

Appendix 1

**Equality Action Plan
2024-2029 Update March 2025**

**Disability Action Plan
2024-2029 Update March 2025**

Equality Action Plan 2024-2029 Update March 2025



Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Section 1 – Improving the data we use to support decision-making

We know that high quality data plays a role in improving services and decision-making. When Trusts have good population data, they can identify areas that have worse health outcomes and target health and care resources to reduce health inequalities. Feedback from consultees has indicated that we need to improve the data we collect in relation to health and social care inequalities. The following actions are aimed at improving the data we collect to ensure the effective discharge of our S75 equality duties.

The Trusts monitor staff across the 9 equality categories to ensure equality of opportunity. Staff input their own equality information on an online system but there are currently gaps in the data available.			
Actions	By when	How we measure success	Progress March 2025
1. 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.	April 2024 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular awareness raising campaigns to encourage staff to update their equality data. Development of regional and local campaigns with timescales for staff to update their equality profile. Increase in percentage of staff completing their equality monitoring data.¹ Promotional resources/Toolkits produced and disseminated to promote inclusion of all staff. Input into the EQUIP project to ensure the next HR IT system is fully appropriate and fit for operational purpose. Regional subgroups to support its development and implementation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark where appropriate with examples of good practice. 	<p>Action to date:</p> <p>Communications are regularly carried out during the year in the staff newsletter Southern-I, global messages, Desktop and email to remind both existing and new staff to keep their equality data up to date on HRPTS.</p> <p>Progressing within Regional Employment Equality Group. Representatives from Regional Employment Equality Group also involved in regional sub groups</p>

¹ Provision of equality monitoring data on our Information System is voluntary for HSC staff however all staff are encouraged to complete and update at regular intervals.

			of EQUIP and regularly report updates as required.
ENCOMPASS is a new health and social care wide programme that will introduce a digital integrated care record to Northern Ireland.			
Actions	By when	How we measure success	Progress March 2025
2. 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.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity and communication support needs recorded on ENCOMPASS system. • Increased access to communication support in timely fashion. • Improved policy formulation, service delivery and population health data. 	<p>Action to date:</p> <p>Only available in English, function for Arabic but not activated at this time.</p> <p>Encompass say they will look at it in the future. Service users can record own ethnicity and language needs in my Care app. Still work in progress</p> <p>Accessibility issues for staff raised by RNIB, solution being sought to attach software such as Fusion and Dragon for those with sight loss.</p> <p>Accessibility Issues also re Read & Write Gold assistive technology software.</p>

Under a new way of planning and commissioning services, the Integrated Care System (ICS) will bring together health and social care organisations, partners in voluntary and community sectors and local government, to develop population health plans to improve outcomes and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Actions	By when	How we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>3. We will work with partners to ensure the inclusion and analysis of Section 75 data in the development of population health plans.</p>	<p>April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust population health plans including Section 75 data. • Identification of health inequalities. • Targeted services that address identified health inequalities and improve health outcomes. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Southern area will moved from test to shadow Nov 2025</p> <p>Western area and south eastern area are stood up in shadow in November 2024</p> <p>Belfast and Northern area to be stood up in early 2025</p> <p>PHA will have to publish population health plans for each AIPB</p>



Section 2 – Addressing barriers to accessing health and social care

While much work has been done to date to promote equality of opportunity, it remains the case that there are a number of equality groups, who continue to face particular and unique barriers. During the listening events and consultation period, we heard many suggestions on how to improve equality of access to health and social care services. The following actions have been developed in response to what we have heard, and are aimed at providing welcoming, person-centred and accessible services for everyone.

