

**Inside this
issue**



Equality News

**Equality Unit
Team**

**Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion**

Involvement

Carer Support

Training

**Interpreting and
Translations**



Welcome

Welcome to the twelfth edition of our Equality Newsletter. We are delighted to share with you news of the great work that is ongoing across the Trust to ensure our services are welcoming, person-centred and accessible for everyone. We hope you enjoy reading about what we have been working on during 2024/2025 and a special thanks to our service users, carers, communities and our staff for their role in supporting us to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do.

Kelly McBride
Head of Equality

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a foundation stone of our #team NORTH culture and the Trust is committed to working together to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all staff regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, community background, religious belief, political opinion, race, disability, dependent status and marital or civil partnership status.

Michelle Morris
Senior Human Resources Manager



Meet The Team



Equality Team



**Jillian Smyth,
Equality Officer**

Involvement Team



**Veronica
Meenan,
Engagement
Manager**



**Lynda Elliott,
Involvement Co-ordinator**



**Sarah Arthur,
Patient Client Experience Facilitator**



**Jan Taylor,
Administrative Officer**

Carer Hub



**Claire Campbell,
Carer Co-ordinator**



**Louise Feeney,
Carer Support Worker**

Disability Consultation Panel



The Trust's Disability Consultation Panel is a disability led, user advisory group, that works in partnership with the Trust to support, and guide the planning, and delivery of Trust services. Panel members include Trust staff, representatives from the community and voluntary sector, and people who have lived experiences of disability, who can provide the Trust with feedback and insights into issues they face.

Following a recent recruitment drive, we have successfully recruited new panel members and we are excited to see the fresh perspective and expertise that our new panel members will bring.

We are looking forward to a productive future with our expanded panel.



Equality Screening and Rural Needs



Northern Trust is one of the largest geographical Trusts in Northern Ireland, providing health and social care services to a population of approximately 479,000 people. The Trust area spans four Council areas and over 40% of Northern Trust's residents live in rural areas.

The population profile indicates that the Trust has the largest older population and the largest child population, when compared to other Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

To ensure the needs of people in rural areas are considered when designing and delivering services, the Equality Unit provide advice and support to Trust staff with equality screenings.

During 2024/25, we held **101** one to one clinics to support staff on Section 75 Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessments relating to specific policies, projects and services.



Further advice and staff resources, including our Screening and Rural Needs Toolkits, are available on [Staffnet](#)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



The Trust is committed to maintaining a safe and positive working environment for ethnically diverse staff and the elimination of racial discrimination for employees and patients. We recognise that, in order for every individual to reach their full potential, there must be no fear of discrimination or prejudice and a belief that career opportunities or experience of work is not predetermined by ethnicity, nationality or colour.

In August 2024, the new Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion strategy was launched. The three year strategy sets out a series of actions that aim to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our staff with a strong emphasis on the need to embrace a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion.



Good Relations Week

In September, the Trust celebrated Good Relations Week, the annual celebration of the work that goes on all year round to build peace and good community relations - this year's theme is '*embracing Opportunity, a call to action to create a brighter, inclusive future for all.*' We took the opportunity to highlight our support for this campaign as a reminder of the importance of working together to help build a stronger shared society and to support the breaking down of barriers to create a positive future for everyone.

As a public authority, we have been promoting good relations as part of our duty as an employer and service provider since its inception under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

We are proud of our staff's commitment to Good Relations, supporting the Trust to ensure everyone is treated fairly with respect and dignity across all of our services and in all of our facilities.

Regional Good Relations Statement



Working together we will promote good relations between people of different race, religion or political opinion

This means that we:

- Will actively address and challenge racism and sectarianism in all its forms
- Will treat each other fairly, with respect and dignity
- Will make sure our spaces are shared, welcoming and safe.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



LGBTQ+ Equality

In 2024, the Trust was proud to support Pride, attending both the Belfast and Portrush events. During the summer months, we also hosted and participated in a number of events across Trust sites to promote LGBTQ+ equality awareness to highlight the variety of resources and support available to all staff including the HSC staff forum.

