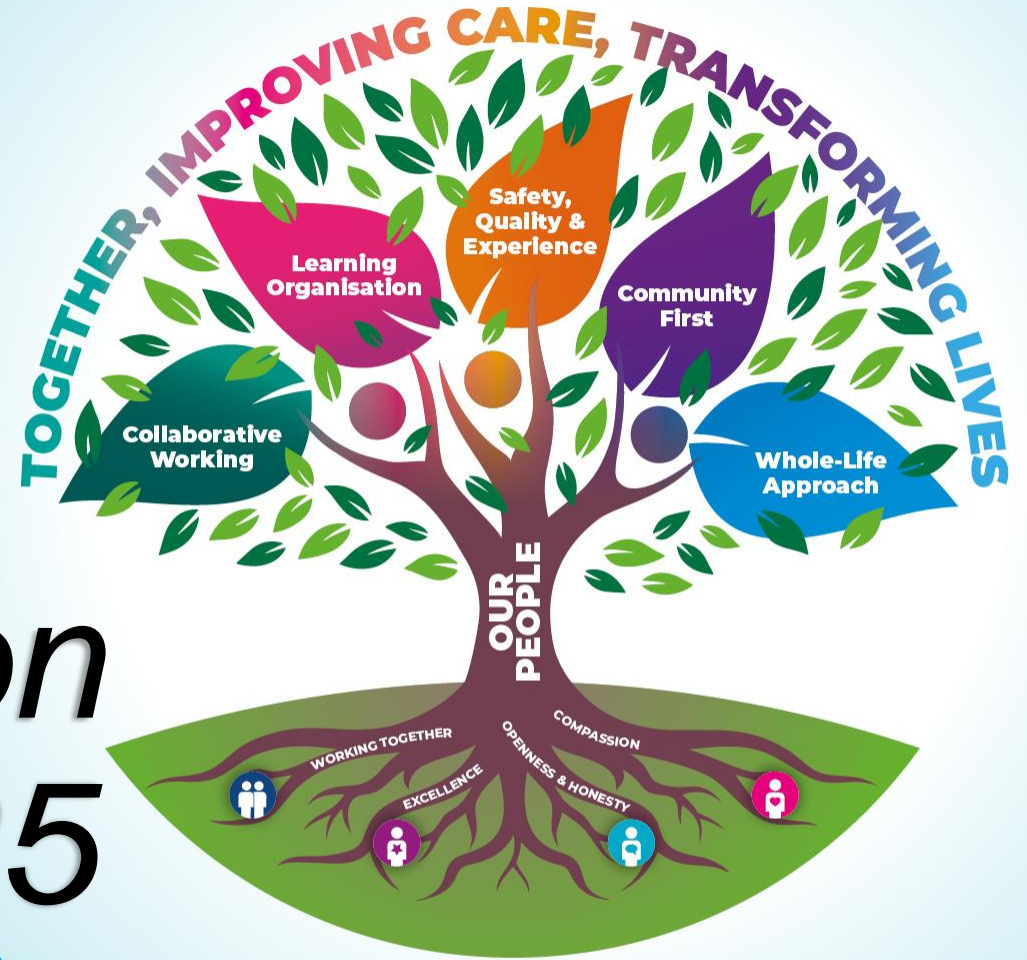


August 2025 Section 75 Annual Progress Report

Equality in Action Newsletter 24/25



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team - Tel: 028 375 64151
Email: equality.unit@southerntrust.hscni.net



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Equality Diversity & Inclusion

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust is an employer of approximately 15,000 staff and welcomes diversity and inclusion, recognising that difference brings value to the organisation. During 2024-25, 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. Some key highlights during 2024-2025 year are detailed on the following pages.

Diversity & Inclusion Calendar

This year we continued with promoting our Diversity & Inclusion Calendar making a commitment to celebrate a number of diversity days throughout the year. For the 2024/25 year this included awareness raising and sharing of information on celebratory events such as:



Accessible Communication for Service Users

During the reporting period, the Southern Trust made 47,761 (last year – **49,848**) requests for interpreters through the NI Regional HSC Interpreting Service. The top 3 languages requested were Polish, Lithuanian and Bulgarian.