Trusts have a duty to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The regional Health and Social Care Good Relations Statement provides a consistent message in terms of our commitment to good relations. Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) has consulted on a co-produced Good Relations Strategy, which includes actions that will promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
4. 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.	September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-produced Good Relations Strategy. Strategy adopted by all Trusts. Regional approach to promotion of good relations in HSC Trusts where relevant. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>SHSCT plan to develop a Good Relations strategy by March 2026</p>

We know that there is a lot of information available on improving health and wellbeing but we need to make sure that the content is understood and accessible.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
5. 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.	April 2025 and annually thereafter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved inclusive health and well-being information, targeted at the effected communities. • One regional seminar held each year. • Feedback and evaluation of seminars. 	<p>Regional Cultural Competency framework 5 February 25 launch event was attended by a number of Trust Staff and Minster for Health.</p> <p>Online training and booklet developed to run alongside face to face training for staff. A total of 34 staff have completed the f2f training to date.</p>

During Covid-19, the increased use of facemasks caused communication difficulties for Deaf and hard of hearing people and people who lip-read. The regional Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing was established in 2023 to provide consistent and improved access to communication support when accessing health and social care services.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
6. We will ensure staff are aware of the Health and Social Care Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind	April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of the regional HSC Communication Support Service for People who are d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. • Greater awareness of the importance and availability of accessible facemasks. • Improved communication and patient experience. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regular communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements.</p>

<p>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.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in complaints. • Increase in compliments/positive feedback. • Proactive and targeted use of Care Opinion to promote better communication. 	<p>The contract for Sign Language Provision is with SPPG. Equality Lead representatives attended SPPG meeting December 2024, alongside with Trust IT representatives and the Sign Language provider to discuss issues and concerns.</p> <p>Deaf Awareness posters to be further highlighted and reissued.</p>
<p>The Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS) provides professionally trained interpreters on a face-to-face basis. Trusts also have a regional contract for telephone interpreting for people, whose first language is not English, when accessing Health and Social Care services across Northern Ireland. Feedback indicated that access to interpreting support remains a barrier for some when accessing services.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>7. 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</p>	<p>April 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting card for service users and patients to bring to their appointments to help support their communication needs. • Promotion of card in training sessions. • Increased staff awareness. • Reduction in complaints about lack of interpreting support. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Trust has developed an interpreting card for patients and service users and are piloting in Emergency Departments. This has been produced in 31 different languages including the most common languages used within the Southern Trust area.</p>

<p>interpreter and include contact details.</p>			
<p>Neurodiversity is a broad term, used to describe the many and varying ways in which human brains are wired. It encompasses the wide variety of ways humans think, learn, feel and process information. Neurodiversity can include Autism, ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia and Acquired Brain Injury. We acknowledge that staff, as well as patients and service users live with neurodiversity and there is a need to raise neurodiversity awareness in the workplace and in the provision of our services.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>8. We will draft and co-produce neurodiversity guidance and a podcast for our staff along with key stakeholders including experts by experience.</p>	<p>April 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of an online signposting resource/service directory on neurodiversity services. • Increased awareness and information provision for staff in terms of people who are neurodiverse. • Improved user experience. • Improved awareness of information and services for people who are neurodiverse. • Dissemination and launch of guidance. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regionally a Neurodiversity Toolkit is being developed.</p> <p>Draft to be available June 2025 with Launch planned for Autumn 2025.</p> <p>Region wide access to the Oliver Magowan Training has been achieved. This training information is being disseminated across the Trust and is available on HSC Learn.</p>
<p>We know that rurality has an impact on equality of access to services, especially for older people, due to lack of accessible transport, times of appointments and the availability of rural and/or community transport. Covid-19 has resulted in a widening of the digital divide affecting older people who may not be familiar with technology.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025

<p>9. 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.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the needs of older people who live rurally. • Raised awareness of best practice in overcoming rural inequality and providing adequate and appropriate mitigations. • Increased number of rural needs impact assessments, where appropriate, which evidence consideration of rurality in service design and service change with reduction in any potential inequality for those living in rural areas. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>RNIA information available for staff on sharepoint.</p> <p>Rural Needs to be considered in light of any equality screening and draft rural needs annual report submitted June 2025.</p>
<p>We know that people may be reluctant to share their sexual orientation with health professionals and are unhappy having to disclose their sexual orientation repeatedly. We have also found that some people have had a negative experience when accessing health and social care services.</p>			
<p>Actions</p>	<p>By when</p>	<p>How will we measure success</p>	<p>Progress March 2025</p>