Race Equality

In February 2025, the Trust celebrated the **Race Equality Week**, focussing on addressing barriers to race equality in the workplace. The theme was #ListenActChange, highlighting the importance of bringing everyone together to focus on listening to the challenges people may face, taking action to drive change and to make a positive difference.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

"Progress" Development Programme for Ethnically Diverse Staff



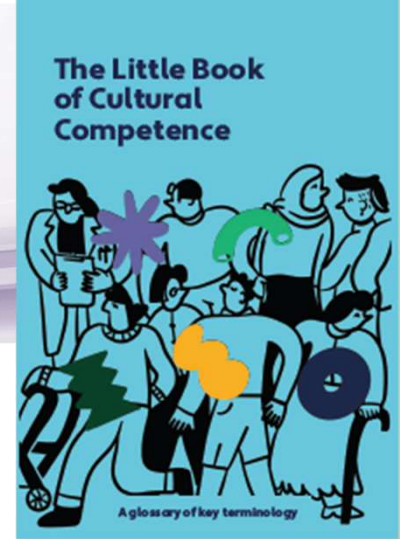
The Trust supported the second year of this regional programme that recognises the low numbers of ethnically diverse staff availing of development programmes through the HSC Leadership Centre. The programme was piloted in 2023 with successful programmes completed in 2024 and early 2025. A further programme is planned to commence in September 2025.

Civil Unrest - Summer 2024

We worked with PSNI and other stakeholders to develop supports for staff during the time of civil unrest in the Antrim area. Owen Harkin, Deputy Chief Executive and Chair of EDI Steering Group, and Stephanie Greenwood, Trade Union Side Chair issued a video statement condemning the attacks and signposting staff to this support. EDI Steering Group members facilitated drop-in clinics across Antrim, Causeway and Ballymena sites.

Cultural Competency Framework

Regional Health and Social Care colleagues worked collaboratively to develop a Cultural Competency Framework to help reduce inequalities in health experienced by ethnic minority populations and patient groups across the region.



Mike Nesbitt, Health Minister attended the launch to hear from the Trusts who presented on areas of best practice and to discuss the importance of this work with staff and service users.

The new regional framework will help health and social care 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 also enhance patient care.

Human Rights Training

Staff Guidance 'A Human Rights Based Approach in HSC

On Human Rights Day, the 10th of December 2024, the Trust launched the new regional Human Rights staff training animation.



Working collaboratively with regional colleagues we developed a training animation with accompanying guidance, which takes you through each one of the five FREDA principles and how they apply to day-to-day work within health and social care.

The animation is about delivering care and treatment using a human rights-based approach, based on the FREDA principles.

FREDA stands for *Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy*.

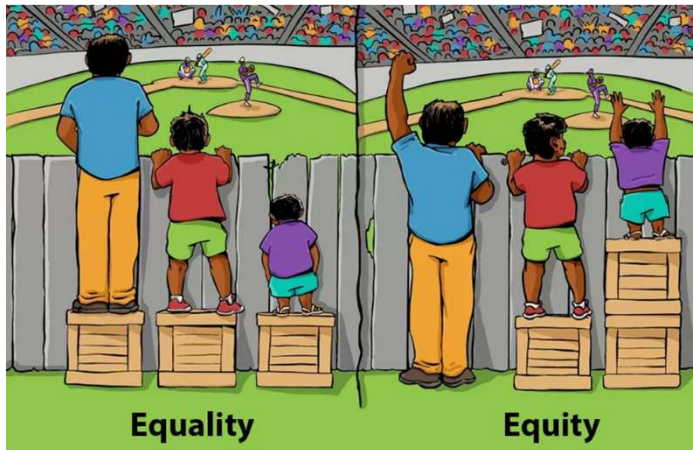
Both training resources are available for staff to view on Staffnet and have been shared widely across the Trust.

