subgroups of EQUIP and regularly reports updates as required. Staff in Belfast Trust regularly reminded via intranet to update and complete monitoring information eg during Good Relations Week 2025. Employment Equality Team created Page Tiger hosted on the HR site outlining the importance of completing monitoring and how to do this.
We will work collaboratively to influence the *encompass* programme to ensure that it monitors ethnicity, first language and communication support needs of patients and service users.	Service users can record own ethnicity and language needs in my Care app. System only available in English, function for Arabic is there but not activated. Encompass say they will review this at another stage. Accessibility issues for staff raised by RNIB, solution being implemented to attach software such as Fusion and Dragon for those with sight loss. The regional Sensory Team Leads met with Encompass to develop communication icons. Discussions are ongoing with ideas around having a red alert stating that an interpreter was required. The idea was that this would be visible as soon as the Encompass record was open and could therefore, hopefully, not be overlooked. *Image 82: Sensory Issues & Storyboard* 

We will work with partners to ensure the inclusion and analysis of Section 75 data in the development of population health plans.	Belfast Shadow Area Integrated Partnership Board (AIPB) stood up January 2025. The AIPB are working in partnership with the PHA to identify key priorities based on the available population health data collated by the PHA.
We will co-develop a series of health and social care seminars with representative organisations, communities and individuals to support health and wellbeing and address inequalities.	Regional Cultural Competency framework was launched at event on 5 February 2025 An Introduction to Cultural Competency training and booklet has been developed for staff and is available on the HSC Learn platform for all HSC staff. https://learn.hscni.net/#/catalogue/landingpage/item/6e7a5d9d-6899-41b9-a178-cba98499882b/ *Image 83: An Introduction to Cultural Competence Booklet* 
We will ensure staff are aware of the Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing and the facemasks approved by Infection Prevention Control, that are more accessible for people who have hearing loss, are Deaf/deaf and lip-read.	**Extensive work** has been undertaken by Belfast Trust in partnership with SPPG, Sign Language Interactions (SLI) and British Deaf Association (BDA) to enhance staff awareness around the potential barrier faced by the d/Deaf community and in particular to ensure staff are aware of the Regional Communication Support Service. Specifically, work included: • Participation in 4 Task & Finish Groups to consider awareness, education, complaint pathways and performance issues. • Creation of a clear Complaint pathway for service users, interpreters, carers and staff. • Creation of two posters – one for staff to advise how to book an interpreter and/or other communication support and one for Deaf

	community in terms of the service. Posters were disseminated across Belfast Trust. • Regular communications issued via staff intranet regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements. • Sign Language and Deaf Awareness Weeks celebrated in March and September to raise awareness with staff re legal duty to book an interpreter and how to book an interpreter. • 4 training sessions organised for approx. 200 staff across Belfast Trust delivered by BDA and Sign Language Interpreter from SLI re Deaf Equality and Good Practice when using an Interpreter and How to book an interpreter. • Bespoke Deaf Equality Training attended by approx. 120 Belfast Trust Emergency Department Staff with 16 staff funded to complete Level 1 of BSL. • Coffee morning celebratory event with new Level 1 graduates with members of the Deaf Sign Language Users Forum. • The Trust in partnership with the British Deaf Association (BDA) developed and launched 3 videos to help raise staff awareness of the barriers d/Deaf community face when accessing our services and to improve experiences. These videos were disseminated via the staff intranet and are available via the accessible and inclusive communication toolkit created by the Planning and Equality team. • Continued success and growth of the vibrant Belfast Trust Sign Language Deaf Users Forum. • Belfast Trust worked with the BDA to identify ways to improve the experience of d/Deaf service users attending Emergency Department in RVH. An initial walkthrough found that there were a number of changes that could be made to tackle some of the barriers that existed. As a result, 120 ED staff undertook training in D/Deaf awareness and 15 staff have completed Level 1 qualifications in BSL.

	All expected actions completed for this reporting period.
We will draft and co-produce neurodiversity guidance and a podcast for our staff along with key stakeholders including experts by experience.	In the reporting period, Belfast Trust has undertaken extensive work in the area of Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence. A Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services has been implemented, and they chair the Belfast Trust's Neurodiversity Champion Network. This is a network of over 40 BHSCT staff who have undertaken 3 modules of training to equip them with knowledge around Neurodivergence, different forms of Neurodivergence, and how this differs from Neurodiversity. The Trust's first Neurodiversity Newsletter was launched in October 2024, with the 7th edition launched in November 2025. The newsletter is a useful tool in sharing information on neurodiversity as well as promoting news, training opportunities, resources and research. The Champion's Network developed a Neurodiversity Champion's Logo which launched in March 2026 following a competitive process within the Network. The Belfast Autism Forum also has representation from BHSCT staff, as well as from Community & Voluntary Sector organisations, SPPG, Belfast City Council and others. This group shares good practice, ongoing areas of work, and highlights areas for challenge/improvements to be made.
We will work with our partners to ensure that the needs of older and disabled people, who reside in rural communities, are considered in service developments or by promoting and monitoring the use of the Rural Needs Toolkit for Health and Social Care and completing Rural Needs Impact Assessments to identify mitigations put in place.	HSC Rural Needs Toolkit developed. Rural Needs Champions exist Rural Needs Annual Report Completed Rural Needs Assessments referenced in Equality Screening Template Rural Impact Assessments and Monitoring Reports | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website
We will implement the Rainbow Badge initiative whereby staff will complete	BHSCT promotes the HSC Rainbow Badge initiative, based on the NHS Employers Rainbow Badge

