



Southern Health & Social Care Trust

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

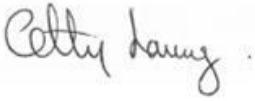
Annual Progress Report April 2025 - March 2026

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Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above ☒ (double click to open) Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://southerntrust.hscni.net/involving-you/equality-and-diversity/>

Signature:

 Cathy Lavery, Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
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This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission. It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

Appendix 1

Equality Action Plan & Disability Action Plan 2024-2029 - Year 2 Update March 2026

Appendix 2

Equality in Action Newsletter

This report reflects progress made between April 2025 and March 2026

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

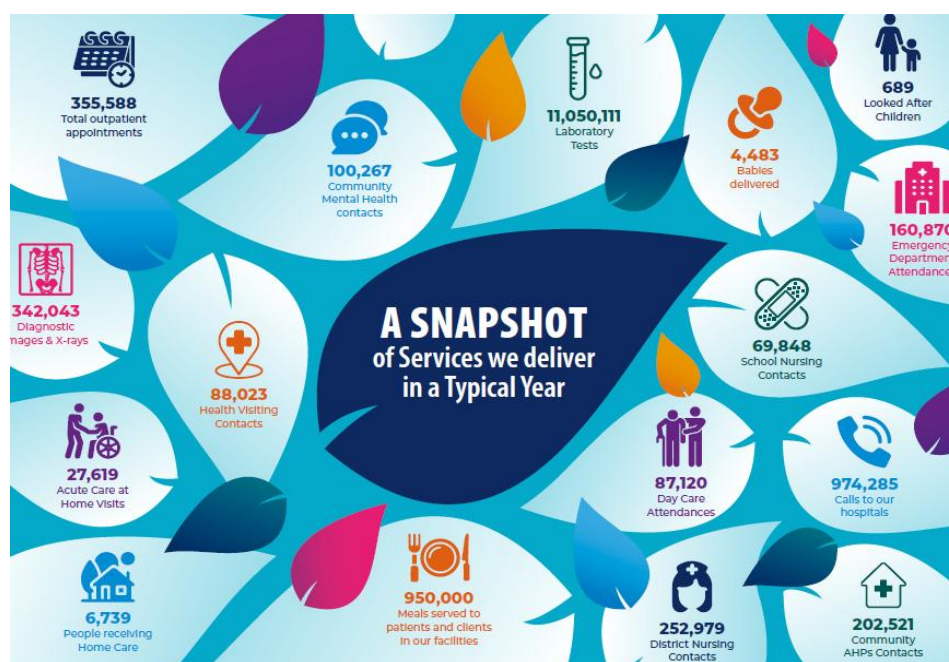
Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2025-2026, please provide examples of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.**

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Q1 – Introduction part

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT or referred to as the Trust) is an employer of approximately 15,000 staff and welcomes diversity and inclusion, recognising that difference brings value to the organisation. During 2025-26, the Trust has continued to take steps to promote equality and inclusion and continues to mainstream it and make it a key strategic priority for the organisation.



This year's report provides a high-level summary of what the Southern 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.

It is important to note that this report stands alongside the range of other Trust reports, such as the Corporate Plan, Quality Annual Report, Trust's Public and Personal (PPI) Involvement Progress Reports and Community Development Report.

Copies of any of these reports can be obtained by contacting us on Equality.Unit@southerntrust.hscni.net

The Health and Social Care Trusts have worked collaboratively to develop a five-year Section 75 Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan. Appendix 1 provides updates on the actions.

The Trust has also produced “Equality in Action” – a user-friendly newsletter for stakeholders and staff to highlight the extensive work that has taken place across the Trust to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and the disability duties.

Some key highlights for 2025-2026 are detailed on the following pages.



It is our aim to help create and support a culture that is inclusive at all levels and help create a sense of belonging, in line with the Trust's Vision, Values and Priorities.