Let's work together to ensure the human rights of our patients, service users, carers and staff are protected, promoted and supported.

Mental Health Seminar



In May 2024, the Trust held a Mental Health Seminar '*addressing health inequalities*' in partnership with Inter-Ethnic Forum and Stronger Together for our ethnically diverse communities.



Keynote speakers included Selena Ramsey, Trust Health and Wellbeing Manager, and Deborah Mullan, Counsellor and Psychotherapist from 'Tree and Tide' along with colleagues from the Northern Area Community Partnership, Inter Ethnic Forum / Stronger Together, who shared knowledge on their various roles and ongoing vital work within the Mental Health field.



The seminar was well attended and provided participants with information on early intervention and prevention in relation to Mental Health, mindfulness and the emotional benefits of nature.



Oliver McGowan Training on Learning Disability and Autism



The Oliver McGowan Training on Learning Disability and Autism is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for Health and Social Care (HSC) staff to have better training. The training is aimed to help save lives by ensuring the HSC workforce have the right skills and knowledge to provide safe, compassionate and informed care to autistic people and people with a learning disability. The training is available for all HSC staff, with two tiers, depending on the job role.

The training will educate and train HSC staff, at the right level for their role, to provide better health and social care outcomes for people with a learning disability and autistic people. The Oliver McGowan training is the government's preferred and recommended training programme and is now available on LearnHSCNI for health and social care staff.

All Trust staff can access the Oliver McGowan Training (part 1) on Learning Disability and Autism via LearnHSCNI.





AccessAble

Your Accessibility Guide



The Trust and AccessAble have been in partnership since 2020, providing detailed accessibility information to patients, visitors and staff, ensuring that everyone can navigate Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital with ease and confidence. There is ongoing collaboration to ensure the guides are up to date, including providing facts, figures and photographs to help people plan their journeys to and around the hospital, covering everything from parking facilities and hearing loops, to walking distances and accessible entrances and toilets.

Following some recent development work, full-screen size images are now available on the AccessAble website, along with 360 images including accessible toilets, accessible bathrooms and Changing Places. AccessAble have been focusing on updating the existing Guides for Causeway Hospital to enhance user experience and work is in progress for the same in Antrim Area Hospital.

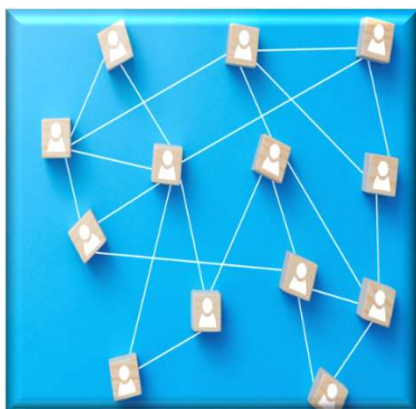
This is a valuable tool for our patients and visitors.

In the last 12 months, 28,807 people have used Northern Trust's Access Guides.

[View the Detailed Access Guides for the Trust here](#)

Interpreting and Translations

During 2024/2025 the Northern Trust made a total of **15,541** requests for interpreters through the Northern Ireland Regional Health and Social Care Interpreting Service. The top three languages requested during the year were **Polish, Romanian and Arabic.**



Trust staff have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and understanding of the BSO HSCNI Interpreting Service and learn of the dangers of using untrained interpreters or family members.

During 2024/25, 22 staff attended 'Working Well with Interpreters Training' and 125 staff attended the BSO Interpreting 'How to Book' training session – both available via LearnHSCNI.

During 2024/2025, the Northern Trust processed a total of 213 translations. The top languages were **Polish, Arabic, Bulgarian and Romanian.**



Are you deaf aware?

Deaf Awareness Week

5th – 11th May 2025

During 2025, to highlight the impact of hearing loss on everyday life and to increase visibility and inclusion of d/Deaf people we celebrated Sign Language and Deaf Awareness Week, including the announcement of hearing support lanyards. This initiative aims to improve communication and provide greater support for individuals who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or who lip read, when accessing our services.



