



TRUST BOARD / SLT COVER SHEET

	<i>The cover sheet purpose is to provide the Trust Board/Committee with a clear summary of the paper being presented, how it impacts on the people we serve, key matters for attention and the ask of the Trust Board/Committee</i> <i>The Accountable Director must satisfy themselves that the cover sheet is accurate and fully reflects the paper. The expectation is that the Accountable Director has read and agreed the content of both the cover sheet and paper.</i>	
Meeting and Date of meeting	Trust Board Thursday 24 th September 2026	
Title of paper	Section 75 Annual Progress Report 2025-26	
Accountable Director	Name	Mrs Vivienne Toal
	Position	Director of HROD
Report Author	Name	Cathy Lavery
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This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:	Accountability	
This paper is presented for:	Approval <i>(Notes on completion at end of document)</i>	
Links to Trust Strategic Priorities 	☐	Collaborative Working
	☒	Learning Organisation
	☒	Safety, Quality & Experience
	☐	Community First
	☐	Whole-Life Approach

1. Reason for Presentation of Paper / Report

To provide assurance to Trust Board on the submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and to present a summary update on key successes for 2025/26 and future areas of focus for 2026/27.

2. Detailed summary of paper contents:

The Report reflects progress made between April 2025 and March 2026. The Section 75 Equality Annual Progress Report is a statutory report that must be submitted to the Equality Commission for NI annually.

The report is a high-level summary of what the Trust has achieved in furthering its statutory duties, the aim of which is to bring about improved outcomes for the 9 Section 75 equality categories including staff and service users. The report comprises three elements:

Report - Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-26 (*Equality Commission prescribed template*)

Appendix 1 - Equality Action Plan & Disability Action Plan (2025-2026) Year 2 update

Appendix 2 - Equality in Action newsletter

3. Areas of improvement/achievement:

Through our EDI plans (regional Equality and Disability Action Plans 2024 - 2029) and associated activities, and in line with our vision and strategy 2030 and People Framework we aim to address discrimination and promote a fairer, more representative workplace and patient experience.

There are many achievements that the Trust and our employees should be proud of during another challenging year; a snapshot of some of those is highlighted in the accompanying newsletter "Equality in Action."

We are delighted to now have a Non-Executive Director Equality Diversity & Inclusion Champion in place.

SECTION A - WORKFORCE EQUALITY AND MONITORING

- **Diversity & Inclusion Calendar**
- **Disability Advocate** - Dr Clodagh Corrigan continues to work within the Trust to support managers and provide advocacy for staff and students with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

- **Multi-Cultural Celebration Day Oct 2025** – a family fun day in celebration of our internationally educated staff and the cultural diversity within the Southern Trust.
- Worked collectively to develop resources on **Reasonable Adjustments**, regionally developed the Workplace Adjustment Plan as part of the regional Absence Management policy and Disability Equality policy (still to be finalised).
- **Flexible Working** - received 990 requests for flexible working (previous year 848). The most common reason was compressed working, and the biggest staff group requesting flexible working is Nursing & Midwifery. Over 70% of requests were accepted.
- Our **Menopause Policy** was updated during the year, and the Menopause Workplace Pledge was signed in March 2026. By signing the pledge, we committed to recognising that the menopause can be an issue in the workplace and some women need support, talking openly, positively and respectfully about the menopause.
- Worked on updating several regional employment equality policies – Equality Diversity & Inclusion/ Gender Identity & Expression and Disability.
- **Statutory Reporting** - A number of statutory reports – FETO and Article 55, in addition to the Annual Progress Report were submitted to the Equality Commission for NI during 25/26, all within agreed timeframes.

SECTION B - SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

- Community inclusive events delivered by the Trust during 2025/26 included:
 - 3 Human Library events** delivered in Armagh, Portadown, Lurgan
 - 2 International Women's Day events** in Portadown and Lurgan
 - Multicultural Christmas Festival** Portadown (Dec 2025)
 - International Children's Day Celebration** June 2025
- **Sunflower Room** - A new sensory room officially opened at South Tyrone Hospital to support patients with learning disabilities as they prepare for dental surgery.
- **Bocombra Children's Centre Sensory Room** - Staff and young people in Bocombra Children's Home have created a trauma-informed study space and sensory room.
- **Enhancing Dementia Care Across the Trust Programme** - The Trust is taking steps to improve care for people living with dementia, with staff recently taking part in the first World Café learning session as part of the Enhancing Dementia Care Across the Trust (EDCAT) programme.
- **Woodlawn House Short-break Respite Unit Welcome pack** - Learning Disability Carers Consultants launched an exciting Welcome

Pack for newcomers to Woodlawn House & Hillview Short break Unit in Dungannon. The pack was one of the outcomes of the Carers and Stakeholders workstream group facilitated by Learning Disability Carer Consultants and co-produced by Carers.

