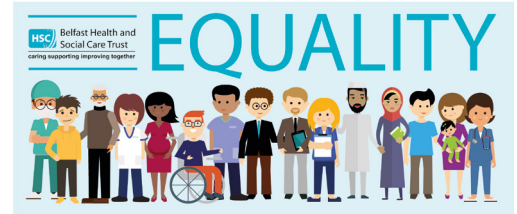


# Equality Bites

Edition 14: September 2024

Hello and Welcome to this 14th edition of Equality Bites.

This edition is a celebration of all that we do across the Trust to meet our Equality and Good Relations duties. It offers readers an insight into the wealth of work taking place across the Trust (on both our hospital and community sites) in 23/24 to ensure equality, human rights and inclusion are integral to our delivery of safe, effective and compassionate care and treatment to our patients and service users and across our workplace.



Promoting Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations with some **22,000 staff** across a complex large organisation comprising:

10 Hospitals



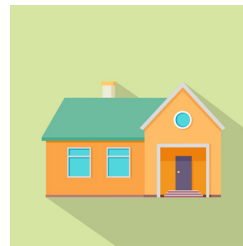
23 Day centres



7 Health & Well-being centres



11 Residential facilities



8 Supported Housing facilities



is very much a journey and not a destination.

I hope you will agree with me that the work and its positive impact is amazing especially given the backdrop of introducing the new digital platform Encompass. You can learn much more about the work we do by accessing our [17th Annual Progress Report](#) which was recently submitted to the NI Equality Commission .

This work becomes much more important and impactful when regrettably as a society in Northern Ireland, we recently faced ongoing civil unrest. As a Trust, with a much valued, ethnically diverse workforce, delivering services to a multi-faceted and diverse community we have been working to



actively ensure staff are not subjected to racist abuse and that our service users know that everyone is welcome to use our services, and that our facilities and buildings are safe spaces with a zero tolerance approach to any abusive behaviour.

To echo the important message from the late John Hume, *“Difference is of the essence of humanity. Difference is an accident of birth and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is to respect it. Therein lies a most fundamental principle of peace – respect for diversity.”*

I hope you enjoy this bumper edition of our newsletter.

Alastair Campbell, Director of Performance, Planning and Informatics

## Our 'Every Customer Counts' Campaign extends



Belfast Trust is a signatory of the NI Equality Commission's 'Every Customer Counts' campaign. Using this framework, the Trust has undertaken a number of projects to improve accessibility of services, buildings and facilities for anyone who is disabled whether a patient or service user, carer or visitor.

Initially, work to improve access at the Eye Outpatient Diagnostic Unit (EODU) in the RVH, the Regional Fertility Clinic was undertaken. We used the framework to consider the accessibility of its communication and the issue of

consent. Going forward, it is hoped that the campaign will bring about small, meaningful changes to the Bridgewater suite (Cancer Centre), the GUM clinic and our Complaints Service.

One of the greatest achievements of this campaign is the creation of the Sighted Guide Service at the RVH. Another which has proved very effective is a video for service users showing how to get to EODU. Read the feedback from service users about the video:

"Great idea. I came across an excellent and really helpful video on-line showing how to get from the RVH main entrance up to the EODU reception."

"It is a good distance and requires using 2 different elevators (if you are able to, stairs are available) and of course long corridors with lots of signposts to the various departments. So... having this video will help get you to the correct area quickly and allows you to proceed straight to the reception without having to keep checking all the various signs etc. along those long corridors."

## New location for the Shopmobility & Sighted Guide Services @RVH



Our Shopmobility and Sighted Guide Services can now be accessed within the main foyer of the RVH and continue to grow in demand. The services are free and available to anyone who requires support to access buildings/services on the large RVH site.

In partnership with Shopmobility Belfast, electric scooters and manual wheelchairs are provided free of charge to any service user, patient or visitor who requires it. This gives many disabled people independence when getting to an appointment, visiting a loved one or when being admitted or discharged.

Our Sighted Guide Service @RVH is delivered by more than 30 Trust staff who were trained by the Trust Sensory Support team. Their role is to 'meet and greet' anyone with a visual impairment and to support them to get around the large complex RVH site.



