Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
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REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR FEED TO CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT GROUP (CGOG)

1. Date of CGOG Meeting where reporting template to be considered	10 September 2026

2. Reporting from: Feed name IE CSSG, People & Culture, Governance & Assurance, Medical Leadership)	People & Culture
3. Date of Meeting of Feed (if relevant)	
4. Lead Director for "feed"	Brendan McConaghy

5. Recommendations within "Feed"
• Recommendations 3,4 and 5 from the Hill/McBride Report (see below) • Any "open" recommendations from DCO or Cardiac Surgery Groups pertaining to People & Culture will be captured in this "feed".

The Belfast Trust should commit to the development of a comprehensive 5 year "People and Culture" Strategy (H/McB 3).

In order to achieve this the Trust should:

- Engage in a meaningful engagement/listening exercise that includes all staff in setting out the ambition of the People and Culture strategy.
- Communicate widely to staff that the People and Culture strategy will be co-designed and co-produced with them, agree a mechanism to "deal with the past", and set up the structures within the organisation that facilitate involvement and engagement.
- Devise meaningful accountability processes that reflect the central importance of the People and Culture strategy to the success of the organisation:
    - Create a NED chaired People and Culture Board Sub-Committee
    - Ensure that a reporting template provides updates from the People and Culture sub-committee to the Board, concerning people issues as a standing agenda item.
    - Devise metrics to monitor "culture" within the organisation. RQIA's "Being Human" document may be helpful.
- Create staff engagement groups throughout the organisation to feed "soft intelligence" into formal People and Culture reports.
- Incorporate a clear plan to build capacity among those with management responsibilities to support them to manage and challenge inappropriate behaviours.

The Belfast Trust should review its Human Resource function considering structure, capacity and resourcing (H/McB 4).

In order to achieve this the Trust should:

- Undertake a formal analysis of need based on the aspirations of the People and Culture strategy and the appropriate prioritisation of people issues.
- Ensure that Human Resources is properly equipped with expertise and resources to undertake its function.
- Evaluate the need for Medical HR expertise and ensure that HR has meaningful oversight of all "people issues" involving medical staff including active involvement with the application of MHPS.
- Ensure that there is clear accountability for people issues at senior executive level to the Board.

The Belfast Trust should review, clarify and improve the mechanisms for staff to raise concerns (H/McB 5)

In order to achieve this the Trust should:

- Incorporate this as a central enabling tenet of the People and Culture strategy.
- Review and update all policies and procedures relevant to raising concerns – grievance raising, disciplinary procedures, conflict, bullying and harassment and whistleblowing.
- Provide clarification to staff on the circumstances in which whistleblowing is appropriate, and the external organisations they can approach if they do not trust internal processes.
- As part of the People and Culture strategy embed "Listening to staff as a cultural norm in the Belfast Trust".
- Clarify the responsibility of line managers to listen to and to respond to staff who raise concerns.
- Introduce 360 review of managers as a standard part of annual appraisals and ensure that staff views are actively sought and provided without fear of identification or negative repercussions.

6. Summary Progress to date against "Feed" recommendations and colour coding for each

Development of a comprehensive 5 year "People and Culture" Strategy (H/McB 3). On Track

- Development of draft strategy now commenced using information from a range of sources. Including;
  - Feedback from People and Culture Townhalls
  - People and Culture Strategy Survey feedback
  - Previous Staff Experience Survey results
  - Feedback from external reviews including DCO and Hill McBride
- Draft strategy will be ready for consultation by end of June 2026

August update:
The draft People and Culture Strategy now been completed. Final feedback is being sought from the Executive Team, Trade Unions and the People and Culture Committee, with revisions due to be completed week commencing 10 August 2026. A launch and implementation plan has been developed, outlining how the People and Culture Strategy will be introduced as the overarching strategy, supported by Being Open and Respect and Civility Frameworks. Together, these initiatives will provide the practical tools required to enable staff to experience the strategy in action. The target launch date is the week commencing 28 September 2026.

Internal consultation on the draft Respect and Civility Framework and Belfast Trust Being Open Matrix has been completed, with final amendments currently being incorporated ahead of consideration by the People and Culture Committee. Both frameworks will launch alongside the People and Culture Strategy.

A comprehensive implementation and communications plan has been developed to support the launch of these frameworks. This includes practical toolkits and a Trust-wide e-learning package designed to build

confidence and capability amongst staff and managers in promoting respectful behaviours, addressing concerns and responding appropriately to inappropriate behaviours.