We strive to ensure the Trust is a 'great place to work' that promotes positive attitudes to diversity, both in relation to employees and service

users. We wish to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded across our organisation and that our employment practices are fair, flexible and enabling so that each employee can reach their full potential.

SECTION A - WORKFORCE EQUALITY AND MONITORING

Diversity & Inclusion Calendar

We continue to raise awareness of equality and inclusion by promoting a range of diversity days throughout the year. During 2025-26 this included:

- Diwali
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities – Our ValuABLE staff network came together at Daisy Hill Hospital to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Members shared their experiences, offered support to colleagues, and discussed plans for future initiatives.



- Ramadan
- International Women's Day – several events were held across the Trust highlighting this year's theme 'Give to Gain'.
- Good Relations Week - the EDI team took the opportunity to promote our Good Relations statement and highlight our commitment that our staff and service users should be treated with respect and dignity in line with the HSC Values.



- Sign Language Awareness Week – we took this opportunity to raise awareness of the Regional Communication Support Service and how it can support the delivery of services to ensure they are accessible to d/Deaf, d/Deafblind and hard of hearing individuals and their carers.



Employee Networks

- REaCH Staff Network is a place of support for all current and new employees from different race and ethnic minority backgrounds and allies. The network continues to grow and we welcome new members. There are regular events and information to support colleagues who may be new to the Trust.



- The regional HSC LGBTQ+ Staff Forum exists to support LGBTQ+ employees within the HSC and create a more LGBTQ+ inclusive work environment. During this time, the EDI team hosted 2 engagement sessions in CAH and DH, where Rainbow lanyards and the Rainbow Pin were available for staff.



- ValuABLE Staff Network for staff and students with disabilities and long-term health conditions. This network is an opportunity for staff and those within the Trust to come together on a regular basis to support each other, discuss challenges and possible solutions to issues which are common across the Trust.



Multicultural Day 4th October 2025

On Saturday 4th October, our EDI Team hosted a Multicultural Day, bringing together staff from across the organisation to celebrate diversity, culture and community. The event featured vibrant music and dance performances, traditional food from around the world, henna art and creative crafts.

The celebration, ran in conjunction with the ABC Community Network in Portadown Town Hall, saw over 150 people attend.



Disability Advocate

The 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. Dr Corrigan has been involved in the review and development of the new regional management of sickness absence policy, disability equality policy and workplace adjustment plan as well as the introduction of the sunflower pin scheme which is due to be rolled out in June 2026.

The Disability Advocate chairs the ValuABLE staff network, delivered joint training sessions on Disability awareness to service leads and worked collaboratively with leadership to address accessibility concerns.

Dr Corrigan continues to work closely with the staff network in advocating for clearer guidance and consistent application of policies and promoting awareness and understanding of disability-related issues across the organisation to influence positive changes. Future priorities are around car parking, estates accessibility and providing support for staff with neurodiversity.



Cultural Competency Framework

Further to the launch of the Cultural Competency Framework, continued development led to the updating of the previous mental health toolkit for ethnic minority communities (2014). To further enhance inclusive mental health care, a new Practitioners Toolkit 'Mental Health and Ethnic Minority Groups' has been launched.

Flexible Working

It is widely accepted that flexibility at work is key to attracting, retaining and supporting our skilled and valued workforce and assisting in the delivery of high-quality services across Health and Social Care into the future.

During the time frame *April 2025 to March 2026*, we received 990 requests for flexible working (previous year 848). The most common reason for requesting flexible working 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; actively support and informing our employees affected by the menopause; and changing the culture of the organisation by taking at least one action a year.

Our **Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Policy**, along with updated guidance, support and resources for employees and managers, was reviewed and refreshed during the year. This includes the introduction of a short period of paid special leave, 'safe leave' for the purpose of dealing with issues related to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

Statutory reports

A number of statutory reports in addition to the Annual Progress Report were submitted to the Equality Commission for NI during 25/26:

Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order (FETO) which must be submitted every year and was submitted by 1 May 2025. This report monitors SHSCT workforce composition, including sex and community background. As of 1 January 2026, the community background of the Southern Trust was as follows: 33.9 % Protestant, 55.9% Roman Catholic and 10.2% non-determined.