<p>10. We will implement the Rainbow Badge initiative whereby staff will complete online training to gain a HSC Rainbow Badge. This is a voluntary initiative. The badge will be used to symbolise an open, non-judgmental and inclusive place for people that identify as LGBTQ+.</p>	<p>April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of Rainbow Badge initiative to ensure regional consistency. • Monitor the number of staff taking part in the initiative. • Gather feedback from staff and service users. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>This Action has been implemented regionally.</p> <p>Through a series of awareness raising initiatives, the Trust has seen 400 staff members request a Rainbow Pin to date.</p> <p>The Trust continues to promote this via Trust Announcements, all user emails, via HRBP's and SMT meetings.</p>
<p>11. We will develop a resource for staff comprising professional body guidance on best practice for inclusion for</p>	<p>April 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance available for health and social care professionals. • Increased staff understanding of improving access to services for LGBTQ+ service users. • Reduction in complaints and increase in compliments. 	<p>Regionally we await DoH and ECNI Guidance.</p>

people who are LGBTQ+.			
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Section 3 – Supporting our staff

We know that our staff are our most valuable resource and the health and social care system in Northern Ireland is indebted to the work that they do every day and in particular, throughout the pandemic. We are committed to celebrating and embracing the diversity of our staff and to ensuring that they feel able to bring their authentic selves to work so that they feel valued and can continue to provide safe, effective and compassionate health and social care services.

We have one of the most ethnically diverse workforces in the public sector and it is vital that we continue to promote the inclusion and visibility of staff who come from ethnically diverse backgrounds.			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
12. We will support the ongoing work of Trusts' ethnically diverse networks.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plans developed to oversee Trusts' strategies on EDI for staff. Policies reviewed, developed and recommended relating to EDI. Internal and external EDI groups and networks better engaged. Stronger links across the region between our Ethnically Diverse Staff Networks. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The REaCH Staff Network provides an opportunity for individuals to come together to share ideas, raise awareness of challenges and provide support to each other.</p> <p>The network is a key point of contact for ethnic minorities' staff in order to create a safe, welcoming and shared working environment</p>

			that embraces good relations and diversity within the workforce.
13. We will develop a Cultural Competency training and awareness programme for staff	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A co-produced package of e learning is developed and made available for staff to access. • Staff access to supporting resources. • Deeper understanding of the key issues to help create a more inclusive environment for all. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regional Cultural Competency framework launched on 5 February 25. Online training and booklet developed to run alongside face-to-face training for staff. To date, 34 staff have accessed the f2f training</p> <p>Link to framework to be added to the mandatory Making a Difference Equality and Diversity Training section and promoted throughout the Trust.</p>
<p>We know that there are still incidents of homophobia in the workplace towards staff who are LGBTQ+ and we know that there is an under-declaration amongst staff who record their sexual orientation as LGBTQ+.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
14. We will continue to work in partnership with LGBTQ+ representative organisations to ensure that training and awareness raising resources are	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training developed to support staff to increase understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences. • Staff access to supporting resources. • Deeper understanding of the key issues LGBTQ+ people face to help create an inclusive environment for all. • Increased knowledge of appropriate language and policies that support inclusion. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust continues to promote the Regional LGBTQ+ Forum for staff.</p> <p>Regionally we await DoH and ECNI Guidance.</p>