September update:
The Trust's five-year People and Culture Strategy is in the final stages of approval following an extensive programme of engagement, consultation and co-design with staff, managers, Trade Union colleagues and key stakeholders across the organisation.

Final feedback is currently being sought from Trust Board members. The Strategy will be presented for formal ratification by the Trust Board on 24 September 2026. Given the breadth of consultation already undertaken, confidence is high that the Strategy will be finalised and approved within these timescales.

A comprehensive implementation and launch programme has been developed, with formal launch scheduled for 30 September 2026. This includes detailed communications and engagement plan and a suite of supporting frameworks and practical resources designed to assist services in implementing the Strategy locally. Supporting initiatives include Respect and Civility, Being Open and Sexual Safety, all of which have been informed by significant stakeholder engagement.

In addition, work to strengthen leadership and management capability to support implementation will be progressed through the Leadership and Management Assurance Group also reporting to the People and Culture Committee.

Communicate widely to staff that the People and Culture strategy will be co-designed and co-produced with them, agree a mechanism to "deal with the past", and set up the structures within the organisation that facilitate involvement and engagement On Track

- A range of communication strategies have been used to advertise the opportunities to inform the future People and Culture Strategy.
- Messaging via screen savers and all-use emails have emphasised opportunities for involvement and how staff and teams can contribute their views as the strategy is developed. Team-based discussions supported by an engagement pack, and Trust-wide Town Hall events with the Chief Executive planned throughout April and May.
- Further work is underway to consider appropriate mechanisms to acknowledge and address past experience using a restorative justice lens.
- A planning meeting has taken place between CEO, the NED who will chair new People and Culture Committee and Co-Directors of HR+OD with a view to hold first quarterly meeting in June 2026.
- The Trust's 2026 Staff Survey was launched on 1st May and will stay open throughout the month. Results from the survey will inform the development of local People and Culture plans as well as track progress of ongoing Culture change efforts. This includes matters relating to raising concerns.
- The Trust continues to contribute to the development of regional bodies of work that pertain to organisational culture including Strengthening Our Core, RQIA's Being Human Framework and the Being Open Framework.
- Internal consultation across the Trust on the draft Respect and Civility Framework and the draft Belfast Trust Being Open Matrix (for staff) has been completed and final changes are being made ahead of presentation to Exec Team and Trust Board in June.
- External consultation has now commenced through the formation of a Being Open Involvement Group with membership from Patients, Service Users and Carers. The group are tasked with ensuring the Trust's response to the DoH Being Open Framework meets the needs of the public. This work is likely to continue throughout 2026.

August update:
Draft People and Culture Strategy completed following extensive staff engagement, consultation and feedback.

Feedback from Executive Team, Trade Unions and the People and Culture Committee is being incorporated into the final strategy.
A comprehensive launch and implementation plan has been developed to support engagement with staff and promote adoption of the Strategy and associated frameworks.
The Being Open Involvement Group continues to support development of the Trust's response to the DoH Being Open Framework.
The 2026 Staff Survey closed with 5310 responses, 3038 recognition nominations and an employee engagement score of 3.84 /5 (vs 3.80 in 2025). Survey results and ongoing engagement activity inform both the final strategy and local implementation plans, ensuring staff continue to shape priorities and actions.

Progress is being made in relation to 'Dealing with the past'. A working group will report to our Open, Just and Learning Assurance Group which sits within the People and Culture assurance structure.

September update
Communicate widely to staff that the People and Culture strategy will be co-designed and co-produced with them - Complete

Agree a mechanism to "deal with the past" – On track. Further consideration in relation to dealing with the past has led to the reflection that many of the issues pertaining to dealing with the past have been progressed over the past year by the leadership within the Trust. It has been agreed that outstanding issues are best taken forward through the various assurance and oversight mechanisms that have been developed such as the Muckamore oversight group.

Set up the structures within the organisation that facilitate involvement and engagement – On track
As referenced above the Trust has implemented a strengthened governance and assurance infrastructure which will among other things support staff involvement, engagement and organisational learning. Oversight responsibility has been established through the People and Culture Committee, a Tier 1 Assurance Committee of the Trust Board, which will provide ongoing scrutiny of culture and engagement. As part of this, the Open, Just and Learning Assurance Group has been established to oversee delivery of key workstreams aimed at strengthening openness, engagement and staff voice across the organisation. The Group's programme of work will include implementation of the Department of Health's *Being Open* Framework and supporting mechanisms designed to promote speaking up, learning from experience and responding constructively to staff feedback and concerns. The launch of the initiative to deliver this is scheduled for Autumn as part of the People and Culture Strategy launch.
The Strategy embeds the organisational commitments to *create an open, inclusive culture built on belonging and respect* and to *listen, involve and respond*. The Strategy is supported by a defined measurement plan, reporting arrangements and accountability mechanisms, ensuring that progress can be monitored and reported through the Trust's formal assurance structure.
In addition, staff engagement mechanisms are being developed across services to provide regular opportunities for staff involvement and to ensure workforce intelligence informs decision-making, service improvement and cultural development.

