

FOI 2635

30th September 2024

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

1. Sickness absence

The Bradford factor is a formula used by HR departments to calculate the impact of employees' absences on an organisation.

Q1. Does your Trust/Board use Bradford Factor scoring as part of monitoring sickness absence?

Response:

No

Q2: Does your Trust/Board's sickness absence policy include a threshold at which sickness absence triggers performance management action?

- **If yes, what is the threshold? (either days absent or, if used, Bradford Factor score)**

Response:

Yes. The Trust's Management of Sickness Absence procedure uses 'triggers' to identify this threshold.

Triggers are the levels above which a review of an individual's absence record will be undertaken and which may lead to action being taken.

These are:

- Three episodes of sickness absence of any length in any rolling twelve month period

OR

- Two episodes of sickness totalling more than 2 working weeks in any rolling twelve month period

OR

- Any recognisable pattern of absence

d. **Q3: Does your Trust/Board's record disability-related absence separately from sickness absence?**

Response:

No

2. **Disability Leave**

Disability leave is a period of time off work for a reason related to an employee's disability; for example, to attend hospital appointments or to receive treatment, usually agreed in advance.

Q4: Does your Trust/Board have a disability leave policy?

- **If yes, please provide a link to/copy of the policy.**

Response:

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust does not have a standalone Disability Leave Policy, this is incorporated into the Time off Work Policy which includes health appointments for staff with a Disability.

The Trust also has in place a regional Disability Equality Policy which sets out what the Trust will do to ensure that staff with disabilities and job applicants do not experience barriers to employment in the Trust and to promote a supportive working environment for people with disabilities.

We also encourage any staff member with a disability requiring reasonable adjustments to speak directly with their line manager. This is to ensure that an employee centred tailored agreement is in place to meet their individual needs in respect of reasonable adjustments.

Q5: Does your Trust/Board offer paid disability leave?

Response:

Staff members who have a condition or illness which is defined as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act may require the Trust to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help them properly manage their health. Reasonable adjustments may include facilitating more regular or longer periods of time out of work to attend necessary medical appointments. Again, we recommend any staff member with a disability requiring reasonable adjustments to speak directly with their line manager.

3. Championing disability

Disability champions are people in roles that provide a personal lead and commitment to championing accessibility and opportunity for disabled people within their organisation.

Q6: Does your Trust/Board have the following available to doctors and medical students:

- **A disabled staff/student network**

Response:

No. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust does not have a standalone Disability/Student Network.

- **A disability champion at a senior/Board level ***

Response:

No. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust does not have a Disability Champion at Senior/Board Level.

- **Disability advocates/champions with lived experience**

Response:

Yes. The Trust has in place a Disability Advocate with lived experience, this employee is currently a doctor in emergency medicine and took over this role part time from 1 July 2024. This pilot post is for one year initially. The aim of the role is to be responsible for leading, developing and improving support for all Trust staff and students with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

They will act as an advocate to enable staff, managers and teams to think differently, including providing support and guidance for both staff and managers on providing adjustments in the workplace, to encourage and retain staff and to ensure our workforce feels supported. It is included in the action plan for 24/25 to establish a Disability Staff Network, this will be developed in advance by carrying out a disability related staff survey to gain an understanding of the needs and experiences of staff and students with disabilities.

Q7: Do you have anyone who is employed in a paid role specifically to ensure that disabled doctors receive workplace support?

- **If yes, please provide a brief description of the job role**

Response:

As above, the role of Disability Advocate is in place to support all Trust staff including doctors.

There is a number of Trust teams as part of the wider HR Directorate who are there to support all staff including doctors, this includes:

- Line manager in the first instance to discuss possible adjustments and supports.
- Occupational Health Team
- Employee Relation Team
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team
- Employers for Disability NI (Southern Health & Social Care Trust Membership) for additional support, advice and guidance

Trust staff, including medical staff, can be referred to SHSCT Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service at any time for advice from the multidisciplinary clinical team on workplace adjustments including flexible working, work schedules, additional IT equipment and recommendations around task allocation and time constraints etc

4. Reasonable adjustments process**Q8: Does your Trust/Board have a reasonable adjustments policy?**

- If yes, please provide a link/copy

Response:

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust does not have a standalone Reasonable Adjustments Policy as Reasonable Adjustments are already protected by Law under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has a Disability Toolkit which is accessible for all Staff and goes into the reasonable adjustment process in depth.

Q9: Does your Trust/Board have a centralised budget for making workplace adjustments for disabled doctors/medical students?**Response:**

No, any costs in relation to reasonable adjustments are managed at service level and will be paid out of the service/ directorate budget.

Q10: Does your Trust/Board have a single point of contact/centralised process for disabled doctors/medical students to request reasonable adjustments?

- **If no, please provide brief details of how individual employees can make requests for adjustments (e.g. via their line manager)**

Response:

There is a number of Trust teams as part of the wider HR Directorate who are there to support all staff including doctors, this includes:

- Line manager in the first instance to discuss possible adjustments and supports.
- Occupational Health Team
- Employee Relations Team
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team (incorporating Disability Advocate)
- Employers for Disability NI (Southern Health & Social Care Trust Membership) for additional support, advice and guidance

As an organisation we are extremely mindful of our legislative requirements including Section 75 (Equality) duties, Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO), DDA and the range of employment legislation in place in NI.

The Southern HSC Trust remains committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations. We also are committed to celebrating diversity and treating everyone with respect and dignity. Our aim is to provide and promote inclusive, accessible and responsive services while celebrating diversity and the great benefits of shared experiences both of our staff and service users.

The skills and experience of disabled employees are highly valued and the Trust is committed to supporting disabled staff balance their work commitments alongside managing their health requirements.

Email: Foi.Team@Southerntrust.hscni.net