As of 1 January 2026, the Trust employed 15,299 staff of which 14.6% were male and 85.4% were female. According to the NI Health and Social Care Workforce Census March 2025, published by the Department of Health (DoH) 78.0% of the HSC workforce were female and 22.0% were male (unchanged from last year). (Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Workforce Census March 2025 (health-ni.gov.uk))

Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 is a legal requirement mandating employers with 11+ staff to review their workforce composition and employment practices every three years. It aims to ensure fair participation in employment between Protestant and Roman Catholic communities, often requiring affirmative action if imbalances. This was submitted 31 March 2026.

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 (Oct), Portadown (Jan), and Lurgan (Mar)

- 200+ participants engaged
- Created safe spaces for sharing experiences
- Promoted empathy, challenged stereotypes, and encouraged meaningful dialogue
- Feedback described events as *inspiring, insightful, and impactful*



2 International Women's Day events in Portadown and Lurgan

- 300+ participants attended
- 30 organisations involved
- Focus on women's physical health and wellbeing
- Provided access to health information, support services, and community connections



Multicultural Christmas Festival Portadown (Dec 2025)

- 150 participants from across the Southern area
- Celebrated cultural diversity and community cohesion
- Created a welcoming space for families to connect and share traditions

International Children's Day Celebration June 2025

- 70+ children participated
- Promoted inclusion, cultural awareness, and early community engagement
- Delivered fun, educational activities in a safe and supportive environment

Feedback and overall impact centered around strengthened community connections across the Southern Trust area, increased awareness of cultural diversity and lived experiences and supported health, wellbeing, and inclusion through partnership working.



Celebrating Women Event

Over 160 women and organisations from across the Trust came together in March 2026 for the “Celebrating Women” event.

The objective of the event was to actively engage and empower women from local and diverse backgrounds by creating an inclusive space for connection, cultural exchange and shared experiences. It aimed to reduce isolation, build confidence and increase awareness of health and





The youth inclusion Project was aimed to engage teenagers from different ethnic minority backgrounds in a safe and welcoming environment each week whereby they could come together in an after school setting, with other youths from the area, with the aim of not only helping to breakdown cultural barriers but to help aid their settlement in the area and also improve their health and wellbeing through participation in various fun games and activities, and the programme saw over 20 young people each week from various backgrounds (Romanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Somali, Afghan, local kids).

The activities ranged from fun sports based activities such as football and boxing to fun off pitch activities like table tennis, pool and gaming consoles.

The interaction amongst the young people was great with many of them learning from each other about the different languages they use, as well as sharing their religious beliefs and practices such as their experience of celebrating Ramadan during the programme.




Sunflower Room



A new sensory room officially opened at South Tyrone Hospital to support patients with learning disabilities as they prepare for dental surgery.

Funded through charitable donations, the Sunflower Room was created by transforming a former storeroom into a bright and calming space. Equipped with dim lights, fidget toys, less noise and fewer staff, it offers patients a safe environment to relax before going into theatre.

Discover how My Care Supports People with Sight Loss



Dr. Neil Black recently featured in a podcast with the Royal National Institute for Blind people (RNIB).

During the podcast, Dr. Black discusses how My Care is supporting patients and service users with visual impairments. View the article and listen to the podcast here:

[Listen here](#)



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.

Many young people in residential care have experienced neglect, trauma, and attachment difficulties, which can affect emotional regulation and lead to challenging behaviours. These enhanced spaces support co-regulation, positive relationships, and provide a sensory environment that encourages engagement and skill development.

Benefits:

- Young people report the space feels more like home and is calming and comfortable
- Dedicated area for completing schoolwork
- Supports relaxation and emotional regulation
- Reduction in Datix reports
- Staff assaults reduced by 27%

"Young people have been delighted with the enhancements and have told us it feels like home and is a more comfortable and soothing environment."

