

Equality Bites

Edition 9: October 2021

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of Equality Bites!

Equality Bites provides us with an opportunity to showcase the different initiatives and stories about our ongoing journey to promote equality of opportunity, human rights and good relations. I am delighted to be able to share some of the highlights of our pioneering work.

In August, I shared with the Executive Team our draft Annual Progress Report before going to the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) (for the period 31st March 2020-1st April 2021). Feedback was excellent with the Executive Team noting its appreciation of all the work that goes on behind the scenes. The Annual Progress Report ([link](#)) is our 14th and is accompanied by year 4 of our 5 year Disability and Equality Action Plans.



In this edition of Equality Bites we are covering a wide range of topics that we feel are important and of interest to our readers. One of the highlights is the overwhelming success of our celebrations to mark Belfast PRIDE 2021, which is testimony to our goal of being an inclusive and welcoming employer and service provider. I was delighted that some of our staff (Vicky, Victoria and Remi) shared their personal journeys and their first-hand experiences and the difference that feeling supported as a member of the LGBTQ+ community can make in the workplace. I firmly believe that such personal stories are so impactful and recommend that you listen to each one (see page 6). This edition also touches on other topical subjects such as the new resource 'Your Equality Data,' a Safety Quality Belfast (SQB) Carers project and the 'Every Customer Counts' initiative.

As we all know, the Coronavirus pandemic is ongoing and continues to impact greatly on the provision of health and social care. In this edition, we have included some statistics on the impact of Covid-19 on certain groups in society which highlights more than ever how important our work around equality, human rights and good relations is.

All of our equality and human rights work makes a difference and is an integral part of our strategic goal to provide the Right Care at the Right Time and in the Right Place. Indeed, Equity is now a key measurement of our progress.



I hope you enjoy our newsletter.

Charlene Stoops
Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics

#AlliedWithPride
Belfast Trust Supports Pride



COVID Impact: Inequalities in Health and Social Care

BHSCT aspires to be known as one of the safest, most effective and compassionate health and social care organisations. We are committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and the prevention of discrimination for service users and staff. Our overall purpose is to improve health and wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities - this has been even more challenging due to the global pandemic.

We now have much more information on Covid-19 in terms of the impact on inequalities. The Department of Health shared a wealth of data ([Coronavirus Related Health Inequalities December 2020 \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk)). Below are some of the statistics we thought you might be interested in.

Gender



The infection rate among females was **8%** higher than the rate among males. Conversely, more men were admitted to hospital and the death rate was also higher among males.

Deprivation

- The Covid infection rate was highest in the **10%** most deprived areas and was **64%** higher than the rate in the **10%** least deprived areas.

- The standardised Covid-19 death rate for the population aged 75 and over was **9** times that for all ages. The over 75 death rate was highest in the **10%** most deprived areas.



Ethnicity



The Public Health Agency confirmed that Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on people from ethnic minority communities. A Public Health England review established that the highest rates of Covid-19 diagnosis (adjusting for age) were in people of Black ethnic groups, with the lowest being in people of White ethnic groups.

Disability

- The Office of National Statistics noted that between January and November 2020 (England), the risk of death involving the coronavirus (Covid-19) was more than **3 times** greater for disabled people.

- For people with a medically diagnosed learning disability, the risk of death involving the coronavirus was **3.7 times** greater compared with people who did not have a learning disability.

Carers

A Carers UK survey in April 2020 noted that **78%** carers were providing more care during Covid-19 and **87%** of carers were worried about their loved ones getting ill.



Mental Health

- A **fifth** of the NI adult population report to perceiving themselves as spending too much time alone during the pandemic since the Covid-19 outbreak which can impact on suicidal thoughts ([link](#)).



- Research undertaken by Mind in England and Wales ([link](#)) noted that: **21%** of adults and **15%** of young people didn't get support because they didn't think their problem was serious enough.

48% of adults and **52%** of young people think their mental health will improve as restrictions ease ([link](#)).