Devise meaningful accountability processes that reflect the central importance of the People and Culture strategy to the success of the organisation: COMPLETE

- **Create a NED chaired People and Culture Board Sub-Committee**
- **Ensure that a reporting template provides updates from the People and Culture sub-committee to the Board, concerning people issues as a standing agenda item.**
- **Devise metrics to monitor "culture" within the organisation. RQIA's "Being Human" document may be helpful.**

- Planning for the new People and Culture Committee to be chaired by a non-executive director and the Director of HR&OD has been completed, and the first quarterly meeting will take place in June 2026.

- Belfast Trust has now implemented a Trust wide Assurance framework that includes standardised reporting templates for all Tier 1 assurance committees. The people and Culture Committee will use these templates for reporting matters relating to People and Culture to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- Results from the Trust's 2026 Staff Survey (launched on 1st May 2026) have been shared with Directorates in July 2026. These survey results will inform the development of local People and Culture plans (to be submitted to the People and Culture Committee in Sept???) as well as track progress of ongoing Culture change efforts. This includes matters relating to raising concerns.
- The Trust continues to contribute to the development of regional bodies of work that pertain to organisational culture including Strengthening Our Core, RQIA's Being Human Framework and the Being Open Framework. Metrics used by the Trust to monitor culture are and will continue to reflect the aims of these regional documents.

NED-chaired People and Culture Committee established and first meeting took place on 24th July 2026 to agree terms of reference, membership and assurance mechanisms. As part of the Trust-wide Assurance Framework the People and Culture Committee will commence quarterly reporting to Trust Board, providing assurance on People and Culture priorities, workforce matters and delivery of the People and Culture Strategy.

Results from the Trust's 2026 Staff Survey have been shared with Directorates and will inform the development of local People and Culture action plans. Survey findings will also form a key component of the Trust's approach to monitoring organisational culture and measuring the impact of culture improvement initiatives over time.

Sept 26 Update
Robust governance and accountability arrangements are now in place to support implementation of the People and Culture Strategy and provide ongoing assurance. The People and Culture Committee (Chaired by a NED) will provide Tier 1 oversight of delivery, with implementation of the Strategy established as a standing agenda item.

Progress reporting against the strategy and a comprehensive measurement plan has been developed, including performance indicators to monitor impact and outcomes.

The Belfast Trust should review its Human Resource function considering structure, capacity and resourcing (H/McB 4). On Track

- The independent review of the HROD function has now concluded and planning is underway for the communication of the recommendations to senior HR staff and the wider team in June 2026. The external reviewer is assisting with the development of an action plan that will form the basis of the improvement work.

Work has commenced across several priority recommendations including strengthening HR service delivery, reviewing the Business Partner model, enhancing workforce support arrangements, strengthening engagement with medical staff and progressing the transformation of the HR&OD function. Work is progressing to strengthen partnership working between HR and Medical Leadership, including increased HR involvement in medical workforce governance and engagement with medical staff. A formal action plan has been drafted, with named leads and target actions identified. Progress will be reviewed regularly to ensure implementation of the HR&OD review recommendations.

Sept Update

There was a pause on this work in August due to annual leave and the availability of the external consultant. The external consultant re-engaged from 1st September, with the first priority being to finalise the action plan.

The Belfast Trust should review, clarify and improve the mechanisms for staff to raise concerns (H/McB 5) On Track