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.

The World Café brought together colleagues from mental health, disability, adult community and acute services, including nurses, social workers, healthcare assistants and support workers, to share experiences and explore new approaches to care.

A key part of the session involved hearing from service user Peter Alexander, who is living with dementia. Staff said that listening to his story gave them a deeper understanding of what the condition can feel like day to day, and how small changes in communication, empathy and patience can make a meaningful difference to someone's experience.



A live before-and-after survey showed a clear increase in staff confidence, particularly in recognising different presentations of dementia and thinking through the possible reasons behind them.

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.

Included in the workstream were the Woodlawn House Management Team, shortbreak Team, Carer representation, Disability Action, and representatives from various teams across disability services. The Welcome Pack is just one of the exciting developments from this group and has been designed with Carers and Service users in mind with key messages, photos of the unit, what to expect during your short break, and useful contact numbers.

Carers have commented that the pack is practical, service user- and carer-friendly, and will act as an object of reference and communication aid when their loved one receives a shortbreak in the Unit.



Take 5 Sensory Arts Programme



The Promoting Wellbeing Division funded a four-week ceramics course as an innovative way to reach into the local Deaf Community with the Take 5 messages for wellbeing. The course was co-designed by service users who are deaf, hard of hearing or have tinnitus to enable them to creatively express themselves.

Participants enjoyed socialising with old and new friends in a supportive environment. Everyone learned new ceramic techniques and created three unique pieces. The event was very well received, and participants had some wonderful Christmas pieces to take home and enjoy.

Accessible Communication for Service Users - *Provision of Face to Face and Telephone Interpreting*

The Trust continues to provide a robust face to face and telephone interpreting service for patients who do not speak English as a first language. During 2025-26 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.

To support this, two Working Well with Interpreters training sessions were held, with 46 members of staff attending. The top four location requests for an interpreter were: Radiology, Physiotherapy, Outpatients and Health Visiting.

NI HSC Interpreting Service Report 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

HSC Organisation	BSO Interpreting Requests
Belfast HSC Trust Area	54725
Southern HSC Trust Area	45921
Northern HSC Trust Area	15389
SE HSC Trust Area	10077
Western HSC Trust Area	6771
Other	176
Total	133,059

Top 20 Southern Trust Languages 2025-26

SHSCT Languages	Requests
1. Polish	8853
2. Lithuanian	6882
3. Bulgarian	6241
4. Tetum	6111
5. Portuguese	5413
6. Romanian	2795
7. Arabic	1780
8. Russian	1645
9. Ukrainian	1067
10. Latvian	798
11. Slovak	673
12. Hungarian	499
13. Urdu	474
14. Mandarin	414
15. Cantonese	407
16. Bengali	258
17. Pashto	223
18. Somali	209
19. Spanish	142
20. Farsi (Iran)	119

In addition, 7,919 (*last year 6,875*) calls were serviced through the telephone interpreting service and 67 (*last year 121*) documents translated.

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

Please see Appendices for an update of actions progressed in the regional Equality and Disability Action Plans and examples of good practice in the Equality in Action newsletter.

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

☒

Yes

☐

No (go to ☐ Q.4)

Not applicable (go to ☐ Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

The application of the Trust's Equality Scheme, equality screening and consultation processes have ensured that an equality focused lens has been brought to policy and service development as well as decision making.

For evidence, please refer to the Trust's Quarterly Screening Outcome Reports which illustrates how the Section 75 equality duties have been mainstreamed into the decision making/policy development processes of the Trust – available on the Trust's website under 'About the Trust / Publications / Policy Screening Outcome Reports'. *Please see Appendices for further examples.*

- 3 With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what difference was made, or will be made, for individuals, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?**

Please provide any details and examples:

Please see Appendices for further examples.