To support this work the Trust has, in conjunction with the NI Regional HSC Interpreting Service, delivered 2 Working Well with Interpreters training sessions online. This was extremely successful as we have 30 members of staff who attended these online sessions from all Trust facilities. The top four location requests for an interpreter in the 2024-2025 period were: Physiotherapy, Health Visiting, Radiology and Outpatients.

Top 10 Southern Trust Languages

1. Polish	9810
2. Lithuanian	7108
3. Bulgarian	5943
4. Tetum	5934
5. Portuguese	5398
6. Romanian	3603
7. Arabic	1884
8. Russian	1657
9. Ukrainian	1173
10. Latvian	885

HSC Organisation	Number of Requests
Southern Trust	47,761
Belfast Trust	47,358
Northern Trust	15,541
South Eastern Trust	9,406
Western Trust	7,019
Other	167
Total	127,252

In addition, 6,875 calls were serviced through the telephone interpreting service during 2024-25 and 121 documents were translated into different languages.

Accessible Communication for Service Users

Handheld pocket translation devices

The Trust Promoting well-being team and Primary Care Multidisciplinary Teams launched a new handheld pocket translation device to help improve communication between staff and patients who do not speak English as a first language in CAH, DHH and GP practices across the Southern Trust area. The pocket-sized digital kit can translate up to 108 languages through audio or text in real time.

Service user feedback found that 100% found the device easy to use, 95% found the device improves patient contact and 96% felt the device should be available in all health care settings.



Disability Advocate Role

The Trust welcomed a new role of Disability Advocate during *July 2024*. Dr. Clodagh Corrigan is a Specialty Doctor in Emergency Medicine and is based in the Emergency Department in Daisy Hill Hospital.

As a Trust, we recognise the difficulties and barriers that exist for staff and students with disabilities and long-term conditions. This role will provide support for those staff and students and allow them to continue to participate fully in our organisation. The Southern Trust is the first Trust in Northern Ireland to establish this role and Clodagh, who is a wheelchair user, hopes to bring real life experience to the position.

Upon the introduction of the disability advocate role, ongoing work has identified a number of target areas to make improvements for both our people and our service users:

- Policies and Procedures
- Staff survey
- Staff network - ValuABLE
- Education
- Estates



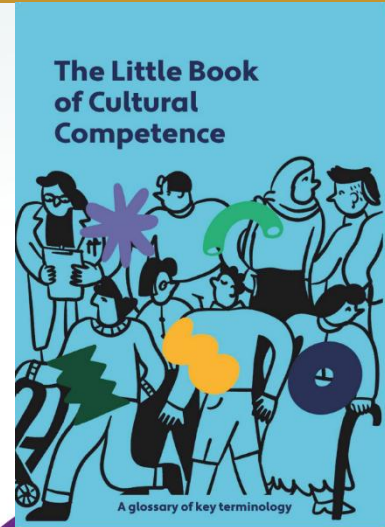
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A Cultural Competency Framework to Guide Health and Social Care

A Cultural Competency Framework to Guide Health and Social Care was launched on 5 February 2025 by the Health Minister and HSC Trust Leads. This new regional framework will help HSC staff to improve their confidence and competence in engaging with and providing services to people from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds.

The framework, which is underpinned by staff training and resources, including the **'Little Book of Cultural Competence'**, is designed to promote equity and enhance patient care. At the launch event Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said: *"This regional framework is an important step as part of our broader efforts to create an environment of inclusivity and equality within healthcare. I am delighted to say that this initiative will provide our staff with the necessary tools to enhance patient care and help reduce health inequalities right across Northern Ireland."*



The Little Book of Cultural Competence is a go-to guide for understanding 10 essential terms around cultural competence. Each section unpacks a key term by sharing a real-life account, addressing common misconceptions, and offering suggestions to assist you in your cultural competence journey. Get your online copy of this great resource [CLICK HERE](#)



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Culture Night 9 May 2024

Culture Night 9 May 2024

On Thursday 9 May 2024, staff joined together for our second Culture Night In DHH in Newry. Over 120 staff, senior management and Trust Board members attended.