online training to gain a HSC Rainbow Badge. This is a voluntary initiative. The badge will be used to symbolise an open, non-judgemental and inclusive place for people that identify as LGBTQ+.	initiative. This is a voluntary initiative, and we have 900 staff signed up to this currently. We will continue to implement this across the Trust.
We will support the ongoing work of Trusts' ethnically diverse networks.	Recognising the needs of our culturally diverse workforce, BHSCT actively supports ethnically diverse staff through practical initiatives: These include: 1. STRIVE Events – Empowering colleagues from global majority backgrounds by promoting awareness and participation in development opportunities. These include career progression, interview preparation, health and wellbeing support, and guidance for sponsored workers. 2. International Educated Physiotherapists – HR designed and implemented a tailored induction and learning plan for Band 5 internationally educated physiotherapists, supporting their induction and role in the service. 3.Internationally Qualified Social Workers – Developed in collaboration with NISCC, this dedicated programme supports internationally qualified social workers, helping them adapt and thrive within the Trust. 4. We continue to actively celebrate and promote understanding of a wide range of cultural events and traditions throughout the year, including Good Relations Week, Ramadan, and Black History Month. These occasions provide valuable opportunities to learn, share, and strengthen our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect. 5. We have updated our uniform policy to better reflect the cultural diversity of our workforce. As part of this update, staff working in clinical settings now have the option to wear disposable sleeves. 6. Ongoing HR, Trade Union, and management support for staff who may be

	concerned or directly impacted by civil unrest, community tensions, or racist intimidation, ensuring safety, dignity, and wellbeing remain at the heart of our approach. 7.Participated in the *Stronger Together* Conference at Queen's University Belfast, where the Trust delivered a presentation and hosted an information stand. 8.Developed a *How to Report a Hate Crime* resource to raise awareness and improve access to reporting pathways.
We will continue to work in partnership with LGBTQ+ representative organisations to ensure that training and awareness raising resources are consistent and up to date.	We continue to work in partnership with the Regional HSCNI LGBTQ+ staff forum
We will promote the regional HSC LGBTQ+ network for staff across Trusts.	HSC Regional LGBTQ+ Staff Forum have appointed two new co-chairs. The Public Health Agency will continue to manage the oversight of the forum. Belfast Trust continues to promote forum during Belfast PRIDE celebrating and ongoing via HR internet.
We will improve awareness of options for flexible working, work-life balance, special leave policies to ensure they are accessible to all our staff.	We are continuing to provide promotion and awareness of flexible working options. This regional data is shared with DOH on a quarterly basis.
We will scope development of Staff Disability Forums and Networks to support regional consistency.	Will be progressed at a regional level with local implementation BHSCT became a Disability Confident employer (Level 1).
We will develop an individual plan in partnership with disabled staff members to ensure they are supported through the provision of reasonable adjustments where appropriate.	New Reasonable Adjustment Workplan has replaced Ability Passport, reviewed if a member of staff moves role or is promoted to make sure still in line with their needs.

We will develop a regional policy framework to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies are reviewed in line with governance requirements.	Regional EDI, Gender Identity & Disability Policies currently under review with regional Employment Equality Group. Belfast Health & Social Care Trust's (BHSCT) Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy was implemented in 2018. This is a regional HSCNI employers' policy and is currently due for renewal and update. We have commenced regional discussions across HSC with our Trade Union colleagues and will not update and finalise this policy until we receive clear legislative guidance from the Equality Commission for NI. ECNI have advised that the review of the recent Supreme Court decision is being considered in relation to its application within NI legislation, the impact of the Windsor Agreement and links to current EU legislation. As employers, we await the conclusion of these matters before updating this regional policy. Our Employment Equality Manager attends the national NHS Staff Council Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group meeting. This is held quarterly via TEAMS and provides guidance and discussion on a range of employment matters including anti-racism, reviewing uniform policies and information for UK employers (not NI) regarding gender in the workplace.
We will update the regional HSC 'Making a Difference' e-learning programme further to review of best practice in E-learning and EDI training.	Programme and accompanying booklet to be updated, Regional Employment Equality Programme and accompanying booklet to be updated, Regional Employment Equality Group will also be involved in the review. Cultural Competency Framework/ Human Rights/Oliver McGowan training links to be added to the training.
We will work to improve uptake of equality training, which is mandatory in all Trusts.	Regular review of training compliance and Directorates with lower uptake contacted. Alternative delivery methods explored and promoted. Mandatory Equality Training part of Belfast Trust 'On Boarding' suite of training that must be completed prior to commencing employment.
We will engage with external experts and representative organisations to provide	In partnership with British Deaf Association bespoke Deaf Equality Training delivered to approx. 120 Belfast

specialist training for employees.	Trust Emergency Department Staff and 50 Trustwide staff as part of March to Safety week. Approximately 200 staff attended two online training sessions delivered by a qualified Sign Language Interpreter from Sign Language Interactions. 16 ED staff funded to complete Level 1 of British Sign Language course. Delivered locally by Sign Source. Disability Masterclass delivered to 40 staff in partnership with Disability Action, RNIB, NI Rare Diseases Partnership and NIUSE. Carer Information Sessions delivered to 186 Trust staff Worked in partnership with Nexus NI through the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Take a Pledge programme to deliver specialist training and awareness raising initiatives. This included the establishment of a network of 33 trained EVAWG Champions to support colleagues, promote positive workplace culture and help challenge harmful behaviors as well as training for our Domestic abuse support staff. All expected actions completed for this reporting period.
We will develop actions in line with legislative provision to improve access to those Section 75 groups, where there is a low representation in our workforce.	Discussions ongoing at Regional Employment Equality Group regarding accessibility of employment in HSC. Trusts continue to submit Article 55 reports annually on workforce. PROGRESS a development course has been developed specifically for HSC Ethnically Diverse staff.
We will address specific health inequalities for staff, for example provide menopause information sessions and celebrate men's health week to promote inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues in the workforce.	Free period products available across Trust. Menopause advice and support- including a managers guide, and advice on symptom management Throughout March the Trust shared videos to raise awareness of women's health, symptoms and when to seek medical advice, these specifically focused Ovarian Cancer, urinary incontinence and to encourage women to attend for their cervical smear.