Young People

Research conducted for NICCY (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People) 'A New and Better Normal' report in August 2021 found that **41%** of primary seven respondents and **52%**



of 16-year-olds felt their mental and emotional health had worsened during the pandemic.

Domestic Abuse

PSNI recorded **>8,000** domestic abuse incidents between April and June 2020 (an increase of **4%** from 2019) ([link](#)).



Equality at the heart of our response to Covid-19: A focus on the Vaccination Programme

Mindful of how Covid-19 has adversely impacted some groups more than others, issues around equality of access remain an integral part of our response to the pandemic. This can be easily seen in how we managed the roll-out of vaccines.

The Covid vaccination programme began in December 2020 and followed the prioritisation list recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). This involved vaccinating residents in care homes and their carers first followed by older people and health and social care workers and then those with underlying medical conditions. The order that people received vaccines was informed by a range of equality-related factors including the impact of Covid on older people, people with disabilities and ethnicity.

Ensuring care home residents and staff received the vaccine was an important step in safely permitting visiting in care homes to allow families and carers to be reunited with their loved ones.

Other groups that have been targeted as part of the vaccination programme include homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers, demonstrating the Trust's commitment to targeting vulnerable groups in society.

Improving YOUR knowledge: OUR Training News

Transgender Awareness

In May, over 150 staff attended an online lunchtime ‘chat’ where we listened, talked and learned about Transgender issues. The session, delivered by Transgender NI, included information on language, demographics & mental health, common problems faced and practical tips and guidance on how staff can be a trans ally in the workplace and in service delivery ([link](#)).

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Comments:

“More training like this is needed. This was an excellent opportunity to learn about transgender people”

“Encourage colleagues gently not to fear the topic of pronouns and inclusive language”

“I have changed my signature and am more aware of the significance of such a simple act in terms of reassuring someone. I am more aware of support for friends and families”

“I will update my language and service forms to include gender neutral language. I will also ask people what they prefer to be referred as in terms of pronouns”

“I’ve already spoken with colleagues about our terminology and I want to discuss with them about changing our assessment forms to be much more inclusive. I rate the training 10/10 - really feel honoured to hear peoples’ experience - I had tears in my eyes. Thank you”

Disability Toolkit for Managers

We are delighted to announce that a Disability Toolkit has been developed. The toolkit will include information on disabilities, reasonable adjustments, positive action, guidance for managers and staff. Training will accompany the new toolkit. Look out for the launch on 3rd December - International Day for People with Disabilities!



Did you know?

Around 1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland has a disability.

Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Monitoring

New training has been developed on Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Monitoring. This is to promote delivering a culturally competent service, to help understand the rationale and benefits of asking service users their ethnic origin and information on accessing an interpreter.

Did you know?

In NI, English is not the main language for 3.1% of the population.

A bespoke session, designed by the Planning and Equality and Community Development teams, was delivered to the Community Mental Health Older People's team.

Human Rights Training

To mark International Human Rights Day (10th December), we will launch a programme of facilitated online Human Rights training sessions for staff.

Also, look out for training delivered by the NI Human Rights Commission for staff who provide residential care to vulnerable adults. This is a regional programme with case studies provided by all of the Trusts. It is planned for early 2022.

Disability Awareness Online Training Now Available

In response to colleagues from mental health teams making disability awareness training compulsory in their training matrix, we have developed a two hour facilitated online session which all staff can now sign up to via HRPTS. The upcoming dates are:

- 8 December 2021, 2pm – 4pm
- 23 March 2022, 10am – mid-day

Mandatory Equality Training: Making A Difference

We are delighted that you can now complete your mandatory training in one of two ways:



Facilitated Online: 90 minute session booked through HRPTS. Dates available include:

- 7 December 2021, 2pm – 3.30pm
- 9 March 2022, 10am – 11.30am

And don't forget our Mandatory Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights E-Learning Programme 'Making a Difference' - ([link](#)). For new staff mandatory equality training is now part of the corporate onboarding programme.