- **Provision of Face to Face and Telephone Interpreting** - During 2025-26 the Trust made 45,921 (last year – 47,761) requests for interpreters through the NI Regional HSC Interpreting Service. Top 3 languages requested were Polish, Lithuanian and Bulgarian.

4. Areas of concern/risk/challenge:

- Provision of appropriate accommodation/changing and toilet facilities for transgender people in line with the regional Gender Identity & Expression Policy - This is such a complex area for both HSC service providers and employers given that we have different equality legislation in NI. With lack of clear guidance from the ECNI, there is a vacuum in relation to being able to provide appropriate guidance and advice both from an employment and service perspective.
- Disability - ensuring Trust staff and managers are aware of disability legislation and the rights of people (both employees and service users) with disabilities can be a challenge. We strive to be an employer of choice and ensure all our services and facilities are accessible for all service users. The regional Disability Equality policy is currently under review with TUS colleagues and is to be finalised during 26/27. Also the need to continue to provide Neurodiversity guidance for staff and managers to help support employees who join employment and to remain in the workforce.
- Implications from new legislation - Identity and Language (NI) Act 2022 and how this may impact on the Trust. It is hoped that further information will be shared during 26/27 so as a Trust we are prepared for any changes.
- Equip – challenges and changes that brings, in particular to statutory reporting to ECNI.

5. Impact on Statutory Duties: Provide details on the impact of the following and how.

<i>Financial Impact</i>	<i>Safety and Quality Impact</i>
Yes, there are Financial Impacts	Yes, there are Quality, Safety or Experience Impacts

Costs for interpreting services (telephone, sign language and translation) for 2025/26 was £67,125. A decrease from the previous year of £30,317. Costs of the f2f interpreting are £1,478,96 for 25/26, a decrease of £43,397 from the previous year. (NB: SPPG cover the cost of all telephone, face to face and sign language interpreting across the region. Trusts approve the invoices for telephone interpreting, and this is then recouped from SPPG. Face –to- Face interpreting and sign language interpreting is paid directly by SPPG.)	<i>The summary report highlights a range of improvements in relation to quality and experience for service users – positive impact.</i>
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6. Risk Assessment (Risk level and state if a risk assessment be completed)

Risk assessment regarding changing and toilet facilities for transgender patients / service users and staff has been completed (both HROD Directorate and Corporate Risk registers) in the absence of clarity on the legal position in NI to inform review of policy position.

7. Other Business Intelligence/data (If appropriate)

n/a

8. Impact: Provide details on the impact of the following and how. If this is N/A you should explain why this is an appropriate response.

Corporate Risk Register	People – reducing risk associated with low staff morale Access to Services
Board Assurance Framework	S75 Annual Report presented to Trust Board annually for approval Regional networks review actions plans and progress
Equality and Human Rights	The report demonstrates how the Trust is mainstreaming its Section 75 equality duties, human rights and disability duties into the core functions of the Trust.

Trust Board Role Fulfilment

Strategy	<i>Papers in this category should address forward-looking priorities, long-term objectives, or service transformation. These are typically focused on shaping the future of the organisation and will often involve decisions on direction, investment, or innovation.</i>
Culture	<i>These papers aim to influence or reflect the values, behaviours, and staff or patient experiences within HSC. They may relate to</i>

	<i>leadership development, equality, diversity and inclusion, staff engagement, or initiatives intended to reinforce our organisational ethos.</i>
Accountability	<i>Papers falling into this area relate to governance, assurance, performance monitoring, compliance, and risk. They provide evidence that responsibilities are being fulfilled, standards are being met, and corrective actions are being taken where necessary.</i>

Reasons for Paper Presentation

Approval	<i>Used when an item requires a formal agreement or endorsement by the meeting / committee members. Examples are approving minutes, budgets, proposals or policies.</i>
Assurance	<i>Used when an item can be measured against a certain criteria / standard. Examples are a project is on course with delivery or financial targets are being met.</i>
Information	<i>Used when an item is presented for the purpose of updating or informing the attendees without requiring a decision or action, such as reports, updates, or announcements.</i>
Discussion	<i>Used when an item is listed primarily for open discussion, brainstorming or gathering input from the members without requiring an immediate decision.</i>