PART B

	The Health Improvement Team manage the Belfast Men's Health Group website and chair the Belfast Men's Health Group. Each year, Men's Health Week (in June) and International Men's Day (in November) is celebrated and we work in partnership with other organisations throughout the year to further raise awareness of the key issues.
We will work collaboratively on the forthcoming gender pay gap legislation and determine appropriate methods of monitoring and reporting.	Regional Consultation Response submitted and awaiting outcome report. Regional work is underway to develop the new EQUIP system to enable any future reporting needs.
We will work collectively to ensure that carers across the region are aware that they can have access to a conversation with their named worker in relation to their caring role and needs The conversation is carer led and encourages both staff and carers to take time to discuss the caring role.	**Belfast Trust Carer Strategy** **"Caring Together in Belfast 2024-2029 and beyond"** Belfast Trust launched the new Carer Strategy together with carers, families, the Belfast Trust Carers Network and its partners in the Community and Voluntary Sector in Belfast City Hall on the 24.9.2025. The event led by Patricia Gordon, Interim Chairperson and facilitated by the Lord Mayor gave recognition and value to the work of unpaid carers in Belfast. The event presented the new strategy long side a series of new educational carer videos. "The Carer Voice – What Matters to me" Carers' Stories | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website 180 views have taken place since the 1.10.2025. *Image 84: Photos from Carers' Stories* . 

	4 priorities identified include: • Reaching all Carers • Navigating Carers Support • Supporting Carer health and wellbeing • Connecting with Carers In this reporting period the following activities have been achieved: • 21% (959) increase in carers registered with Carers support service = total of 5953 carers. • A successful Charitable Funds application has been made for a temporary Senior Peer Carer Support and Information Worker for ethnically diverse communities to improve access. • A Carers respite event held with ethnically diverse communities in April 25 • Carer Awareness Training Sessions for 489 Staff delivered • Faith Communities Outreach initiative – Carer Support Service in partnership with Trust Chaplaincy Service. • Partnership with QUB Widening Participation Outreach Officers to reach young carers • Take 5 funding secured for a Young Carer event in partnership with Art-Cart and Action for Children Young Carer Service in Feb 26. • Carer Education sessions for 70 Social Work University Students in QUB delivered by carers and Trust staff • Carer Information Sessions delivered to 186 Trust staff. • Carer Information Hubs developed • 4300 staff members have viewed the Carer Support Service Loop site. • 525 Carer contacts were made during 23 Clinics & Health Fairs. • 3 MyCare Information sessions with 40 attendances.

	Image 85: Photos of Carers Service Delivery  In addition, the following services were delivered to carers by Belfast Trust • Carer Counselling • 1391 Complimentary Therapy Services • 7 Peer Carer Support Groups alongside advocacy and information services. • 2482 one-off payments were made to unpaid carers which assisted with deprivation and financial pressures. • 1637 Carer Assessments were completed. • The Hello Carers Activity Programme provided 5020 support hours with 2656 attendances. Preparation is underway for Carers Week 8-14 June 2026 – the theme is "Building Carer Friendly Communities" *Image 86: Support For Carers In Belfast* 
We will hold an annual event on Carers Rights Day to highlight care and caring and help informal/family carers understand their rights and	Carers Week 2025 9th – 15th June 2025 *Image 87: Carers Week Logos*

find out about support that may be available.	The Carer Support Service launched Carers week to an audience of 80 carers recognising and valuing carers on the 9th of June 2025. 14 events were delivered across the week around the theme of 'Caring about Equality'. The week featured Information clinics and a Carer Rights session, well-being and connection events. During the week there were 222 attendances. All expected actions completed for this reporting period.
We will identify an EDI Champion at a senior level in each Trust.	BHSCT Disability committee is co-chaired by the Co-Director of Planning and Equality. And this includes EDI champion responsibilities The Trust is continuing to scope additional champions at a senior Level.

Actions to commence: 1

Table 8: EAP actions yet to commence (including RAG status)

Actions	Update
We will develop a resource for staff comprising professional body guidance on best practice for inclusion for people who are LGBTQ+.	ON HOLD: Awaiting advice following Supreme Court Ruling and ECNI Consultation and Guidance.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2025-26 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*:

- n/a

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2025-26 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 2025-26 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:

In line with the Trust's Involvement and Consultation Scheme and our legal duties, a formal consultation and engagement plan was developed to invite stakeholders to share their views on our body worn cameras (BWCs) proposal.

A public consultation (and EQIA) was undertaken in relation to our proposal to introduce the use of **body worn cameras** (BWCs) in the Adult **Emergency Departments** (EDs) at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) and Mater Hospital (MIH) for a six-month pilot…

and

Having evaluated and learnt from the pilot, consider the implementation of **body worn cameras** (BWCs), **in other areas**, **when appropriate** for the purpose of preventing, reducing and managing violence and aggression against staff.

326 people (approx. 40% BHSCT staff) provided feedback on the consultation. Approx 90% of respondents agreed with our proposal and 70% with our draft EQIA. Issues raised related to privacy, concerns with staff safety, need for good governance, BWCs not addressing system wide issues, the need to learn from the pilot and a cautious welcome to using body worn cameras Trust wide.

The formal consultation plan built on the significant engagement undertaken during the pre-consultation phase. During the pre-consultation phase an extensive range of engagement sessions with the public (including carers) and staff and trade unions were held in addition to a staff survey with Security staff which resulted in over 120 people being involved in shaping our proposal.

Targeted meetings and discussions with key stakeholders such as the Information Commissioner's Office, the NI Human Rights Commission, NI Mental Health Champion and other NI HSC colleagues (NI Ambulance Service (NIAS) were held to gain insight

into lessons learned and guidance with regard to data protection, privacy rights and issues around capacity and consent.

Internally our proposal was developed by our BWC Steering Group (staff and trade union membership) with approval from our Executive team and Trust Board in January 2026.