The idea for the lanyards was sparked by feedback from a patient who described the communication challenges they have faced while in hospital. We contacted them to tell them about the concept and they said, *“I am delighted with the introduction of the lanyards, it will hopefully prompt staff to establish my preferred method of communication. I hope this will be of benefit to others.”*

**Staff member
Sarah Cochrane
wearing her
lanyard.**

For more details or to request a lanyard, please contact the Equality Unit on equality.unit@northerntrust.hscni.net



Sign Language Interpreting



During 2024/2025, **935** Trust appointments were supported with sign language interpreters through **Sign Language Interactions**.

Sign Language Interactions (SLI), provide face to face and remote sign language interpreting services to people who are d/Deaf, d/Deaf-blind and hard of hearing using health and social care services.



All Health and Social Care staff can book a sign language interpreter directly with Sign Language Interactions.

Service users can text Sign Language Interactions on 07520 645 246 to check an interpreter has been booked.

The service is free for service users and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including out of hours.

BOOKING A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

Staff Notice

A Sign Language Interpreter **must** be organised by Trust staff for any Deaf service user, patient or carer that uses British or Irish Sign Language. This is a **legal duty**.

Using an interpreter assists with **informed consent**, **privacy** and reducing **missed appointments**. Please **do not** ask family or friends to interpret.

Registered Interpreters can be booked to interpret face-to-face or remote/online.

Face-to-Face Interpreter



This means the interpreter attends the appointment to support better communication. Such Interpreters should be used if preferred and for complex/difficult conversations.

To Book:

- ✓ **Telephone:**
0333 344 7712 (available 24/7)
- ✓ **E-mail:**
bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com
- ✓ **Web:**
signlanguageinteractions.com/hscni

Remember!

- ✓ Pre-book an interpreter, as early as possible, as there are a limited numbers available.
- ✓ Tell the Deaf person that an interpreter has been booked.
- ✓ To avoid costs always cancel a booking if not needed.
- ✓ To contact a Deaf person either text, email or phone 0333 344 6012 (BSL user) 0333 305 1143 (ISL user)

Online/Remote Interpreter



This means the interpreter is online or on the telephone and is **only** used if face-to-face is not possible.

To Access:

- ✓ **Log** into the 'HSC_Guest' Wi-Fi & accept the T&Cs
- ✓ **Scan** the QR Code below & select either British or Irish Sign Language

Remember!

- ✓ Close all other websites/apps on your device.
- ✓ If connection is poor, turn off & retry!
- ✓ Limit movement as this can upset connectivity.
- ✓ Make sure your device has a camera and a microphone

Scan here to
access an
online/remote
interpreter



SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

British Sign Language (BSL) & Irish Sign Language (ISL)

**Health & Social Care professionals,
make sure you book an interpreter
for appointments with Deaf people**

Face-to-Face / In-Person



Emergency Departments (ED), Apointments, Clinics, GP Surgery, Assessments... etc.

Online / Remote



On-demand, Pre-booked
Remember to use HSCT Wi-Fi for best results

AVAILABLE 24/7

One Number - One Email - One Form

Telephone: 0333 344 7712

Email: bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com

Webform: signlanguageinteractions.com/hscni

**It is the responsibility of Trust
staff to book a Sign Language
Interpreter, if required.**

Deaf Awareness Posters



People who are Deaf, have hearing loss or communication support needs rely heavily on visual clues for effective communication, including body language, facial expression and lip reading.

Not everyone's communication needs are the same. If you don't know, ask them how best you can communicate with them.

Top Tips on how to be Deaf aware



Speak in a well lit environment.



Ensure minimal background noise and get their attention before you speak.



Face the person making eye contact, speak clearly. Avoid moving and turning.



Speak clearly, not too slow or too fast. Don't shout. Use clear, plain language. Repeat / rephrase when necessary.