- Developing the infrastructure, training and support mechanisms to enable staff to raise concerns will be a key component of our new People and Culture Strategy.
- Our Foundations of Leadership programme contains a curriculum on Openness where focus is given to the behaviours that leaders need to display to create the conditions for staff to speak up and raise concerns.
- All new starts attend a workshop on openness on their first day at the corporate welcome event. During this session staff are provided with written information on how to raise concerns.
- Four workshops were held with staff in October and December 2025 to seek feedback on the existing WB policy and procedure and to highlight areas of improvements.
- The Grievance and Conflict Bullying and Harassment policies have both been reviewed regionally and implemented within the Trust. The Disciplinary policy is currently under review regionally and is in the final stages of consultation.
- Revision of the WB Advocates list has been undertaken and refresher training provided to those who will act in this capacity. Further WB Advocate nominations have been sought to further enhance this support across the organisation.
- Whistleblowing is now included in the New Manager Toolkit training.
- Staff views on leadership are actively and routinely captured through the annual staff engagement survey, where experiences of leadership are the basis for a number of questions, with results fed back at service and team level and are completely anonymous.
- Three Staff Experience metrics that relate to psychological safety 1) knowing how to raise concerns 2) feeling safe to raise concerns and 3) a belief that the organisation will act on concerns when raised have all increased over the past 5 years.
- Options to introduce 360° feedback for managers as part of the annual appraisal process are currently being explored by the Enhancing Leadership Assurance Group with a focus on ensuring the approach is supportive, constructive and scalable for those in formal leadership roles.
- Multiple Trust wide communications have been issued to encourage staff to speak up if they have a concern, how to do so, and the appropriate policy. These communications will continue on a rolling basis going forward.
- Discussions are ongoing regionally in relation to the Hill/McBride Freedom to Speak up recommendations. In addition, the Trust have undertaken benchmarking of other raising concerns services to help inform the future structure going forward.
- The Trust have increased the resources within the Whistleblowing team by recruiting an additional band 7. Further funding has also been received to recruit a band 4 and this is currently being processed. The additional resource within the team will strengthen the ability to respond to concerns that are raised and the ability to process these in a more timely way.

August update:
A Whistleblowing Annual Report for the 24/25 year was presented to Trust Board on 23rd July 2026 to provide an overview and assurance of the service.

Awareness raising in relation to how to raise a concern is now built into induction and other new-to-manager and management development programmes.

The most recent staff survey which has been reported since the last meeting has identified a positive increase. As can be seen from the table below, there has been a year-on-year increase across all three 'psychological safety' questions.

Survey Year	I know how to challenge and raise concerns about a work issue if I need to	I am able to raise concerns in this team without fear of negative consequences	I am confident that the organisation acts on concerns that are raised
2023	75.3	61.1	55.7
2024	75.6	63.7	55.8
2025	77.2	66.2	58.2
2026	78.2	66.5	58.8

Recent analysis of concerns received has indicated that a number of them have not met the whistleblowing criteria and were referred onto other services as appropriate. Further work is planned in the coming months to help increase staff knowledge on the appropriate mechanisms for raising complaints to help address this going forward.

Sept Update

Substantial progress has been made in delivering this recommendation, with the key requirements now embedded within the Trust's new People and Culture Strategy. The Strategy includes specific commitments to create an open, inclusive culture and to listen, involve and respond, providing a clear organisational framework for encouraging staff to raise concerns and ensuring those concerns are heard and acted upon.

Supporting resources have been developed to reinforce these commitments, including the Being Open guidance materials, which will be launched alongside the People and Culture Strategy in Autumn 2026. A comprehensive communications and engagement programme has been developed to support implementation and raise awareness across the organisation.

Training and development activity continues to strengthen management capability in this area. The Openness module within the Foundations of Leadership programme remains a core component of development for new managers, while openness, honesty and speaking up continue to be emphasised through the Corporate Welcome programme. Whistleblowing arrangements are also incorporated within the new Manager Toolkit, supported by a programme of workshops delivered between October and December 2025.

A review of key employment policies has also been undertaken, including the Grievance Policy and the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

The Trust has established governance and assurance arrangements through the People and Culture Strategy to support ongoing oversight of organisational culture, staff voice and employee experience. Implementation of the Strategy will be monitored through the People and Culture Committee, with agreed performance

measures included within the Strategy's measurement plan. There is also a dedicated Tier 3 assurance group reporting to the committee on Whistleblowing in the Trust. This is chaired by a Non-executive Director.

The Trust will continue to monitor staff perceptions through the Staff Engagement Survey and other staff feedback mechanisms, providing evidence of whether concerns are being raised and responded to appropriately at local level.

The development of a 360-degree feedback approach for managers will be a key focus for the tier 3 leadership and management assurance group and represents the principal outstanding element of this recommendation.

7. New risks identified, including controls and mitigating actions discussed
None

8. Issues requiring escalation to CGOG (if any) and actions proposed for consideration by CGOG
None

9. CGOG consideration of the Reporting Template
CGOG noted the update provided and in particular welcomed the plans for the finalising of the People and Culture Strategy by end September 2026.

10. Trust Board consideration of the Reporting Template