To develop a formal public consultation plan, a stakeholder analysis was developed and used to identify the following key groups:

- **Internal:** Belfast Trust staff working in Emergency Departments and across the Trust, Trade Unions.
- **External:** Commissioners (Information, Equality and Human Rights), patients, service users, carers, advocacy groups, community and voluntary sector, statutory agencies (PSNI, NIFRS), HSC Trusts (NIAS & NHSCT), political representatives and media

This analysis ensured that key internal and external stakeholders were made aware of our proposal and were provided an opportunity to get involved ultimately to ensure that the formal public consultation was meaningful and effective.

To support the public consultation a consultation paper was drafted together with a draft EQIA and Data Protection Impact Assessment. The paper and EQIA were summarised and translated into Easy Read by TILII Translates. Tailored Information Briefings (staff, external stakeholders), a FAQ and Newsletter articles were also created.

An extensive and varied range of consultation methodologies developed by the BWC steering group were used to ensure optimal dissemination of consultation documents. Consultees were encouraged to get involved and provide feedback. Consultees were also advised how to get alternative formats of documents. Consultation methodologies used by Belfast Trust included:

- Publication of consultation materials on public online platform Citizen Space
- Multiple staff notices via the Trust intranet (The Loop)
- Briefings shared at staff team meetings
- Targeted circulation of consultation materials via staff email
- Targeted staff briefings e.g. community navigators
- Dissemination via existing Trust forums e.g. Disability Committee and Healthy Relations Committee
- Publication of consultation documents on Belfast Trust website homepage.
- Development and dissemination of tailored information briefings for external stakeholders including political representatives, ECNI and NIHRC
- Targeted communication with public and community networks/databases including:
    - Emails to the Trust Involvement Network (individual service users, carers and community and voluntary sector partners).

- Emails to the S75 Equality Database (>450 organisations including MLAs, Community and Voluntary Organisations, Ethnic Minority Groups, Professional Bodies, Trade Unions)
- Communication via Trust partners, including the Patient and Client Council (PCC) and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).
- Promotion via the Engage and Community NI websites.

- 3 Engagement Sessions (Face to Face & Online)

12 In the 2025-26 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently <u>used</u> by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

☒ Face to face meetings

☒ Focus groups

☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing

☒ Questionnaires

☐ Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation

☐

Internet discussions

☐ Telephone consultations

☒ Other *(please specify)*: Staff Survey and Citizenspace Online Platform

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:

As detailed above

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

BHSCT generates ongoing media, social media, newsletters etc. Articles are drafted for staff and published on the Trust intranet (The LOOP) whilst the Trust external website has a dedicated Equality section where Equality Screenings, Annual Progress Report, DAP/EAP are published.

As well as these productions, 4 bulletins are developed each year which focus on Equality and Good Relations awareness raising and information sharing - Equality Bites Newsletter and Good Relations Bulletin.

Both are proactively disseminated to all staff and approximately 630 on Section 75 consultee list including community and voluntary groups/ Council / Politicians and Ethnically Diverse Groups etc. Positive feedback is regularly received on both.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

[Equality & Human Rights Screening – April to Jun 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – July to Sept 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – Oct to Dec 25

Equality & Human Rights Screening – Jan to Mar 26

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

- The Trust screened **109** policies and proposals throughout the reporting period

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2025-26:

Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

- 1 = Body Worn Cameras Proposal

Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

- 1 = Body Worn Camera Proposal

Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

- n/a

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

As aforementioned the main consultations conducted were:

- Proposal to introduce a pilot in two adult Emergency Departments and across the Trust when appropriate and subject to the pilot
- Engagement on the reconfiguration of the Care of the Elderly wards
- Engagement with regard to the introduction of Virtual Wards

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:

- The Consultation on the Body Worn Camera Proposal, received feedback such that the current implementation of the pilot is being amended in terms of staff training, public awareness, draft policy and standard operating policy and ensuring the pilot evaluation is robust and made public prior to a further rollout of BWCs beyond adult Emergency Departments.

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 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- **1** = Body Worn Camera Proposal

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 2025-26 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No, already taken place

☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- Encompass system replaced information systems and provided a single digital Health record

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

☐

Yes

☒

No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2025-26 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

- Increased provision on accessible information and reasonable adjustment. Thereby improving communication and accessibility

PART B

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:

Two examples to note:

A VASCO device is a handheld, two way speech translator that provides fast, accurate communication across many languages. It is a practical, reliable tool capable of supporting real time communication until an interpreter can join.

A pilot was undertaken involving 33 VASCO translation devices with the intention of providing staff in emergency unscheduled care with them to improve communication with those service users whose primary language is not English – a key barrier identified repeatedly by members of the ethnic minority community in NI.

We monitored the use of the devices throughout the pilot to ensure the devices were not used inappropriately and were not a replacement to the professional interpreting services such as the BSO Regional Interpreting Services.

Monitoring was embedded in the project with results showing that VASCO devices can deliver high quality, reliable translation, works offline and reduces delays in urgent care all of which aligns to the 75 duties around Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations.

Going forward funding for additional devices has been secure via Charitable Funds which will support a more accessible service delivery for services particularly within children's services (unaccompanied minors) and maternity services.

A regional research project, led by BHSCT, sought to engage directly with **women seeking international protection** on their experiences of accessing Health and Social Care services, specifically Maternity Services, Public Health Nursing, Social Services and Mental Health Services, in relation to their own experience or the experience of accessing for children. The focus was placed on women and children as there was an identified gap in the knowledge base for this group and a recognition that they face barriers when accessing services.

A total of **19 engagement sessions** took place across Northern Ireland, engaging **167 women** from **15 different nationalities** with a number of sessions held within the Belfast area. The voices of those that were involved in the engagement sessions created **six recommendations** that have the potential to enhance experiences and access to health and social care services for people seeking international protection. The recommendations included:

1. Audit of best practice across Trust areas.
2. Co-ordination and consistency of support services across Trusts
3. Promoting best practices in interpreting services and translations
4. Cultural competence framework embedded across HSCNI

5. Provision of a centralised resource
6. Building Health literacy

The work resulted in the development of the 'Make my Voice Heard Report'. and is a much-needed addition to the literature and evidence base regarding the service delivery planning in NI.