Belfast Trust Celebrates PRIDE 2021

#AlliedWithPride #BelfastTrustPride2021



This year, Belfast Trust went bigger and better to celebrate Belfast PRIDE week. As a Health and Social Care provider and employer, the Trust is committed to ensuring that our services, facilities, and our staff provide an inclusive and welcoming experience for **everyone equally regardless of who they are or who they love!**

This year, Equality colleagues from both Planning and Equality and Human Resources came together with Corporate Communications colleagues and a number of interested staff to develop a diverse programme of events over PRIDE week. Our events were shared widely to visibly demonstrate how our workplace and services are welcoming to people from LGBTQ+ communities!

What a week! Did you see any of the following?

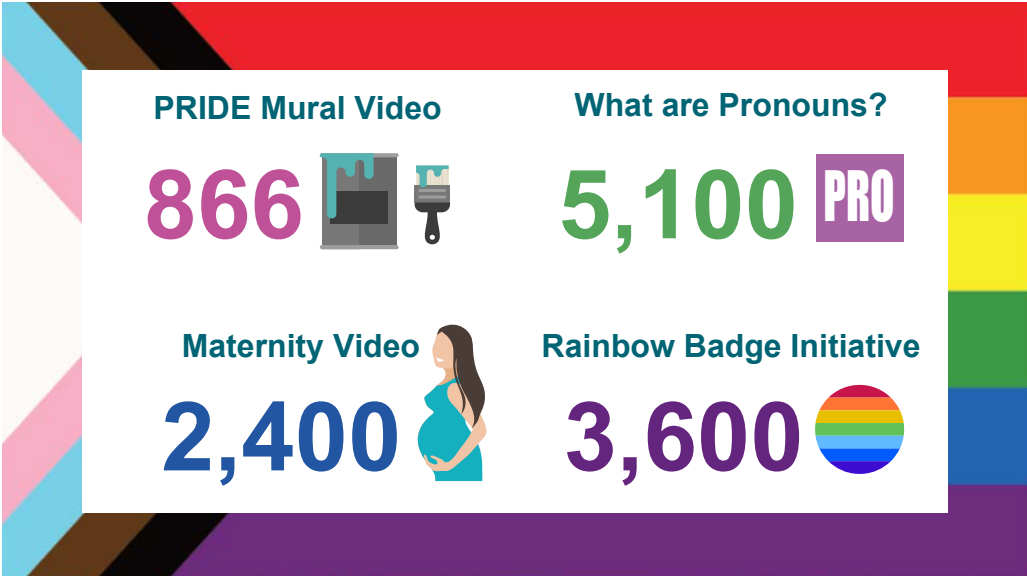
- The Rainbow markings at the Royal Victoria and City Hospitals (outside the Maternity Hospital and Cancer Centre)
- The PRIDE Rainbow Mural at the Royal <https://fb.watch/7pZL0noS1q/>
- PRIDE Lanyards (still available to request from PRIDE@belfasttrust.hscni.net)
- Our staff interviews telling us all about the importance of allies in the workplace
Remi Teal: <https://fb.watch/7pZPrwqYIA/> full here: <https://youtu.be/XcBLHz1xNpM>
Victoria Garrett: <https://fb.watch/7pZQe7eH-H/> full here: <https://youtu.be/lBzFdVbckZw>
- Our midwives talking about their individualistic approach to meeting the diverse needs of each service user and particularly in respect of LGBTQ+
Vicky Thompson: <https://fb.watch/7pZOGyiaXo/>
- Information on the Rainbow Badge initiative – coming soon!
- Information on 'What are pronouns' [link](#)
- 'Stride for PRIDE' – a free online one hour Boot Camp with local Gym 'Bayburn'.



How we reached people via Social Media

Belfast PRIDE this year again was a virtual event. Here are some of the statistics around our pride pieces on Facebook which showcases the amount of people who have engaged in our Pride celebrations.

