

4 April 2022

## **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - Delegated Time for Section 75 Groups**

**Can you please advise how much time / what work has been done in the past year for each staff group which falls under the S75 categories, e.g. ethnic minorities staff groups, LGBT group etc.**

**Is there equal support from BHSCT HR Equality given to each group as it seems there is such focus given to one group, can this be defended?**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, including Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and other HSC organisations, to comply with two statutory duties.

The first duty is the Equality of Opportunity duty. This requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

The second duty, the Good Relations duty, requires that public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

With regard to the work undertaken by Belfast Trust, I can advise that owing to intersectionality between a range of categories, i.e. race, gender, disability, carers etc., it may not be possible to fully account for each and every activity undertaken in terms of the timeframe for each of the categories. The work of the Trust is accounted for by way of our Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This accounts for, and details, how we are meeting our statutory obligations and we endeavour to ensure that each of the groups is supported accordingly. The Trust has a robust and inclusive Staff Wellbeing Strategy that is accessible to staff and their families to address health and social inequalities across the nine groups.

Over the past 12 months, the Human Resources (HR) Equality Team has undertaken the following work:

- Participated in regular forum across the HSC region, with regional HR Equality leads, to ensure consistent employment equality approaches across the 9 groups, including data monitoring, benchmarking best practice, employability initiatives and planning for new Regional Employment Equality HR system.

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- Delivery of Employment Equality Training encompassing each of the 9 groups, delivered each month on planned and ad-hoc basis.
- Developed a user-friendly guide for staff on 'Why Your Equality Data Matters'. This aims to allow staff to review/update their Section 75 Data.
- Promoting Harmonious Working Environment and Joint Declaration of Protection Statement.
- Regional Meeting with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) to review our Fair Employment Monitoring return.
- Regular updates with ECNI regarding good practice and learning from current cases within Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

### **Race, Different Religious Belief and Political Opinion**

- Current review of Good Relations Strategy – ongoing
- Release and promotion of regionally agreed Good Relations Statement
- Participation in Good Relations Week
- Development of Ethnic Minorities Staff Network - Quarterly meetings.
- Participation in the new Regional Organisational Development group led by the Leadership Centre to enhance OD and mentoring and career progression of staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Continued work to address employment opportunities with persons from under-represented communities, including Protestant Males.
- Reviewed the Trust employment 'Welcome Statement' for applicants and potential employees.
- Pathway to support newly recruited international nursing staff.

### **Age**

- Participation in Public Health Agency, Regional Healthier Workplaces Group and the Age at Work subgroup
- Review of flexible retirement processes.
- Review of Menopause resources.
- Review of Age Retirement processes and support for staff, including new virtual resource with the Leadership Centre

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### **Sexual Orientation**

- Development of draft LGBTQ+ Toolkit – resource for staff and managers
- On-line lunch time Awareness Session for staff on Gender and identity,
- Participation in online PRIDE events 2020 and 2021

### **Disability**

- Development and release of a Regional Disability Policy and Toolkit for managers and staff on all matters regarding disability.
- Working in partnership with Leonard Cheshire to support work experience placements
- Working in partnership with Belfast Met to support Next Steps – work experience for 3 individuals.
- Working with Belfast Met, Translink, Belfast City Council and Hendersons to deliver Positive Action Employability initiative for supporting persons with a disability into the workplace.
- Continuing to work with staff to ensure timely, person-focused, reasonable adjustments in the workplace and ensure that new starts and applicants are attracted to Belfast Health and Social Care Trust as an employer of choice.
- Partnership work with Employers for Disability Northern Ireland to deliver a range of learning events, including Neuro Diversity and Mental Health.

### **Persons with Dependants**

- Continued provision of support with childcare / dependents and other means of flexible working for our workforce.
- Development of a Carers Network, Carers Framework.
- Delivery of quarterly online, virtual information sessions for Carers in terms of their rights, signposting to support etc.
- Currently working with regional Trade Union and Human Resources colleagues to review the Trust Flexible Working Policies.