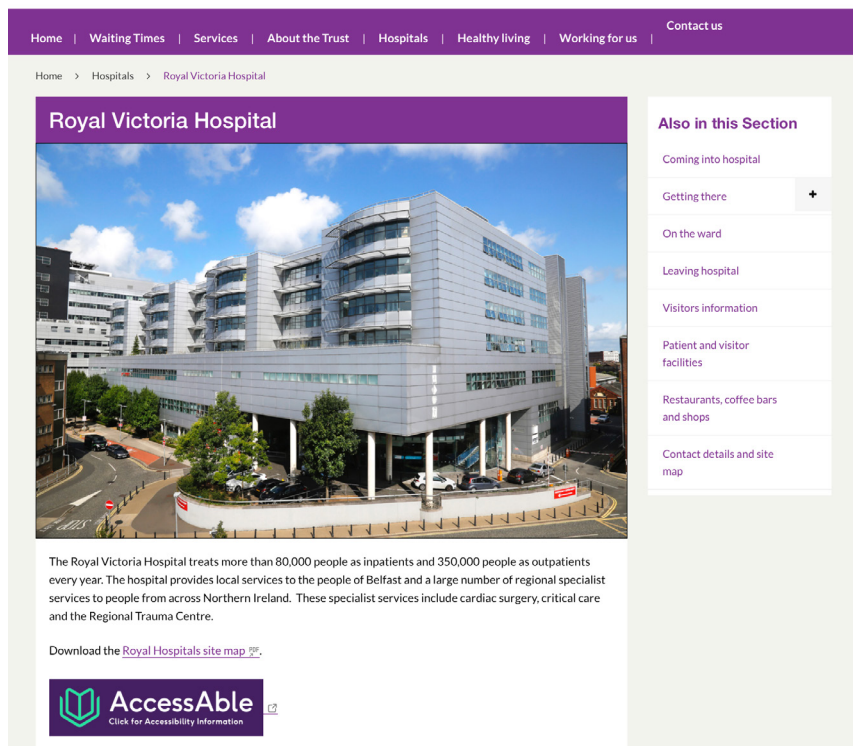
"Excellent service. Very friendly and helpful. I could not have attended my appointment without this service. It is too far for me to walk"

"The help I received was great and friendly. I have mobility problems and without help wouldn't have been able to reach the department I had to get to."

## Improved Navigation @ RVH via AccessAble Project

Funding was secured through the Trust Charitable Funds income stream to finance a significant [AccessAble](#) project on the RVH site. Almost £50k was allocated over three years to fund access auditors to visit our public facing buildings and services on the RVH site to produce approximately 150 digital access guides all available via the AccessAble website

The guides support disabled people to access and navigate the site as a service user, patient or visitor to the RVH. The guides provide factual information and photographs of car parking arrangements, accessible toilet facilities, loop systems etc. and are available in alternative formats such as Easy Read.



## Accessible and Inclusive Communications Toolkit Launched

An online [Accessible and Inclusive Communication Toolkit for Staff](#) was co-designed to support staff to communicate with patients, service users and carers in an accessible and inclusive way. The toolkit was drafted designed and produced in partnership with the Trust Disability Steering Group, Staff, Speech & Language Therapists, the Mae Murray Foundation and Occupational Health colleagues.



## Literacy Support for Staff: Read&Write Toolkit

Belfast Trust is the only health Trust in NI to invest in software Read&Write which provides literacy support for all staff. It is available Trust wide without the need for staff to disclose they have a difficulty.



The software supports staff with reading and writing emails and online documents and is particularly useful for staff who are neurodiverse, have a visual impairment, difficulties with concentration or anxiety and for staff whose first language is not English. The software is also available to families of staff.

Read&Write is an online tool with 15 different functions – see details below.



Read&Write is online literacy support software which, once installed, can be used every day.

Once you download the Read&Write software to your Trust account you will have access to an **online toolbar** with **15 features**:

> Text-to-speech	> Screenshot reader	Scan
> Check it	> Dictation	Translator
> Similar word checker	> Screen masking	Voice note
> Prediction	> PDF reader	Vocabulary list
> Dictionary	> Highlights	Audio maker

Click here for the **Quick Reference Guide** to find a summary of what each icon means and does.