It was an evening in celebration of our International Staff and the cultural diversity within the Southern Trust. The night included traditional dancing and entertainment with nationalities from Brazil, Philippines, Portugal, Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Zimbabwe represented.





★ Thursday 9th May 2024 6.30pm-8.30pm
★ Daisy Hill Hospital Dining Room
★ Transport provided

Please join us for an evening of traditional dress, food, music and dance in celebration of our International staff and the cultural diversity within the Southern Trust.

Get involved!
Bring along some traditional foods to share on the night

To register for the event please contact Aine in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team by **Friday 26th April**
equality.unit@southerntrust.hscni.net
07721685731

 **REACH**
The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Partnership

Employee Networks – REaCH Staff Network

The 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. There are regular meetings and organised events throughout the year such as Hiking, Zumba, Badminton and continued communication via the What's App grp, regular emails, meetings and drop in events.



SHSCT Buddy Scheme

We launched the SHSCT Buddy Scheme during *September 2024*. The Buddy Scheme has been designed to help new internationally educated staff settle into life at the Southern Trust, and life in Northern Ireland in general.

The main purpose of a buddy is to help ease the transition of both moving to a new country and a new job in Health & Social Care at the same time. This guide is designed for new internationally educated staff who will be paired with a current staff member (Buddy Volunteer) who will support them.

HSC LGBTQ+ Staff Forum

The HSC LGBTQ+ Staff Forum has continued to create visibility for LGBTQ+ people in our organisation and be actively involved in support for LGBTQ+ employees within the HSC and creating a more LGBTQ+ inclusive work environment. Sexual orientation and Gender Identity Awareness Training was offered to staff in partnership with the Rainbow Project to help give a deeper understanding and awareness to staff. Members of the Forum participated in the annual pride parade on Saturday 27th July.



Pride 2024

From **Friday 18 July – Sunday 27 July 2024**, the EDI team joined other HSC staff at Pride to show support for our LGBTQ+ staff and service users and to highlight the Trust as an inclusive employer for all. This is the second year we have adopted the [HSC Rainbow Badge](#), to show that Southern Trust is an open, non-judgemental and inclusive place for people that identify as LGBTQ+. We also (along with trade union colleagues) hosted 2 engagement sessions in CAH and DHH, where Rainbow lanyards and the Rainbow Pin were available for staff.



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 2024-25 we continued to promote the HSC Flexible Working Framework along with supporting resources. This included briefing communications, awareness training and resources for managers and information on flexible working options for employees. During the time frame April 2024 to March 2025, we received 848 requests for flexible working (last year 661) The most common reason for requesting flexible working was reduced/personalised hours with the biggest staff group requesting flexible working being Nursing & Midwifery. Over 75% of requests were accepted.



Global Diversity Awareness Month

Global Diversity Awareness Month, which aims to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion and celebrate all the ways our different ethnicities, cultures, heritages, experiences and abilities contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive workforce. During this time, the EDI Team celebrated the diverse cultures and experiences of our staff. we are committed to listening to all voices, learning from one another and delivering for everyone.

The EDI team promoted available resources for staff:-

- The Buddy Scheme
- Importance of our names
- REaCH Staff network
- Diversity and Inclusion Calendar



Equality Diversity & Human Rights Week

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights week is a national campaign for health and care organisations run by NHS Employers, who support workforce leaders and represent employers to develop a sustainable workforce and be the best employers they can be.

This year the EDI team promoted useful resources produced by the team – Interpreting and Translations Toolkit, Disability Toolkit, Multi-Cultural and Beliefs Handbook, EDI Training Portfolio, EDI Diversity and Inclusion Calendar, REaCH Staff Newsletter and Employment Equality Data information.