Facebook Post and Engagement (Interactions: all clicks, likes, retweets)



Brighter Days Ahead



Good Relations Week 2021 took place from Monday 20th – Sunday 26th September. The theme this year was 'Brighter Days Ahead' which celebrated and spotlighted the range of projects young people are involved in to break down barriers, unite communities and act as a catalyst for meaningful change in our society. It explored many of the issues affecting the youth of today and how society can better meet their needs. BHSC had a packed programme of online events shared on social media to mark the week of celebrations for Good Relations Week. Did you spot any of the following?

- Lord Mayor launching Good Relations Week for BHSC
- 'Brighter Days Ahead' Children's Art Competition
- Living Library: Ethnic Minorities
- Ethnic Minorities Staff Network Podcasts
- Fabulous song 'Reverie' sung by CAMHS Service User Group 'Impact'
- Promotion of the need for staff to provide their Equality Data and why it matters
- A beautiful performance by Fane Street Primary School Choir. Fane Street Primary is a School of Sanctuary.

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.

An illustration of a diverse group of people of various ages, ethnicities, and abilities standing together in a line. The background shows a stylized cityscape with a sun and clouds.

Good News! Shopmobility Belfast reopens at the Royal!

Would your patient/client/visitor benefit from an electric scooter or wheelchair to safely and independently access your ward or an appointment?

Shopmobility Belfast provides electric scooters and wheelchairs **FREE** to members, Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm.

To access the service a person must be a member of Shopmobility Belfast - registration is **free**, quick and simple.

If you wish to promote this service within the Trust contact: louise.neeson@belfasttrust.hscni.net OR

to book the service contact:

Telephone: 028 9031 0923

E-mail: info@shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk

Web: www.shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk

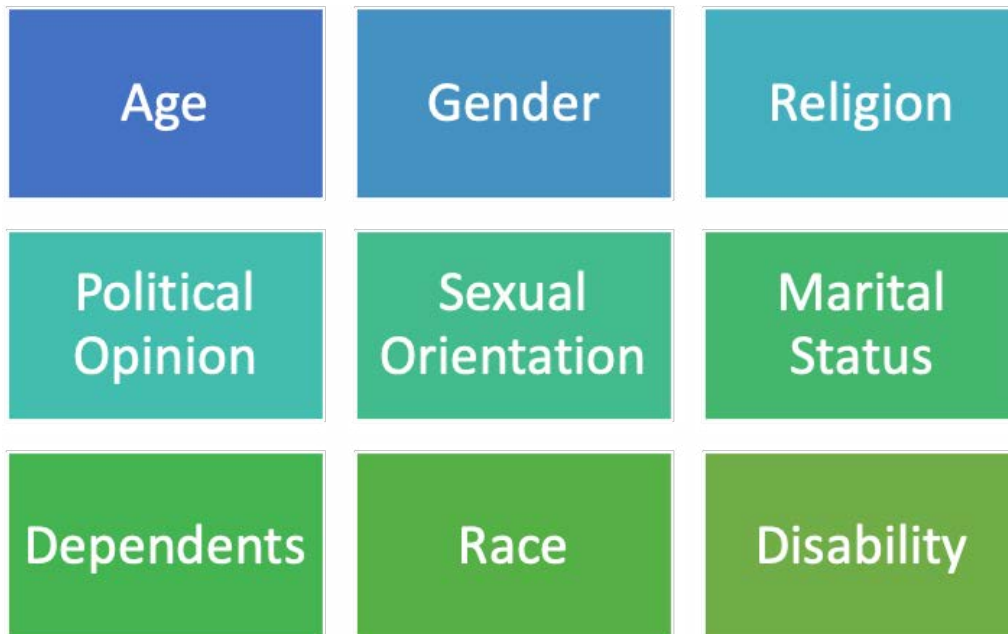


Equality Staff Data: FAQ

Through HRPTS, staff can update their own equality data. It is important that the data we hold on staff is accurate and up-to-date. This enables the Trust as an employer to effectively develop policies and make decisions that reflect our diverse workforce.