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 2025-26, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Staff Training

Supporting New Staff via 'On Boarding' Induction and Virtual Marketplace

Image 88: Trust Induction resource



All new staff (with the exception of Doctors in training as these are NIMDTA employees) are invited to complete a **Digital Welcome Pack.** The Welcome Pack is designed to give new staff an insight into our culture, values and how we operate. It also ensures that all new staff have the core awareness necessary to keep them safe and support available before starting their new role.

Every new Trust staff member must complete the introductory pieces of **Statutory Mandatory Training** in the Welcome Pack which includes the mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training. HR have developed single sign-on arrangements that include pre-boarding, on-boarding and completion of statutory mandatory training at in-person marketplace event each month, held in Belfast Castle. At this event, HR highlight the various EDI initiatives, support groups and resources available, e.g. HSC LGBTQ+ Forum, Carers Forum, THRIVE etc.

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.

During the reporting period, the Planning and Equality Team facilitated training and awareness sessions for 1,274 staff. This included 689 staff undertaking online mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training.

Image89: Mandatory Equality Training logo



Table 9: Staff training

Training Title	Number of staff trained
Statutory Mandatory Equality Training	1,274
Disability Awareness Training	234
Human Rights Training	125
Ensuring your service is inclusive to d/Deaf people: How to book & use sign language interpreters	191
Equality Screening Masterclass	35
Carer Awareness Campaign # Think Carers	375

What staff had to say:

100% of staff gave feedback that training was **'Very Good or Excellent'.**

- "The training was well delivered, and the scenarios were also very relevant to everyday life."
- "Interesting content, right length, thought provoking."
- "Very informative, well-paced and loved the FREDA principles. I found the unconscious bias really interesting".
- "Great update, new information in relation to scenarios and really makes you think about reflecting on how to react / respond".
- "Comprehensive overview of Equality and legislation - great use of case examples. Delivered on Teams made it easy to fit into my working day
- "Examples of inequalities were great, really gets you thinking about situations in the workplace. Also liked the interaction easy to do but keeps you interested".
- "Good mix of theory and practical interaction".

"Great update on Equality training. There were really good examples of situations within the workplace and increase awareness of respecting everyone".

Every new Trust staff member must complete the introductory pieces of Statutory Mandatory Training which includes the mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training.

During the Trust Welcome event HR highlights the various EDI initiatives, support groups and resources available, e.g. HSC LGBTQ+ Forum, Carers Forum, STRIVE etc.

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.

FREDA – guidance and animation has been added to Human rights training.

PROGRESS a development course has been developed specifically for HSC Ethnically Diverse staff.

Cultural competency training and resources

Trust staff have access to BSO training related to the Regional Interpreting service.

- Working well with Interpreters
- Interpreting online booking system 'How to book'

In partnership with British Deaf Association: Deaf awareness Session delivered during March to Safety; plus 8 sessions being delivered to ED staff as part of a significant QI project to improve access to ED re d/Deaf community

- Carer Awareness Campaign **# Think Carers.** 375 staff attended training
- Availability of supportive resources and toolkits.

Table 10: Use of staff resources and toolkits

Resource / Toolkit	Visits in reporting period
Equality Screening Toolkit	2499
Interpreting, Translation and Easy Read Toolkit	3705
Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit	1597
Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit for Staff	229
Faith, Spiritual and Cultural Handbook: Death	439
Staff guidance: Reporting a hate crime incident	291

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: Examples include:

In partnership with British Deaf Association bespoke Deaf Equality Training delivered to approx. 120 Belfast Trust Emergency Department Staff and 50 Trustwide staff as part of March to Safety week.

Approximately 200 staff attended two online training sessions delivered by a qualified Sign Language Interpreter from Sign Language Interactions.

16 ED staff funded to complete Level 1 of British Sign Language course. Delivered locally by Sign Source.

Disability Masterclass delivered to 40 staff in partnership with RNIB, NI Rare Diseases Partnership, Disability Action and NIUSE

Carer Information Sessions delivered to 186 Trust staff

In partnership with Nexus NI and Women's Aid, specialist training was provided to staff who support the Trust's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Service, enhancing their ability to provide informed support and signposting to colleagues affected by abuse. The Trust's partnership with Nexus led to its commitment to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Pledge. In support of this commitment, to date 33 staff members completed Nexus training and were appointed as EVAWG Champions.

Improved access to equality, good relations and human rights training and diversity training through availability of more condensed training package for staff and managers as well as the availability of a training manual for those who do not have access to computers.

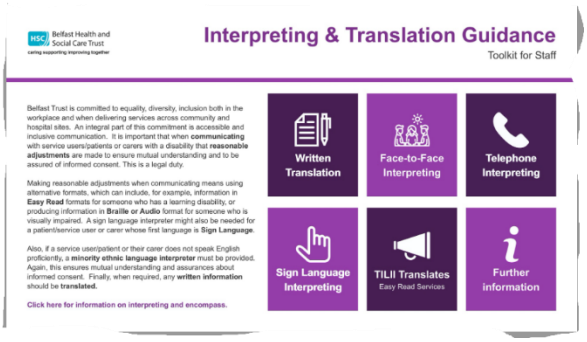
Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2025-26, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- The creation and promotion of a range of toolkits for staff by the Planning and Equality Team encourages staff to think about accessible and inclusive communication in their everyday work and in all that they do. Emphasis has been placed on the critical need for inclusive and accessible communication to ensure informed consent, reduce DNAs and health literacy.

- The toolkits are hosted on the Page Tiger online platform and include:
  - Interpreting, Translation and Easy Read Toolkit
  - Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit
  - Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit for Staff

Images: 90 & 91: Interpreting & Translations Toolkit





- The toolkits were promoted with staff during Safetember and March to Safety – two Trust wide initiatives with a focus on patient safety and care.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2025-26?