Good Relations Week

September 2024. The Southern Trust is committed to the promotion of good relations amongst people of different religious belief, race or political opinion, during GRW the EDI team took the opportunity to promote: -

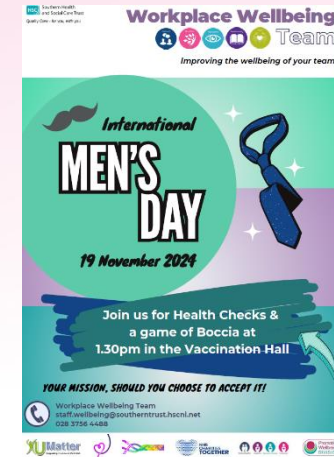
- Our good relations statement and highlight our commitment that our staff and service users should be treated with respect and dignity in line with the HSC Values.
- We also took the opportunity to highlight the importance of our names. Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity. They carry deep personal, cultural, family and historical connections. They give us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong and our place in the world. Names are very much attached to who we are as individuals, they are part of our personal DNA. Names are also often linked with our ethnicity and culture. Pronouncing names correctly shows respect and signals inclusion.



International Men's Day

As part of **International Men's Day** on 19 November 2024, the workplace wellbeing team set up health checks and a game of bocchia at the vaccination hall to facilitate the 2024 theme of "Men's Health Champions".

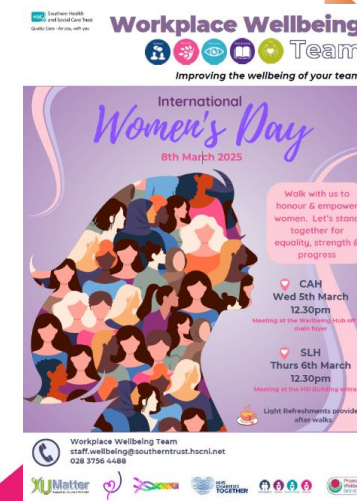
Men's health champions will help shine a spotlight on both the problems of men's health and people delivering the solutions.



International Women's Day

International Women's Day took place on 8 March 2025. With 86.5% of our workforce female, raising awareness of IWD helps to demonstrate our commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace for everyone.

Members of the Workplace Wellbeing and EDI teams took part in Walk with Us to honour and empower women across sites in Southern Area. We also used this opportunity to highlight the range of resources available in particular on Women's Health on Umatter and Menopause Awareness Information.



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“Many Cultures, One Community: Human Library Events”

Human Library events were organised by the Community Inclusion Worker in collaboration with local community organisations. Human Libraries aim to open dialogue about personal experiences, expertise, cultures, and identities. We want to use these conversation to promote empathy and connectivity with our diverse community. Participants from diverse backgrounds and many countries shared their powerful life stories, promoting understanding, empathy and inclusion. These events created safe spaces for dialogue, challenged stereotypes, and celebrated the richness of cultural diversity



Human Rights Resource and Video

The Trust has worked in collaboration with fellow regional Trusts to produce a staff resource and video to promote a Human Rights based approach to the delivery of care and service user support. We know that Health and Social Care can be full of complex and challenging situations, where often we have to balance rights, for example a person's ability to make their own decisions, their autonomy, versus managing risk and our duty of care.

We want all HSC staff who provide care and treatment on behalf of HSC Trusts, to be aware of their human rights duties in the context of the FREDa principles. FREDa stands for Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy. This guide and video takes our staff through each of the five FREDa principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care. We want to ensure that the human rights of our patients, service users, carers and staff are protected, promoted and supported.

Ramadan

Ramadan took place from the evening of 28th February – 30th March 2025, with the first day of fasting from Monday 1st March. As a Trust, we have a diverse workforce and it is important that we consider our Muslim colleagues during this time, who may be observing religious customs such as fasting, to ensure they remain properly supported and safe at work. In recognition of our staff practising Ramadan, we offered a provision of light snacks in both CAH and DHH dining rooms overnight and shared information on how to support staff and colleagues throughout the month of Ramadan.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities

To help raise awareness of **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** (3 December) the EDI Team organised a number of events for staff including:

- Two drop-in engagement sessions which were facilitated by the Trust's newly appointed disability advocate – Dr Clodagh Corrigan
- Disability Awareness Training for Managers



Equality, Good Relations & Human Rights eLearning Training – ‘*Making a Difference*’



During the 2024-25 year, 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”.