consistent and up to date.			
15. We will promote the regional HSC LGBTQ+ network for staff across Trusts.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and celebration of LGBTQ+ diversity. • Space provided for LGBTQ+ staff peer support. • Improve experience for LGBTQ+ staff by providing access to support. • Increased understanding of LGBTQ+ inclusion. • LGBTQ experiences more visible in the wider organisation. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Promotional Communication ongoing for Forum.</p> <p>HSC Regional LGBTQ+ Staff Forum have appointed two new co-chairs.</p> <p>The Public Health Agency will continue to manage the oversight of the Forum.</p>
<p>Informal/family carers represent a significant proportion of the working population. A growing number of people working in health and social care are trying to balance their jobs and their caring responsibilities. The entitlement to carers' leave and flexible working arrangements are two of the main support measures that can help informal/family carers to keep a balance between their work lives and caring.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025

<p>16. We will improve awareness of options for flexible working, work-life balance, special leave policies to ensure they are accessible to all our staff.</p>	<p>April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish baseline on uptake of flexible working and monitor year on year staff accessing these opportunities. • Increased awareness of flexible working, work-life balance and special leave policies. • Monitoring reports produced twice a year on flexible working. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Ongoing promotion and awareness of flexible working options. 848 requests for flexible working were made during 2024-25 year, an increase of 28% from the previous year.</p> <p>A baseline for each Trust is being gathered for monitoring report, which had been requested by Trade Union Colleagues</p> <p>Regional monitoring report nearing completion.</p>
<p>It is important that staff who have or acquire a disability are supported in the workplace by overcoming any potential barriers to achieving their full potential. Trusts are committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all staff.</p>			
<p>Actions</p>	<p>By when</p>	<p>How will we measure success</p>	<p>Progress March 2025</p>
<p>17. We will scope development of Staff Disability Forums and Networks to support regional consistency.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective implementation and widespread use of Disability Passport. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust's newly appointed disability advocate launched a new staff network ValuABLE aimed at supporting staff with disabilities and long terms health conditions and provide a place where to chat, support each other and discuss challenges and possible solutions which are common across the trust.</p>

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
18. 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.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better support for disabled staff to return and remain in work. • Record available of what has been agreed previously to support disabled staff member if changing role. • Guidance available for managers on how to support disabled staff member. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust Reasonable Adjustment Plan is available for staff and managers to discuss and record an individual plan, ensuring the member of staff is supported as much as possible in the workplace.</p>
<p>Health and social care staff must have the foundation of effective policies and relevant training to support them to provide the most inclusive and compassionate health and social care services.</p>			
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
19. We will develop a regional policy framework to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies are	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies reviewed. • Policies reflective of up to date advice and best practice from the Equality Commission and other legislative developments. • Regional consistency in EDI policies and equity for all staff across the Trusts. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regional EDI and Gender Identity Policies were planned to be reviewed in 2025.</p> <p>This review has now been paused on instruction from DoH and the Regionally the Trusts await further guidance from DoH and ECNI with regard to this matter.</p>

reviewed in line with governance requirements.			
20. We will update the regional HSC 'Making a Difference' e-learning programme further to review of best practice in E-learning and EDI training.	April 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional HSC Making a Difference e-learning programme updated. • Updated training incorporated best practice identified. 	<p>Programme and accompanying booklet to be reviewed and updated regionally through HSCLC.</p> <p>Links to the Cultural Competency Framework/ Human Rights/Oliver McGowan training to be added to the training modules.</p>
21. We will work to improve uptake of equality training, which is mandatory in all Trusts.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake of statutory mandatory equality training monitored. • Increased compliance levels with mandatory equality training. • Increased awareness of zero tolerance approach to racial harassment/ discrimination/ bullying and abuse at work. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regular review of training compliance and Directorates with lower uptake contacted. Alternative delivery methods explored.</p>