What is equality data?

It is information we ask staff to provide us with around the following nine areas:



Is my data securely stored? Who will access my Equality Data?

Yes, only a limited number of Senior HR / Equality Officers have access to this data which is held securely in accordance with regionally agreed and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approved protocols. This information will only be accessed for the purposes of equality screening or monitoring. When data is used it is anonymised and never displayed at an individual level.

What difference does it make if I complete my Equality Monitoring Form?

Simply put, if we have up to date, accurate, equality data it:

- Enables good evidence-based policy making
- Ensures effective compliance with the equality and good relations legislation.

Please update your employment equality data on HRPTS. If you have any queries about this contact Martin.McGrath@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Carers well-being improves through SQB Project

Staff from Older People's services were delighted to receive an award for their Safety Quality Belfast (SQB) improvement project designed to increase the satisfaction levels of support which unpaid carers received from Belfast Trust.

Using service user involvement, feedback from carers strongly suggested a lack of support in the initial surge of Covid which impacted negatively on their psychological health. Staff wanted to improve this support and the SQB project was therefore aimed at increasing the percentage of carers of older people (65+) who are satisfied with the support provided by BHSCT.

Fortnightly online sessions with carers were held which:

- Created an informal, safe space to *share and raise concerns*
- *Co-produced* practical suggestions on how to better support carers
- *Shared knowledge* on what support & resources are already available
- Allowed Carers to *feel listened to* & that they have a voice.

The outcome was excellent. Carer satisfaction rose by **38%** in terms of the support they received. Due to the success of the project, there are plans to scale and spread this across the Trust.

Well done to our Older People's Team!!!

HSC Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
caring supporting improving together

Improving the Wellbeing of Carers

Clayre Thompson, Cynthia Chan, Emma Carson & Rachel McLean



Introduction

A 'Learning from Covid-19' exercise was carried out in 2020 which aimed to capture the story of the impact of Covid across Belfast Trust and lessons learned. Using service user involvement, feedback received from Carers strongly suggested a lack of support in the initial surge phase of Covid which has impacted negatively on their psychological health. Creating an informal setting in which Carers could feedback their experiences, get advice and support from peers and be listened to may help improve the support that they are missing.

Our Aim

To increase the % of unpaid carers of older people (65+) who are satisfied with the support provided by BHSCT by 20% by April 2022.

Aim	Primary Drivers	Secondary Drivers	Change Sites
To increase the % of unpaid carers of older people (65+) who are satisfied with the support provided by BHSCT by 20% by April 2022.	Communication	Information being readily available	Established Learning Teams/Groups
	Education/Advice	Guidance/advice from health professionals	Guidance or advice by Health Professionals
	Wellbeing/Support	Psychological safety	Peer Support
	Engagement	Having someone or agency to talk to/being consulted	Trustee role

Methodology

- Survey was distributed to Carer's of Older People via social media, to help us take a deeper dive into understanding the feelings towards the support provided by BHSCT.
- Results from the survey were put into a Pareto Chart (Fig. 1) to show us what the biggest areas of concern were.
- Respondents were invited to take part in fortnightly Focus Groups, where we co-produced practical recommendations that could be passed onto the Trust.
- Carers completed the happy app daily, this information helped us understand if this level of support was making a difference.
- 'Satisfaction with support' question from original survey is completed every two weeks following focus group.

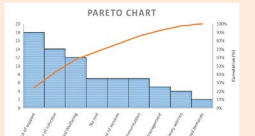


Figure 1. Pareto chart depicting the findings from the original Carer's Questionnaire which shows lack of support as the biggest issue.

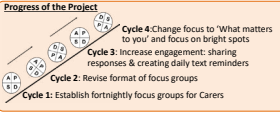
Measures

Outcome: Increase % of unpaid carers who score ≥5 on the satisfaction with support scale.