The Corporate Mandatory Training (CMT) Compliance comparisons since March 2021 are outlined below:

Training	% Compliance as at 31 st March 2021	% Compliance as at 31 st March 2022	% Compliance as at 31 st March 2023	% Compliance as at 31 st March 2024	% Compliance as at 31 st Dec 2024
Equality, Good Relations & Human Rights	73%	53%	65%	83%	88%

Uptake has increased from 83% to 88%, working to increase this percentage will remain a priority.

Corporate Mandatory Training Element	% Compliance as at 31 st March 2024	% Compliance as at 31 st Dec 2024	Variance (%)
Equality, Good Relations & Human Rights: Making a Difference	83	88	+5

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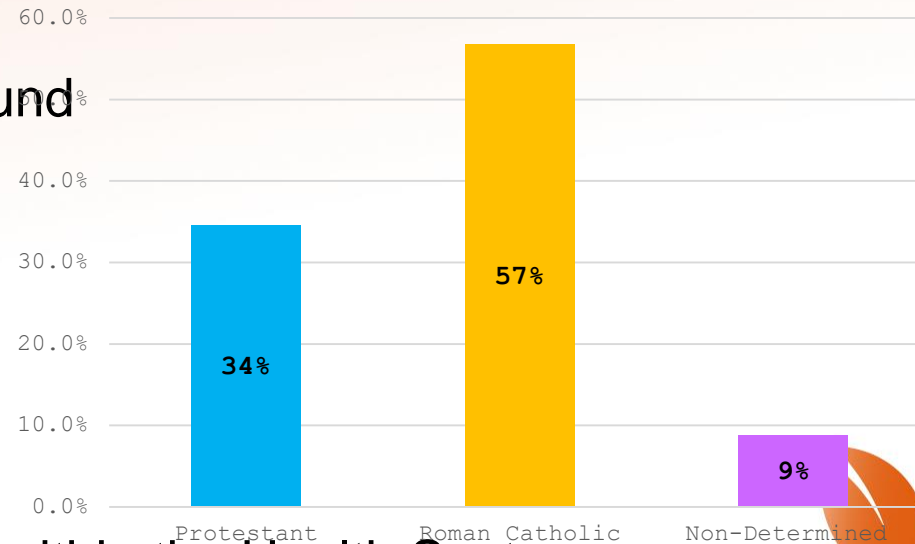
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Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return

The Trust submitted its statutory Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission showing workforce composition between the two main communities in NI, applicant flows/appointees, promotees and leavers for the year.

As at 1 January 2025, the community background was as follows:

- 34% Protestant,
- 57% Roman Catholic
- 9% non-determined.



The analysis is in line with an increasing trend within the Health Sector in favour of Roman Catholics as evidenced in the Equality Commission's Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Report No 34 – A Summary of NI Monitored Workforce Returns 2023.

As at 1 January 2025, the Trust employed 15,204 staff of which 13.5% were male and 86.5% 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. [\(NI HSC Census 2025\)](#)



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Key Priorities for the Year Ahead 2025-26



- HSC Trusts continuing with actions from the regional 5 year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan (2024-2029).
- Support for EQIAs / Equality Screenings
- Policy review and development
- 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. Continued support for the Disability Advocate.
- Support for under-represented groups of staff, including internationally educated staff, LGBTQ+ colleagues and those with Caring responsibilities.
- Promoting and raising awareness of the D&I Annual Calendar and a range of Celebratory Days
- Continuing to raise awareness and mainstreaming of equality, diversity & inclusion



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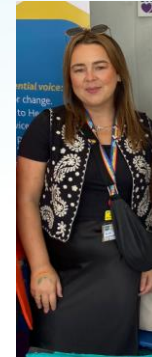


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For more information please visit the EDI [SharePoint site](#).

Comments and feedback are always welcome. If you have any suggestions for progressing the diversity and inclusion agenda within the Trust, please get in touch with any of the team.



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