22. We will identify an EDI Champion at a senior level in each Trust.	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified lead on EDI at senior level. EDI Champion at senior level identified in each Trust. 	Update: The Trust is currently reviewing the role description for an EDI Champion and hope to identify a lead a senior level in 2025-26.
Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
23. We will work in partnership with trade unions to ensure that staff who experience domestic and sexual violence and abuse.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Workplace Policy in place and support networks established. Positive feedback from ongoing engagement from affected staff. 	Update: Policy under review.
Personal stories can really resonate and be most impactful in terms of effectively communicating key messages. We recognise that collaborating with people with lived experience enhances the training we provide and gives staff a different perspective, improving the services we provide.			
24. We will engage with external experts and representative organisations to provide specialist	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions developed delivered and evaluated. Marketing and promotional strategy to increase uptake of training across all Trusts. 	Update: The Trust has delivered a number of Cultural Competency Training sessions throughout the year and promoted the booklet, which accompanies the training, which is both face to face and via e-learning module. 34 Trust staff have accessed the training.

training for employees.			
25. 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.	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and competence in providing person centred, person led care and what a human rights based approach. • Evaluation of training and associated resources. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>To mark World Human Rights day on 10 December 2024 Trusts shared a new training resource for staff.</p> <p>The short animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach. The approach helps us all to deliver services that are compassionate and patient/service user focused; one of our core values.</p> <p>The video is supported by written guidance.</p> <p>https://vimeo.com/1033099726/695acd51cd?share=copy</p> <p>Guidance for HSC Staff: A Human Rights Based Approach to Services</p> <p>Team FREDA Animation: A human rights approach to healthcare</p>

We want to harness the talents of a diverse workforce and recognise that we need to take a proactive approach in improving access to health and social care employment for marginalised Section 75 groups.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>26. 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.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to employment for marginalised Section 75 groups. • Equality data indicating better representation. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Discussions ongoing at Regional Employment Equality Group regarding accessibility of employment in HSC.</p> <p>Trusts continue to submit annual Monitoring and three yearly Article 55 Reports on workforce.</p> <p>The Trust has supported our global majority staff to attend the regional PROGRESS programme courses. This is a development course which is facilitated by the HSCLC specifically for this staff group.</p>
<p>27. We will address specific health inequalities for staff, for example provide menopause information sessions and</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of gender specific health inequalities for staff. • Increased inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues. • Better support for staff with gender specific issues. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust held a range of initiatives to celebrate World Menopause Day. This included a guided Walk & Talk for staff, promotions of the availability of lighter weight uniforms and a number of women's health resources.</p>

<p>celebrate men's health week to promote inclusion and visibility of gender specific issues in the workforce.</p>			
<p>28. We will work collaboratively on the forthcoming gender pay gap legislation and determine appropriate methods of monitoring and reporting.</p>	<p>Dependant on enactment of legislation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay structure established that ensures fairness and equity in pay and reward arrangements. 	<p>Update: The proposal to include not only gender monitoring and reporting but also race and disability is currently out for consultation. This approach would be similar to what happens in rest of UK.</p>

Section 4 – Supporting informal/family carers

We know that many of us are likely to become a carer at some point in life and informal/family carers cover a great part of care needs, often called the ‘invisible workforce’. Strengthening the voice and representation of informal carers is the first step to address the challenges facing informal carers. Informal care can be physically and mentally demanding, resulting in carers often feeling exhausted, lonely, and strained. Carer Co-ordinators in each Trust area work collaboratively with carers to develop an accessible carer support and short break programme. The Trusts also work with community and voluntary organisations to ensure carers can be signposted to support in their local area.

Recognition of the key role a carer plays is essential and we must provide support when the caring role is having a negative impact on the health and well-being of the informal/family carer. It is also important to make useful information and training easily accessible and available to informal carers.