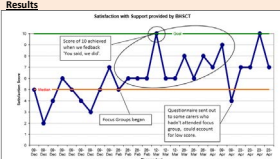
Process: Number of Carers completing the happy app and attending focus group

Balancing: Time taken away from caring responsibilities to join focus group

Progress of the Project



Results



As depicted in our run chart, following our first focus group, satisfaction scores began increasing above 5. Each date here represents a single Carer who completed the satisfaction score on this date. Circled in the chart above, we observed a positive trend in scores after the first focus group, signalling that our change had made a difference.

In addition to the Pareto Chart, qualitative data gave us an insight into the positive impact this project had.

"Having someone to talk to about the same issues or problems can be reassuring"

"It's great we're finally making progress!"

"I feel better already!"

"I feel we are being listened to and acknowledged"

"I look forward to the online call to talk to people and just connect"

"I am content with the support from the Trust"

Conclusions & What's Next for the Project?

Our team achieved our aim and even surpassed the goal of a 20% increase in satisfaction with the support provided. There was an increase from 56% to 94% of Carers scoring 5 or above. Although our main aim was to improve wellbeing via support provided, we also improved wellbeing by allowing Carers to be connected, reassured and heard.

Next, we will be presenting our findings to the Senior Leadership team and have had initial conversations with community social work to continue these group sessions for all unpaid Carers Trust wide. We will be catching up with our group during Carers week June 2022.



safety & quality

Recent Northern Ireland Disability Discrimination cases

GP fails to provide sign language interpreter

A recent disability discrimination case in Northern Ireland underlines the importance of providing a sign language interpreter for anyone who requires it.

The case focused on the late Mrs Ida Curlett, a patient of a healthcare provider, who was profoundly deaf and a BSL (British Sign Language) user. Mrs Curlett was unaware until the year before she died that she was entitled to a sign language interpreter for her appointments. She was never offered a sign language interpreter and had relied on her daughter to interpret for her.

The case was taken by her daughter, Carole Curlett, and was assisted by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Ms Curlett said:

'She really needed a professional interpreter to give her a proper service and a full understanding of what the doctor was saying. She felt that her enquiries about her health were never fully explained and she found the lack of privacy difficult. It was a strain on both of us.'

Our Learning

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust has a legal obligation to provide a sign language interpreter when one is required. Ensuring a patient or service user is fully informed of what is covered at their appointment is important for informed consent, mutual communication, respect and dignity and patient safety.

If your service user requires an interpreter, please contact RNID to arrange this:

Phone RNID: 0845 685 8000

Or email: communication.services@rnid.org.uk

Text: 07537 404369

Textphone: 0845 685 8001

Or a remote sign language interpreter can be arranged through Interpreter Now

Did you know?

The employment rate for disabled people in Northern Ireland is 37.3%, the lowest of all the UK regions

Did you know?

49.5% of all enquiries received by the Equality Commission in 2020/2021 were related to the area of Disability

Young man with a learning disability harassed in the workplace

In another recent case, a young man who has a learning disability settled a disability discrimination case, assisted by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, against a retailer.

Harvey Spence had been employed for 18 months and enjoyed his job, however he began experiencing disability harassment in the workplace from colleagues. He was excluded from conversations, subjected to derogatory remarks, was constantly told he was useless and that no other company would want him because he was stupid and that everything about him was bad.

Mr Spence said, *“I liked going out to work and earning my own money, it was important to me... I found it hard to stand up for myself, and in the end I had to leave my job as it was making me feel very sick. I got so worried about how they would treat me if I went back in. I don't know if I'll ever be able to get another job because I'm really afraid other people will treat me like that again.”*

Dr Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said, *‘It is so disappointing that Harvey, who was keen to work, enjoyed his job and the sense of identity and independence it offered him, felt he had no choice but to leave his job. The sort of behaviour that Harvey describes really has no place in any workplace. Harvey was entitled to be treated with dignity and respect at work just like everyone else....’* Employers have a responsibility to provide and promote a good and harmonious working environment.’