- 3 What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? (tick all that apply)**

☒

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy (*please give details*):

New and revised policies adopted by the Trust during this period have been screened. Please see the Trusts Screening Outcome Reports <https://southerntrust.hscni.net/involving-you/equality-and-diversity/policy-screening-outcome-reports/>

PART A

- ☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (*please give details*):
- ☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (*please give details*):
- ☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):
- ☐ Other (*please specify and give details*):

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2025-26 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- ☐ Yes, organisation wide
- ☒ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- Compliance with Section 75 equality duties is stipulated in job descriptions under 'Staff and Managerial Responsibilities'.
- Compliance with the Section 75 equality duties is also included in specific guidelines for Trust Board members and the Trust's Senior Management Team.
- Arrangements and responsibility for ensuring the effective and timely discharge of the Trust's Section 75 equality duties are set out in Chapter 1 of the Trust's approved Equality Scheme - which elaborates on how the Trust proposes to fulfil its equality duties in relation to its specific functions. The accountability structure is also clearly outlined in the Equality Scheme.
- Equality objectives are specifically included in the job descriptions of the Trust's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development and the Trust's Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.
- Incorporated in Training Programmes – Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights – Making a Difference – eLearning programme.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2025-26 reporting period? (tick one box only)

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- Progress in implementing the Section 75 duties is reported in the Trust's Annual Progress Report and regularly to the Trust Senior Management Team and Trust Board.
- Equality training is mandatory in the Trust. Compliance is monitored and reported through the Trust's accountability framework.
- The Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion team provides ongoing training, hosts workshops for policy leads/decision makers and provides advice and guidance in the area of Section 75, the disability duties and human rights obligations. They also act as a business partner - participating in discussions of policy development and decision making processes.

6 In the 2025-26 reporting period were objectives/ targets/ performance measures relating to the Section 75 statutory duties integrated into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☒ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- ☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2025-26 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Section 75 equality duties are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level into the business of the Trust.

Objectives/targets/performance measures relating to the Section 75 statutory duties were integrated into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans as follows:

- The Trust's Corporate Plan
- The Trust's own Annual Report
- The Trust's Management of Change Framework embeds the principles of fairness and equity
- Trust's Section 75 Annual Progress Report
- Equality Screenings are tabled at the Policy Scrutiny Committee along with the policy document
- Equality and Human Rights are a standard section for consideration for reports progressing to SMT/Trust Board

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

Actions Completed	15	Actions ongoing	28	Actions to commence	8
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8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2025-26 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

The Equality and Disability Action Plans are 'live documents' and therefore constantly under review to ensure they deliver on outcomes.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2025-26 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- ☐ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- ☒ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- ☒ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

The regional 2024-2029 Action Plans were developed, consulted on, approved and implemented.

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (tick one box only)**

☐ All the time ☒ Sometimes ☐ Never

Where relevant, we engage with targeted groups in a pre-engagement phase of consultation. This initial engagement is to inform the consultation at an early stage and help us shape the scope of the wider consultation.

- 11 Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2025-26 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:**

The Human Library events and methodology provide a safe space for Service Users, Carers and Staff to share their lived experience of their Involvement, how they personally found it, the challenges, benefits and impacts.

In its monitoring report on the Trust's commitment to supporting engagement and involvement, the PHA states *"The Trust have been an active partner in the HSC wide collaborative monitoring arrangements and the development of the Involvement Human Library model. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered through this process provides an indicative insight into key aspects of progress in terms of embedding Personal & Public Involvement into the culture and practice of the Trusts. It is evident that there is a wide and diverse range of Involvement work going on in the Trust and an organisational commitment to grow and develop this further."*

The User Involvement team continues to maintain a service user register to ensure that service user and carer voices and experiences are integral to decision making. There are currently 36 registered service users and carers trained in and supporting involvement practice and development across the Trust. The User Involvement Team continues to work with Trust staff, service users and local communities to promote opportunities for involvement and encourage sign-up to the register.

There are currently 146 user involvement projects and opportunities embedding the principles of co-design and co-production across the Trust.

Examples of service user involvement include:

- Care Experience Hubs within operational Directorates.