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>29. 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.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of carers’ assessments. • Improved carer experience of the carer assessment process. • Carers across Northern Ireland receive the same information and know where to get help and support. • Increase in people who identify as carers, which will enable them to link into supports available. • Quarterly DoH monitoring. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust's Carers Co-ordinator supports carers by actively identifying their needs and developing services and actions to address these with the support of staff teams. The Coordinator works closely with carers' groups and carers' organisations and other voluntary organisations who provide support to carers and works in partnership to ensure that all carers are provided with the support and care that they need to remain in the caring role.</p> <p>Carers Support - Home</p>

Actions	By when	How will we measure success	Progress March 2025
<p>30. We will hold an annual event on Carers Rights Day to highlight care and caring and help informal/family carers understand their rights and find out about support that may be available.</p>	<p>November 2024 and annually thereafter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, regional approach to Carers Rights Day. 	<p>Update</p> <p>The Trust's Carers Co-ordinator actively promotes Carers Rights Day each year. Discussions ongoing with reference to a staff network for those with Caring responsibilities, this will be progressed during 2025-26.</p>

Disability Action Plan

2024-2029 – Update March 2025



Section 1 – Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Disabled people have told us that negative attitudes are often the biggest and most common barrier they face and we believe as a large service provider and employer we have a vital role to play in shaping and modelling positive attitudes towards disabled people. Section 1 of this Plan focuses on promoting positive attitudes through an inclusive approach to the use of images and language, providing better training, guidance and support for our staff and ensuring our Disability Action Plan is easy to access.

What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
There is a need for greater visibility of disabled people.	1. 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.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visibility of disabled people and disabled staff, including those with hidden disability in Trust publications, use of social media and online presence. Proactive promotion and communication of our co-production with disabled people and disability-related events. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust welcomed a new Disability Advocate role during July 2024. This role will provide support for both staff and students with disabilities and long term conditions.</p> <p>The ValuABLE Staff & Student Network has been launched and meets on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <p>The EDI team provides support for this role and its functions.</p> <p>The Trust Disability Toolkit is in place to support our staff.</p> <p>The Toolkit holds information which is helpful to managers when considering disability</p>

What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
				<p>issues in the workplace. The advice and information in this Tool Kit is based on the HSC's Disability Equality Policy informed by best practice drawing upon the Equality Commission's 'Disability Code of Practice – Employment and Occupation', relevant case law and operational experience.</p> <p>The toolkit is user friendly and is presented in a PowerPoint presentation lay out, so Managers can easily click on areas relevant to their needs.</p>
	<p>2. We will mark and celebrate allocated disability – related days to raise awareness at a local and regional level.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-produced calendar of events organised and publicised annually. • Increased staff awareness of disability equality. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust promotes allocated days and has in place an annual Diversity & Inclusion Calendar of events. The Trust raises awareness by the use of global all users' emails, Southern-I, briefings, SMT updates and via HRBP's.</p>

What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
<p>That the disability legislation in Northern Ireland is very complex and there is a need to ensure our Disability Action Plan is accessible and easy to understand.</p>	<p>3. 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.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the accessible Disability Action Plan internally and externally. • Disability Action Plan available on Trust websites and internal intranets, including Easy Read and Signed versions • Proactively disseminate the Disability Action Plan to key stakeholders. • Co-produced resource explaining the disability duties and legislative requirements. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Disability Action Plan including an Easy Read Version is available on the Trust Website. The Plan has been shared with regional and local stakeholders and consultees.</p>
<p>All health and social care staff should be trained on disability equality and disability duties.</p>	<p>4. 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</p>	<p>March 2025 and review Annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of training completed. • Feedback on training gathered from staff to inform the evaluation. • Increased awareness of disability duties. • Co-production of training resources on disability equality and disability duties. • United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) guide for HSC staff updated. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Training is available for all staff via eLearning module Making a difference on Learn HSCNI. This training is currently being reviewed.</p> <p>Bespoke training is provided on request.</p>

What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
	McGowan Mandatory Training.			Cultural competency training now available via e-learning and face to face sessions. Oliver McGowan training regionally available.