Give important information in writing and provide a Sign Language Interpreter if required.

Be Patient! A person with hearing loss will know what works for them, let them help and guide you.



Do you know your Assistance Dog Etiquette?



Assistance Dogs need to concentrate on their job to keep their owner safe. If you break that concentration, you could be putting the dog and its owner in serious danger!

Please respect Assistance Dogs and their owners by following this simple etiquette guide

DO ✓

- Speak to the owner first, not the dog.
- Allow the dog to work without distraction.
- Respect that the dog is working.
- Allow the dog to rest undisturbed.
- Let the dog owner know if the dog approaches you as this may be unwanted behaviour that needs correcting.

DO NOT ✗

- Approach, touch or speak to the dog without the owner's permission as this can be a distraction.
- Offer the dog food.
- Allow other pets to interact with the dog.
- Be offended if the owner does not want to answer questions or says no when you ask to pet the dog – they may be in a hurry to get somewhere.



If you think a handler needs help, remember to ask before acting!

Accessible Communication

The Trust continues to promote best practice advice and guidance to ensure everyone understands the information they are given about their health and care. We know that some people need information in a different format, or help to communicate. For example, in large print, braille, easy read or by email. There are a range of different disabilities that need to be considered when making information accessible.

The guide Making Communication Accessible for All provides advice to help staff communicate more effectively with people who may have a disability or communication need. The guidance is available on our website and Staffnet and we continue to highlight the importance of accessible communication during training.

Remember everyone has different needs and their needs can change. Always ask people for their required information formats and their communication needs. Don't forget to review these on a regular basis.

By making the small effort to become better at communicating, you will make a big difference to the lives of people with communication difficulties.



Carer Support

According to the 2021 Census, there are 17,500 carers under the age of 25 in Northern Ireland, however Carers NI estimate that number is much closer to 30,000. Many young carers aren't identified as or don't see themselves as carers and miss out receiving the help and support they need. **If you are a young person who cares for others or you are worried about a young carer, please get in touch with Barnardo's Young Carers service on 028 79 631344.**



If you would like to know more about what supports are available throughout the year, please contact the Carer Hub.

The Hub is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on 02827661210 or via email at Carer.Hub@northerntrust.hscni.net

Carer Support



In August 2024, a group of Young Carer Champions from Barnardo's NI met with Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt at Stormont, to discuss the legislation changes they would like to see implemented in Northern Ireland, to ensure young carers here have access to the same support and resources as their peers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said, *"I was delighted to meet the young carers and I commend the incredible dedication and resilience they demonstrate every day. Their commitment to supporting loved ones is inspiring, and it is important that they have their voices heard and their needs addressed. I understand that the lack of specific legislation for young carers in Northern Ireland is a concern. My Department will actively explore how we can strengthen support for young carers. There is still work to be done, but I want to be clear that the wellbeing of young carers is a priority for me and my Department."*

Involvement Network



The Involvement Network is made up of service users, carers and representative organisations who work in partnership with the Trust to develop health and social care services. The Network is a key resource to help shape and design services, and contribute to the development of service information. Over the year our Involvement Network have been busy, members have received **63 involvement opportunities and 375 members**

have taken part in more than 35 engagement events. In November, we carried out a survey with our members to hear about their experience of being involved, helping us identify any barriers that our service users/carers are experiencing, and to hear of any training needs that may be required.

What happens when you become a member?

We may be in contact with you to help us plan and review services or when we are thinking about developing support information, such as leaflets or service user information packs. We will ask for your input on the content, layout, colours and advice on accessibility and format. You will also receive information via email about support available in the local area and any upcoming training opportunities.



Join the Network

If you would like more information or to become a member of our Involvement Network, please contact

Email: InvolvingYou@northerntrust.hscni.net or **Telephone:** (028) 2766 1377

Service User Involvement



Service User Involvement Training

The Trust is committed to providing training to make sure staff have the skills and expertise to involve service users and carers effectively. This year a total of **924** staff members took part in our involvement training programme. To build capacity, we also provide advice clinics to support staff on how to involve service users and carers. This year we provided **30** advice clinics.