- Regional Health & Social Care PPI Involvement Forum.
- Community of Involvement Events.
- Co-Production Week 2025.
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology Reference Group.
- CYP SU/C Reference Group.
- Local Engagement Partnership.
- Volunteer Handbook review.
- Welcome Pack for Transitioning Families receiving short breaks.
- Podiatry website review and update.
- Co Production Video.
- 'Season of Life' project to support young people to cope with bereavement – top award winner at the Picker Experience Network awards 2025.
- Community Addictions Service podcast, co-produced with service users.
- Enhancing Dementia Care Training; and
- Shared Decision-Making Project Team.

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

- ☒ Face to face meetings
- ☒ Focus groups
- ☒ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- ☒ Questionnaires
- ☒ Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- ☒ Internet discussions
- ☐ Telephone consultations
- ☒ Other *(please specify)*: The Trust continues to engage with its established user groups. Care Opinion.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

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

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- Publication of S75 Quarterly Equality Screening Outcome Reports
- Section 75 Annual Progress Report was made available
- Equality newsletter “Equality in Action”
- Equality section included in the Trust’s Annual Report
- Engagement exercises
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion section on Trust website/SharePoint
- Staff Training
- Ongoing guidance and briefings to senior management and Board
- Informal meetings with the Equality Commission and other organisations

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

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

The consultation list is constantly under review and is updated on an ongoing basis.

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

Details can be found at:

<https://southerntrust.hscni.net/involving-you/equality-and-diversity/policy-screening-outcome-reports/>

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

29

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

0

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

0

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

0

Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

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

As above.

- 18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes ☒ No concerns were raised ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2025-26 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2025-26 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes ☐ No, already taken place

☒ No, scheduled to take place at a later date ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

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

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

NI HSC Interpreting Service – ongoing review of language trends used to determine future language needs in order to ensure equality of access to services and in the interest of providing high quality safe services.

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

N/A

- 23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:**

The Trust continues to monitor staff across the 9 equality categories. The monitoring of staff is enhanced by the self-service function of the Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence System (HRPTS).

This information is used for screening purposes and helps to identify specific issues that need to be addressed to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Trust regularly raises awareness to encourage staff to keep their details up to date.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2025-26, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.**

In keeping with the commitments in its approved Equality Scheme, the Trust has put in place a range of training interventions to ensure the effective discharge of its Section 75 equality and disability duties.

Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights eLearning Training – Making a Difference

Corporate Mandatory Training (CMT) is training that **all** staff must complete and keep up to date. CMT is a process to help all staff to get to know the Trust, what it expects of them and how they will be supported to provide a safe, effective service and to perform to the highest level within their post. Part of this process involves providing training that is essential for staff to do their jobs safely and well.

During the year 2025-26, the Trust continued the emphasis on enhancing our staff knowledge and capacity around equality, diversity and inclusion across all parts of the organisation. To this end, we

continue to roll out the corporate mandatory online training equality training “Making a Difference”. **5,042** employees undertook the training during 2025-26.

The Corporate Mandatory Training (CMT) Compliance comparisons from March 2022 are outlined below:

CMT	Compliance as at 31st March 2022	Compliance as at 31st March 2023	Compliance as at 31st March 2024	Compliance as at 31st Dec 2024*	Compliance as at 31st March 2026*
Equality, Good Relations & Human Rights	53%	65%	83%	88%	88%

**due to Encompass the last report produced for 2024 was in December.*

Employment - Selection and Recruitment

The Trust has in place arrangements to ensure recruitment panels receive training on the Trust's procedures for ensuring a fair selection process. A regional eLearning module has been developed. During the reporting period, **738** staff undertook the on-line Selection and Recruitment Training in the Trust

EDI delivered Staff Training 2025-26

Date	Name of Training	Numbers attended
24 th June 25	BSO Interpreting Online Booking System - How to Book an Interpreter	19
10 th Sept 25	Working Well with Interpreters	29
Nov 25		
19 th	Working Well with Interpreters	17
25 th	Neurodiversity Awareness training	70
27 th	Regional how to book an interpreter	12
		(SHSCT)
3 rd Dec 25	International Day of Persons with a Disability	18
Jan 26		
14 th	Making a difference CMT face to face	15
21 st	Neurodiversity Awareness training	79
19 th Feb 2026	Neurodiversity Awareness training	73

- 25 Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Refer to Q24 above.