Insert number here: One

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

The Trust received a complaint in regard to alleged failure to comply with its Equality Scheme on October 2025 from the ECNI Investigation Team. However having perused the detail in the Commission's Procedures for Complaints and Investigations and considered the Trust's own approved Equality Scheme, the Trust proposed that the complaint would be out with the statutory requirements for making a complaint about our alleged failure to comply with our Equality Scheme as set out in Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The complainant had not submitted to Belfast Trust in the first instance to allow for the Trust to provide a reasonable opportunity to respond to the alleged failure.

In December, the Commission advised the Trust that the complaint would not be upheld, as due process had not been followed by the complainant.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

- 2028

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)*

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

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):

1. **Transgender access following Supreme Court ruling in 2025**

2. **Potential for Age Discrimination to be extended to Goods, Facilities and Services**

3. **DOLs & New Supreme Court Ruling June 2026 re Cheshire West Case**

An application was made by the NI Attorney General to ask the UK Supreme Court whether the proposed Code of Practice for DoLS (in N Ireland) was appropriate. They wanted to include idea of “incapacitous consent” – i.e. that there can be “valid consent” if someone is “content” with the situation, even though they lack capacity for the decisions about their care.

The Supreme Court handed down its judgment on 2 June 2026 and concluded that:

- the Cheshire West 2014 judgment was incorrect
- instead of relying on the single ‘acid test’, an assessment of whether someone is deprived of their liberty must now consider multiple factors - that is, it is multifactorial
- the starting point in assessing whether someone is deprived of liberty is to look at the specific situation of the individual and take into account the type, duration, effects and manner of implementation of restrictions on the person - crucially, no single factor is determinative
- the Cheshire West 2014 judgment wrongly assumed that if someone lacks legal capacity under the MCA 2005, they cannot give valid consent to the arrangements. The 2026 judgment clarifies that a person’s expression of their wishes and feelings carries significant weight. A person can give valid consent if

they are conscious of their environment, have a basic level of understanding and are capable of expressing a view that they accept and/or are happy with the situation. However, if there is serious doubt, no conclusion of valid consent can be drawn

- the effect of the restrictions on the person may differ based on whether or not the person is content with their arrangements - Cheshire West 2014 was wrong to conclude that a person's lack of objection is never legally relevant to the question of objective confinement

These changes to the definition of a deprivation of liberty apply with immediate effect and extend across the UK.

4. Sign Language Bill NI

The aim of the bill is to provide greater accessibility to information and services for Sign Language users and to increase the number of professionally trained and accredited BSL and ISL interpreters. The Bill is based in a cultural and linguistic context rather than disability and will not replace existing disability or equality legislative architecture or replace existing rights. Every prescribed organisation must take all reasonable steps so as to

(a) ensure that information and services provided by the organisation are as accessible to individuals in the deaf community as they are to individuals who are not in the deaf community, and

(b) offer or facilitate the use of British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language for the benefit of individuals in the deaf community in accessing information and services provided by the organisation.

5. Potential Reconfiguration of Services

Public services in Northern Ireland continue to operate under significant pressure due to rising demand, increasing costs, and workforce challenges.

The Department of Health's (DoH) draft three-year budget highlights the need to prioritise resources within a constrained financial environment while ensuring that services are delivered fairly and in line with statutory Equality and Good Relations duties.

Northern Ireland continues to face significant challenges in relation to waiting times, with sustained demand across acute and community services contributing to delays in access. There is a strong and shared recognition of the need to improve performance, increase productivity, and ensure consistent, high-quality care.

Belfast Trust will continue to work in partnership across the system to deliver transformation and reconfiguration. Initiatives such as outpatient modernisation, Same Day Emergency Care, virtual wards and tech-enabled care are supporting improved access and helping to reduce system pressures in a more equitable way.

Ensuring long-term sustainability will require a shift in how services are designed and delivered, with an emphasis on prevention, early intervention, streamlined pathways, and reducing inequalities in access, experience and outcomes.

Belfast Trust remains committed to ensuring that any transformation of services is grounded in equality and human rights principles and values. In line with its statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Belfast Trust will continue to promote Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations and is committed to fulfilling Disability and Human Rights Duties as this is central to addressing persistent health inequalities and improving outcomes for those who experience the greatest disadvantage.

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:

12	**8 (inc ongoing)**	**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 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	We will ensure that Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy makers.

		technologies suitable for 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.	
Local[v]	Disability Positive Accreditation	Audit of employment-related good practice • Evidence of high standard of commitment to the employment of disabled people Identification of areas were further progress is required	Staff with disabilities experience positive support from service managers and HR

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.	Compliance monitored Every new Trust staff member must complete the introductory pieces of Statutory Mandatory Training which includes the mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training. Staff in Belfast Trust must complete this training every five years and is part of the mandatory training matrix.	During the reporting period, Planning & Equality team delivered facilitated online training "As well as delivery of the necessary information, it was delivered in a way to make me evaluate and consider different scenarios."

		During the Trust Welcome event HR highlights the various EDI initiatives	
2	Staff awareness and understanding of the Regional Interpreting service.	Trust staff have access to BSO training • 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	Development of Deaf awareness sessions in partnership with British Deaf Association	d/Deaf Equality and Awareness Sessions delivered to staff during Safe September and March to Safety Over 100 ED staff attended d/Deaf Equality and Awareness Sessions 16 ED staff have completed Level 1 BSL. D/Deaf Awareness promoted during Sign Language Week. New Sign Language legislation discussed at Disability Committee	Improved staff awareness of the barriers d/Deaf community face when accessing our services and to improve experiences.
4	Access to Oliver Magowan Training	Access to Oliver Magowan Training programme paused due to concerns relating to not being tailored to NI framework. Regional group established to design evidence-based training for HSC staff in conjunction with Prof Laurence Taggart (QUB). Meantime, Trust staff have been offered alternative training - "Caring for People with a Learning Disability in General Hospital Settings".	Ensures staff have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability.