Section 2 – Actions to encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Disabled people have told us that too often, they and their representative organisations face barriers to full and effective participation. These include inaccessible physical and online environments and inaccessible information and communication. Actions in this section focus on increasing disabled people’s participation in decisions about policies and service development.

It is important to note that the Trusts do not have direct control over public life positions within health and social care, however we do have disabled people sitting on many of our user groups and forums so we have also included actions to ensure these opportunities are accessible and promoted.

As one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland, disabled people have told us that this section of the Plan must include how disabled people have the opportunity to find out about the range of jobs available in health and social care and ensure people are provided with appropriate support to enhance employability and obtain employment.

What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
Disabled people want to be clear on how they can get involved, be heard and inform decisions.	5. 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.	March 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a specific database of disabled people and organisations and determine the best way for them to be involved. • Consultee database reviewed and updated annually. • Increased usage of involvement section on each Trust website and the Public Health Agency (PHA) “Engage” website and sharing of links with disabled people and representative organisations. • Promotion of Trust Involvement Teams and involvement opportunities with disabled people and representative groups. • Use of alt text in our social media. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust database of stakeholders and consultees is annual reviewed and updated.</p> <p>The Equality Team works in partnership with the Trust Planning team on consultation processes.</p> <p>The Trust provides information in easy read format, alternate formats or languages on request or when a need is identified.</p>
	6. We will work in partnership with relevant key organisations and individuals to identify advocacy services.	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Directory of Advocacy and Support Services co-produced with representative organisations, published on each Trust’s website (and in alternative formats) and disseminated widely - reviewed on annual basis. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Trust are working regionally to gather information for this Directory.</p>

What you told us	What we will do (<i>Actions</i>)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
	7. We will work with representatives from the Regional Disabled People's Forum on disability equality issues.	April 2025 and annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual meeting with members of Regional Disabled People's Forum. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Equality Leads attended meeting December 2024</p>
	8. We will review the membership of our user forums and where necessary work to increase representation of disabled people and representing organisations.	April 2025 and annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of membership of forums and user groups completed. Gaps identified where increased representation of disabled people on user groups and forums is required. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>The Trust continues to review the membership of our staff Forums.</p> <p>We encourage our staff and their advocates to attend and participate in a way that works best for them. The Trust annually reviews stakeholder and consultee information.</p>

<p>consultation methods must be accessible to disabled people.</p>	<p>9. We will ensure that all consultations are inclusive, targeted and use appropriate methods to ensure participation of a wide range of disabled people.</p>	<p>April 2025 and throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Consultation processes designed to be as inclusive as possible from the outset. • Focused consultation with disabled participants as required. • Improved opportunities for disabled people to engage with and influence policy-makers. <p>Methods and tools used for online involvement will allow disabled people to participate on a fair and equal basis.</p>	<p>Update:</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>What you told us</p>	<p>What we will do (Actions)</p>	<p>By when</p>	<p>How will we measure success</p>	<p>Update March 2025</p>

<p>It is the responsibility of HSC staff to book communication support for people who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing</p>	<p>10. We will continue the roll out of the Health and Social Care Communication 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.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional consistency and equity of access to communication support for people who are Deaf/deaf or have hearing loss. • 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. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>Regular communications issued regarding sign language interpreting options and booking arrangements.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Deaf Awareness posters to be further highlighted and reissued.</p> <p>Various initiatives within Trusts to mark Sign Language Awareness week from 17 March 2025.</p> <p>In December 2024 the Trust Equality Leads attended SPPG meeting with Trust IT representatives and the Sign Language provider to discuss issues and concerns.</p>
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<p>Consideration should be given to the installation of Changing Places toilets in all hospitals in Northern Ireland</p>	<p>11. We will scope the availability of Changing Places and new facilities will be added in accordance with legislation.</p>	<p>April 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of all facilities completed. • Gaps identified in relation to relevant legislation. • Improved access to HSC services for disabled people. 	<p>Update: Work to be carried out with Estates/Strategic Capital Development to scope facilities and identify gaps.</p>
<p>Staff need to understand how to involve disabled people in decisions they make about services.</p>	<p>12. 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.</p>	<p>April 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Update: Regionally, guidance has been co-produced with disabled people via a task and finish group. This will be promoted internally across the Trust in the coming year.</p>
	<p>13. 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</p>	<p>April 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective participation masterclass developed in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations. • Masterclass held – one in each Trust area. 	<p>Update: Regional Task & Finish group established to co-produce a masterclass to be held in coming year.</p>