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

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

Based on Care Opinion feedback received within SHSCT during 2025–26.

We regularly review feedback shared by patients, families, and carers through Care Opinion to help us improve our services. During 2025–26, service user experiences highlighted areas where change was needed. In response, we have made the following improvements across Southern Health & Social Care Trust services.

 **Clearer Information** - You told us information wasn't always easy to find or understand.

What's changed?

- ENT noticeboards now include facial palsy information and support resources in Craigavon Area Hospital
- Emergency Department, Craigavon Area Hospital - waiting-time boards have been introduced and are updated every 1–2 hours.
- Paediatric Emergency Department, Daisy Hill Hospital - Waiting times are now committed to being displayed in waiting area
- Emergency Department, Daisy Hill Hospital - Safety brief learning and condition-specific awareness information (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (M.E. / C.F.S.) has been shared with staff.

 **Supporting Families** - You said families wanted to be more involved in care.

What's changed?

- Maternity Admission, Craigavon Area Hospital - processes have been improved to allow accompanying persons.
- Neonatal, Craigavon Area Hospital - feedback has been shared to support parental presence during cot transitions.
- Ward 1, Lurgan Hospital - Development has begun on a patient and family goal-setting folder for inpatient wards.

 **Safety & Clinical Care** - You said clear escalation and consistency in care were important – Emergency Department DHH

What's changed?

- Learning has been shared with senior clinicians to improve recognition and management of rare conditions.

 **Equality, Access & Interpreting** - You told us access to interpreters needed improvement in 3 South CAH.

What's changed?

- Interpreters are now booked in all appropriate situations, with a specific focus on sign language provision.
- Interpreter-booking flowcharts are now displayed and staff have been reminded of required processes.

 **Hospital Environment & Wayfinding** - You told us our hospital environments could be clearer and more welcoming.

What's changed?

- Pre-Operative Assessment, St Luke's Site - Signage has been enhanced.
- Stone Treatment Centre (NI ESWL), Craigavon Area Hospital - Waiting areas have been improved with better seating, partitions, and planned educational displays.

 **Comfort, Food & Facilities** - You said facilities and refreshments needed improvement.

What's changed:

- Emergency Department, Craigavon Area Hospital - Additional vending machines have been installed and night-time refreshment trolleys introduced.
- Emergency Department, Craigavon Area Hospital - Vending restocking and monitoring have been improved, with clearer instructions and exploration of contactless payment.
- Daisy Hill Hospital - Menus have been reviewed, increasing the availability of gluten-free options.
- Emergency Department, Craigavon Area Hospital - Wipeable toys are now available for babies and children in Emergency Departments.

Your Care Opinion comments help shape our services, and we will continue to listen and act on what it tell us.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

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

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

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

2029.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? (please provide details)

It is anticipated that focus during the next reporting period will be on:

- HSC Trusts continuing with actions from the regional 5-year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan (2024-2029).
- Support for EQIAs / Equality Screenings
- Continued support for Trust managers and support for staff with disabilities/ long-term health conditions, to ensure best practice and effective reasonable adjustments in the workplace.
- Provision of appropriate accommodation/changing and toilet facilities for transgender people. 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.
- Implications from new legislation - Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) 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 (replacement digital system for HRPTS) – challenges and changes that brings, in particular to statutory reporting to ECNI.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next (2024-25) reporting period? (please tick any that apply)



Employment



Goods, facilities and services



Legislative changes



Organisational changes/ new functions

PART A

☐ Nothing specific, more of the same

☐ Other (please state):