5	Staff awareness and understanding of neurodiversity	Psychological Services has been providing Neurodiversity Awareness Training sessions to staff within Children's Services - this training has been developed in conjunction with neurodivergent individuals and incorporates the lived experiences of neurodivergent parents and children Belfast Trust has undertaken extensive work in the area of Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence including: A Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services has been appointed. Neurodiversity Champion Network has been established. Involving over 40 BHSCT staff who have undertaken 3 modules of training to equip them with knowledge around Neurodivergence, different forms of Neurodivergence, and how this differs from Neurodiversity. 7th edition of the Neurodiversity Newsletter created (launched October 2024). The newsletter is a useful tool in sharing information on neurodiversity as well as promoting news, training opportunities, resources and research. The Champion's Network launched a Neurodiversity Champion's Logo in March 2026 BHSCT Autism Forum meets quarterly with representation	An opportunity for Trust staff to hear someone else's story to deepen understanding of neurodiversity.

		from BHSCT staff, Community & Voluntary Sector organisations, SPPG and Belfast City Council. The group shares good practice, ongoing areas of work, and highlights areas for challenge/improvements to be made.	

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	Belfast Trust has undertaken significant work in this area through the work of the planning and Equality team including: Two Toolkits for staff: “Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit” and “Interpreting, Translations and Easy Read Toolkit” Belfast Trust has an annual contract with TILII Translates to translate information into easy-to-understand formats. Staff Notice Posters have been developed and disseminated across the Trust to advise staff of the need to use sign language interpreters and how to book an interpreter (f2f and remotely). Staff are reminded of the duty to make reasonable adjustments when communicating when drafting a policy (policy template wording) and undertaking an equality screening (equality screening template wording).	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.

		Belfast Trust is a signatory to the "Every Customer Counts" campaign. A key aspect of this is to consider how the services communicates with service users.	
	Communication support for online information	As above.	
2	Supporting staff to provide more accessible communication	As above	There have been approximately 4000 visits to the two toolkits.
	Video support for Sign Language users to access electronic health care records through MyCare App	BDA produced videos which are available on Trust website and proactively disseminated to staff at appropriate times eg sign language week *Image92: BDA produced support videos*  	Enhanced accessibility to individual health care records via the MyCare app.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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<table>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Making a difference Training- Mandatory Equality Training</td>
<td>The regional Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights; Making a Difference eLearning programme is mandatory and compliance is monitored twice each year.

New staff complete mandatory equality, good relations and human rights training as part of their ‘on boarding’ journey.

Staff in Belfast Trust must complete this training every five years and is part of the mandatory training matrix.</td>
<td>During the reporting period, Planning & Equality team delivered facilitated online training

100%, n=101 staff gave feedback that training was ‘Good, Very Good or Excellent’

Feedback included how staff would use the training e.g.

“As well as delivery the necessary information, it was delivered in a way to make me evaluate and consider different scenarios.”

“Have confidence to call out things when necessary & Follow the principles of FREDA”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Supportive resources and toolkits available</td>
<td>Resources and toolkits available to promote and support reasonable adjustments and to provide more accessible communication

Video support for Sign Language users to access electronic health care records through MyCare App</td>
<td>Table 11: Visits to Resources and Toolkits
<table>
<tr><th>Resource / Toolkit</th><th>visits in reporting period</th></tr>
<tr><td>Equality Screening Toolkit</td><td>2499</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interpreting, Translation and Easy Read Toolkit</td><td>3705</td></tr>
<tr><td>Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit</td><td>1597</td></tr>
<tr><td>Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit for Staff</td><td>229</td></tr>
<tr><td>Faith, Spiritual and Cultural Handbook: Death</td><td>439</td></tr>
<tr><td>Staff guidance: Reporting a hate crime incident</td><td>291</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
</table>

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	Availability of Involvement opportunities	Trust's Involvement Strategy - 'Involving You from "Them and Us" to "We", which has been extended to 2025. The Involvement Steering Group is part of the Trust Assurance and Accountability Framework which provides Strategic Leadership. Through the Belfast Trust's virtual Involvement Network, service users and carers receive regular communications including Newsletters, opportunities to get involved and attend training to support their involvement journey SCOPE (Service user Carer Opportunity to Participate and Engage) training is delivered to service users and carers to help equip them with the knowledge they would need to be involved in Belfast Trust. Good Relations bulletin and Equality Bites.	Involvement Network: Recruitment is on-going with 112 service users and carers currently involved The Trust has 24 Service User and Carer Groups who get involved to help shape services and includes the Carers Network, Deaf Sign Language User Forum and Prosthetic User Forum. SCOPE training: From April 2024 to March 2025, the Involvement and Partnership team hosted 7 sessions. Good Relations bulletin and Equality Bites disseminated to all staff and to over 600 key stakeholders including community and voluntary sector and MLAs.
	Disability Positive Accreditation	Audit of employment-related good practice • Evidence of high standard of commitment to the employment of disabled people Identification of areas were further progress is required	Staff with disabilities experience positive support from service managers and HR

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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 at Christmas time	Belfast Trust has compiled a list of supportive strategies *Image 93: Autism at Christmas support resource* 	To help people with neurodiversity and their families find Christmas a little easier
	We will continue to promote 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.	Explanation of the social model co-produced with disabled people in a Task & Finish Group and approved by Disability Committee. Resource is included in training and promoted across the Trust	Increased visibility of disabled people and disabled staff, including those with hidden disability
	We will mark and celebrate allocated disability – related days to raise awareness at a local and regional level.	Click or tap here to enter text. Online EDI calendar co-produced with Disability Committee approval to mark significant dates in the year eg Learning Disability Week, Sign Language Week, International Day for People with Disabilities.	Increased staff awareness of disability equality
	We will continue the roll out of the Health and Social Care Communication	Regular communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements.	Regional consistency and equity of access to communication support for people who are Deaf/deaf or have hearing loss.