	better participation with disabled people is central to the implementation of our Disability Action Plan.			<p>Content suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Legislative context (sharing information about disability legislation in Northern Ireland)
What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
Policies need to be kept up to date and relevant, to	14. We will review our Staff Disability Equality Policy in line with best practice to ensure it	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Disability Equality Policy completed in partnership with disabled staff. • Revised regional policy in place. 	Update:

support disabled staff to remain in the workplace.	remains fit for purpose and relevant.			Currently under review and due to be consulted with Trade Union colleagues.
	15. We will review and update our Disability Toolkit.	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Disability Toolkit in place. Policy and Toolkit reviewed and amended in partnership with disabled staff. 	Update: The Disability Toolkit will be reviewed in 2025-26.
	16. We will engage with disabled staff to ensure they have a voice and influence the support we provide.	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Method of ongoing engagement established in each Trust area. 	Update: This will be progressed at a regional level and local implementation.
What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025
There is a need for more opportunities for disabled people to gain employment within health and social care.	17. We will work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to review our employability schemes and placement schemes to enhance employment opportunities.	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities and availability of our employability schemes and placement schemes scoped. Plans developed to enable and support employment placements and work experience for disabled people across each Trust. 	Update: Consultation with local stakeholders in coming year
	18. We will work to reduce barriers to recruitment in health	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers to recruitment in health and social care identified in partnership with disabled people and representative organisations. 	Update:

	and social care for disabled people.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of actions, in line with the legislative provisions and supported by equality data, to improve access to employment for disabled people. 	<p>The Trust Reasonable Adjustment Plan is available for staff and managers to discuss and record an individual plan, ensuring the member of staff is supported as much as possible in the workplace.</p> <p>Regionally a Neurodiversity Toolkit for staff and managers is being developed.</p>
	19. 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.	Throughout the lifetime of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Method for disabled applicants to apply for HSC jobs available. Better communication with disabled applicants who require adjustments or support with their application. 	<p>Update:</p> <p>A Guide has been produced regionally re accessibility for the HSCRecruit website.</p> <p>Applications are accepted in alternative formats. Community and Voluntary groups and applicants can liaise with HR staff.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments can be put in place.</p>
What you told us	What we will do (Actions)	By when	How will we measure success	Update March 2025

<p>There is a need to improve visibility and awareness of jobs for anyone who is disabled.</p>	<p>20. We will work towards Disability Positive Accreditation for all Trusts.</p>	<p>March 2029</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Positive Accreditation achieved. • Increased awareness among disabled people of HSC jobs available. 	<p>Update: This will be progressed in the coming years of the plan.</p>
<p>Better data on service users communication support needs is required.</p>	<p>21. We will continue to work with ENCOMPASS to ensure that the communication support needs of service users are captured.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication support needs are recorded on the ENCOMPASS system. • Improved communication and access to services. 	<p>Update: We continue to work with encompass and monitor service user feedback. SHSCT and WHSCT were the last Trusts to go live with encompass 8 May 2025.</p>
	<p>22. We will support the involvement of disabled people and representative organisations in the roll out of ENCOMPASS.</p>	<p>Throughout the lifetime of the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement with disabled people in the roll out of Encompass. 	<p>Update: The Trust continues to address issues of access for staff and service users, and regionally a software solution is being sought.</p>