Our Learning

The Trust has a [‘Conflict, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace’](#) policy which underlines our commitment to creating and promoting a harmonious working environment where all staff feel safe at work and are treated with respect and dignity regardless of their age, disability status, marital or civil partnership status, political opinion, race, religious belief, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, with or without dependents. The Trust operates a Bullying and Harassment Support Service, which any member of staff can contact. This is a confidential service. Telephone 028 9615 9615 and ask to speak to a representative of the Bullying & Harassment Support Service.

Making our Services Accessible: Every Customer Counts update

Through the Equality Commission’s initiative ‘Every Customer Counts’, Trust staff, with disabled service users, focused on increasing the accessibility to the Eye Outpatient Diagnostic Unit (EODU) in the Royal Victoria Hospital. We are delighted to say that the work continues with a number of key actions now complete including:

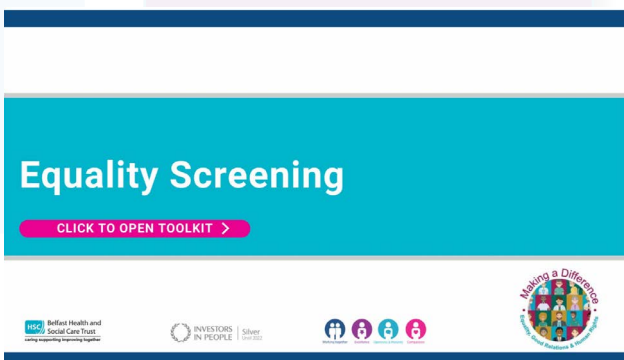


- A dedicated EODU page on the Trust website
- A newly-created patient walk-through video showing the entire patient journey from the main foyer in RVH to EODU ([link](#))
- A downloadable map with written directions
- Training of over 30 Sighted Guides to assist a service user who is blind or has significant sight loss. This training was carried out by colleagues in the Trust’s Sensory Support Team
- A review of signage
- Submission of an application to enhance accessibility of toilet facilities in EODU.

We hope to share the learning from this pilot project and that other services who are interested in increasing accessibility will consider getting involved in the Every Customer Count initiative. If you would like to find out how your service area can take part, contact Louise Neeson louise.neeson@belfasttrust.hscni.net

All New Equality Screening Toolkit

Our Planning and Equality colleagues have been working on a more accessible and interactive toolkit for staff who need to complete an equality screening ([link](#)). The link will also be available on the new Loop Page (which will replace the Hub), in the ‘Writing a Policy’ section. This toolkit gives you information on why we need to equality screen, what we screen and when we screen. It will contain a Screening Template and useful Guidance to help you. We hope this makes the screening process more straightforward and reminds everyone of the importance of undertaking equality screening. Remember, you can contact the Planning & Equality team equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net to assist you with equality screening. We are happy to help!



Celebrating Men's Health Group in Belfast Trust

Belfast Men's Health Group are a group of women and men from community, voluntary and statutory organisations throughout Belfast who look at issues affecting Men's Health and some of the simple and practical things that can be done to improve one's own personal health experience.

Members include voluntary, community and statutory practitioners and organisations across Belfast who provide expert advice on: smoking cessation; alcohol awareness; mental health and wellbeing; impacts of cancer; and suicide awareness.

Celebrating Men's Health week in June (14th to 20th) the group organised a range of activities including a Men's Health Webinar: 'Keep Connected: Check in; Check up; and Check it Out' which was very successful.

For more information and to join the group go to:

<https://belfastmenshealthgroup.org>



Did you know?

Suicide is the leading killer of men under 50 in Northern Ireland and 1 in 3 men have experienced suicidal thoughts as a result of feeling stressed.

<https://aware-ni.org/standupformen>

We hope you find this bulletin of interest and informative – if you have suggestions or comments on how we could improve it, we would love to hear from you. Also, we are committed to being accessible and inclusive and so if you would wish to receive this newsletter in other languages or in alternative formats please contact: equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net or telephone 028 9504 8734.



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

HSC Values