	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.	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. Deaf Awareness posters highlighted and reissued. Belfast Trust staff quality Lead reps attended SPPG meeting (Dec 24) with Trust IT reps, Sign Language provider to discuss issues and concerns	Improved access to communication support for people who are Deaf/deaf or Hard of Hearing. Increased awareness of HSC staff of need to provide communication support. Reduction in complaints about lack of communication support available/provided.
	We will co-produce guidance for staff on how to effectively engage with disabled people in decision making processes. These guidelines will provide practical information to support staff to address the barriers to meaningfully involvement We will 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	Task & Finish group established to co-produce Guidance and a Disability Masterclass. Content included: • Understanding the lived experience (personal stories) from disabled people when accessing health and social care • Practical guidance and considerations for providing health and social care • Practical tips to encourage participation from disabled people • Guidance, education and understanding the impact of terminology • Information and guidance about the social model of disability	Guidance integrated into Involvement/Engagement resources and as a standalone resource to support staff with best practice. Masterclass attended by approx. 40 staff. Evaluation completed to inform next steps 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. Improved participation of disabled people in health and social care decisions.

	implementation of our Disability Action Plan.	• Legislative context (sharing information about disability legislation in Northern Ireland) Effective participation and influence of disabled people and representative organisations Guidance co-produced with disabled people in a task and finish group and approved by Disability Committee. To be promoted internally across the Trust. *Image 94: Resource to support staff to involve d/Deaf and disabled people in decision making*  	
	We will work towards Disability Positive Accreditation for all Trusts.	BHSCT: Disability Positive Accreditation achieved	Increased awareness among disabled people of HSC jobs available.
	We will scope the availability of Changing Places and new facilities will be added in accordance with legislation.	Task and Finish group established (including Mae Murray Foundation) to co-ordinate the installation of the facility as it involves 5	Improved dignified access to HSC facilities

	Funding of £100k secured via Charitable Funds to install Changing Places facility at RVH site.	services moving to accommodate the installation. Two Changing Places facilities planned for the new Childrens Hospital. Meantime an enhanced accessible facility has been installed on the current estate. Director led group established to consider alternatives to a Changing Place facility across acute sites Improved access to HSC services for disabled people	
	We will provide an alternative way for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs until the current HSC jobs website is replaced by the new system	A Guide has been produced regionally re accessibility for the HSCRecruit website. Applications are accepted in alternative formats. C&V groups and applicants can liaise with HR staff. Reasonable adjustments in place. Alternative Method for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs available. Better communication with disabled applicants who require adjustments or support with their application	Enhanced participation in society by disabled people

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
	We will review our staff training programmes and ensure that training is co-produced, reflects lived experience and includes information on disability equality and the disability duties and promotes the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training.	Training reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis with new case law and resources added. Training available to staff via HSC Learn platform	Increased awareness of disability duties.	Access to Oliver Magowan Training programme paused due to concerns relating to not being tailored to NI framework. Regional group established to design evidence based training for HSC staff in conjunction with Prof Laurence Taggart (QUB). Meantime, Trust staff have been offered alternative training - “Caring for People with a Learning Disability in General Hospital Settings”.
	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.	Consultee database reviewed and updated annually Increased use of alt text in our social media and Website. Information from Trusts is available in alternative formats.	Increased awareness of Trust Involvement Teams and involvement opportunities with disabled people and representative groups. Development of a specific database of disabled people and organisations and determine the	Work ongoing throughout lifetime of the action plan.

		d/Deaf Sign Language BHSCT Forum established and meets twice per year. Members involved in ED and Complaints work	best way for them to be involved Increased usage of involvement section on Trust website and the Public Health Agency (PHA) "Engage" website and sharing of links with disabled people and representative organisations.	
	We will work in partnership with relevant key organisations and individuals to identify advocacy services.	Directory for support for carers on Trust website. Where else to get support | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website	Increase awareness of support available	Work in progress. Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan as requires annual review.
	We will 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- April 25	Partnership working and support of co-production on disability equality issues.	Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan as requires annual review
	We will review the membership of our user forums and where necessary work to increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations	Staff supported to enhance involvement opportunities	Increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations to guide decision making	On-going through the lifetime of the plan as requires regular review. Support available • Involvement Strategy • Involvement Network • SCOPE training • Staff Guide to Involvement resource

		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 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 on-going through the lifetime of the plan
	We will review our Staff Disability Equality Policy in line with best practice to ensure it remains fit for purpose and relevant	Review in progress	Update policy to ensure appropriate and effective	Currently under review and due to be consulted with Trade Union colleagues Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan
	We will engage with disabled staff to ensure they have a	This will be progressed at a		Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan

	voice and influence the support we provide.	regional level and local implementation		
	We will work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to review our employability schemes and placement schemes to enhance employment opportunities		Improved opportunities and availability of our employability and placement schemes	Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan
	We will work to reduce barriers to recruitment in health and social care for disabled people	Neurodiversity Guide Promotion of requirement to provide reasonable adjustments	Barriers to recruitment in health and social care identified in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations. Development of actions, in line with the legislative provisions and supported by equality data, to improve access to employment for disabled people.	Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan
	We will continue to work with ENCOMPASS to ensure that the communication support needs of service users are captured	We continue to work with encompass and monitor service user feedback.	Improved communication and access to services	Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan
	We will support the involvement of disabled people and representative organisations in the	Engagement process with disabled people in the roll out of Encompass.	Increased awareness of accessibility challenges with encompass and	Action on-going through the lifetime of the plan

	roll out of ENCOMPASS		improved influence over decisions	

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	We will review and update our Disability Toolkit.	This is deferred until 2026/27. Focus has been on development of the Ability Passport.

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 will not specifically use the Oliver McGowan training.
- Use of the Read and Write software for staff is not available on a Trustwide license rather purchased on an individual basis due to lack of compatibility with Encompass.
  .

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.