What has been happening

This year we had **101** involvement activities take place throughout our Divisions. Our service users have been involved in the co-design of the Macmillan Information and Support Centre. Members of the MEM Service User Engagement Panel have co-produced a patient information leaflet for the Discharge Lounge. Service users and carers have also been involved with the 'My Journey' Project, which support services find a different way to provide information and education to patients via their care pathway in Northern Trust, in the form of videos, podcasts and webinars.

Engagement Advisory Board

The Engagement Advisory Board (EAB) ensure that the Trust is approaching engagement in a way that meets the needs and interests of all communities, with a focus on targeting the most hard to reach groups. We have recently recruited 4 new members to represent the communities we serve. This year members have helped us shape the Trust Corporate Plan, Quality Strategy and engagement regarding the Vision for Causeway. They have also provided pre-engagement advice on the General Surgery Consultation and piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department Consultation.



The EAB members became Community Connectors with Connect North

Care Opinion



Care Opinion is an online platform where patients, relatives and carers can anonymously share their experience of our health or care services. All feedback helps us to make things better for everyone – we like to know what is working well and what we can improve on.

Over the past year, Care Opinion has published **1102 stories** relating to healthcare experience within Northern Trust, shared by patients, service users, their families and carers.

[Tell Your Story](#)

Care Opinion offers a safe and simple way to share your story online and see other people's stories too. You can see how stories are leading to change. Working together, we can all help make care better.



Staff Training Available



The Equality Unit provide a range of training and resources to help staff develop their knowledge and skills to ensure everyone is treated with respect and dignity, service users and carers are involved in their care and service improvements. Below are some examples of staff training available.

Equality Matters:

- Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights 'Making a difference' E-Learning
- Disability Equality Training online video
- Working Well with Interpreters Training

Involvement:

- Involving Service Users, Carers and Communities
- Engage and Involve E-Learning Programme
- Citizen Space Training
- Facilitation Training
- Care Opinion Responder Training
- Appreciative Inquiry Training

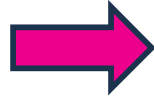
Carer Hub:

- Carer Assessment Training

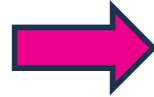
**Promoting
Equality**

Additional resources are available on Staffnet.

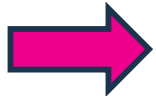
For any queries, please contact equality.unit@northearntrust.hscni.net



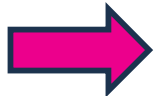
Good Relations Week: w/c 13 October 2025



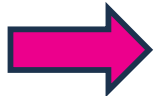
World Quality Day: 13 November 2025



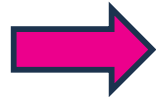
Carers Rights Day: 21 November 2025



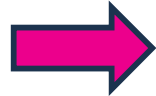
International Day of Persons with Disabilities: 3 December 2025



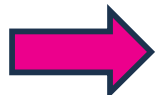
Human Rights Day: 10 December 2025



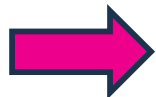
Race Equality Week: w/c 5 February 2026



Sign Language Week: March 2026 (exact dates to be confirmed)



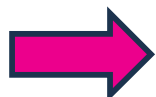
Deaf Awareness Week: w/c 4 May 2026



Carers Week: June 2026 (exact dates to be confirmed)



Learning Disability Week: w/c 15 June 2026



LGBT Pride Month – June 2026

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to read our Equality Newsletter and a special thank you to all the service users, patients, carers and staff who worked with us this year.

If you have any queries, suggestions or issues related to this newsletter or the work that we do, please contact the Equality Unit on the details below.

Phone: (028) 2766 1377

Email: equality.unit@northerntrust.hscni.net

Text: 078 2566 7154

Web: www.northerntrust.hscni.net