Information about how to access and use Read&Write can be found in a new toolkit for staff: [Read&Write Support for Trust Staff: Toolkit & Guidance](#)

## Trust Domestic & Sexual Abuse/Violence Supports for Trust Staff

Regrettably, Northern Ireland has the highest rate of domestic homicides across all of Europe. With over 22,000 staff, Belfast Trust, with Trade Unions have developed an extensive range of activities to directly and indirectly support staff who may be experiencing domestic and/or sexual abuse/violence.

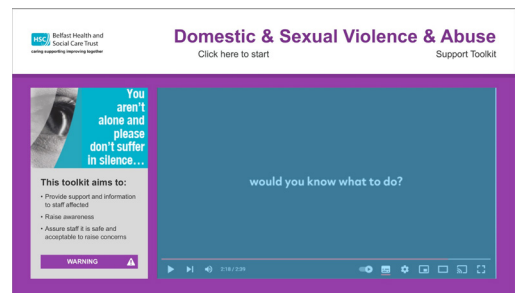
The support includes:

1. A confidential **Support Service for staff (available to all genders)**. The service involves trained staff volunteers from across the Trust to provide emotional support, practical help and to signpost to other sources of help.

The Support Service can be accessed via:

- Telephone – 028 9504 8667
- Email – [domesticandsexualabusesupport@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:domesticandsexualabusesupport@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

2. A **Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Support Toolkit**. This award winning resource was co-produced by a multi-disciplinary team involving: the Planning & Equality team, HR Employment Equality colleagues & the Belfast Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategic Partnership and Trade Unions.



*“A truly impressive project with far reaching consequences and benefit for transforming the lives of staff.” Judges at HPMA*

3. A **Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy**.

4. Promotional and fundraising activities including the production of **15,000 Calendars** for staff each year and a **Christmas Appeal** for Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid (and the Welcome Organisation).



## Delivering Inclusive Services to Sign Language Users



To deliver an accessible and inclusive service to the Deaf Community, all Health and Social Care Trusts in NI avail of [Sign Language Interactions](#), who deliver a full range of communication supports. This includes both Face to Face and Remote Sign Language Interpreting.

### sign language interactions

A new staff poster giving advice on how to book a sign language interpreter face to face and remotely was designed and distributed to over 500 staff areas across acute and community sites. To help with booking remote sign language interpreters, a new QR code was created with support from Digital Services colleagues.

Our vibrant **Sign Language User Forum** continues to meet and ensures that the lived experience of the Deaf Community is taken on board when delivering services. Forum members have worked with our Fertility clinic and Care opinion to improve communication access and with the British Deaf Association are producing videos for staff to raise awareness about how to meet the needs of the Deaf Community many of whom have sign Language as a first language not English.

Why not use our [Interpreting, Translation and Easy Read Toolkit](#) which gives advice about how to book a sign language interpreter as well as other forms of interpreting and translation.


### 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 & for complex/difficult clinical conversations.


**To Book:**

- ✓ **Telephone:** 0333 344 7712 (available 24/7)
- ✓ **E-mail:** [bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com](mailto:bookingsni@signlanguageinteractions.com)
- ✓ **Web:** [signlanguageinteractions.com/hscni](http://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 a virtual interpreter**





## Belfast Trust committed to Making Communication more Accessible

Mindful of our Disability Equality Duties, Belfast Trust led on the drafting, review and production of the regional staff resource [Making Communications Accessible: A Guide for HSC Staff](#).

In addition the Trust now provides **Plain English Training** for staff. During 23/24 we ran 5 training courses and 59 people attended. We also have a **Plain English Reader Panel** which helps Trust services to deliver clear and more accessible health literature to patients and staff. Contact [PPI@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:PPI@belfasttrust.hscni.net) for more information about the training and the Reader Panel

In addition, staff now have access to an Easy Read - Page Tiger Resource [Click Here](#) produced by Speech and Language Therapists.

## TILII Translates: Easy Read Translation Service

As Michael from TILII Translates says: "I can't read, so don't give me words...help me with pictures, it's not rocket science"



The Trust has an annual contract with TILII Translates as part of its range of day opportunities for people with a learning disability. [TILII Translates](#) is an easy read translation service involving an advocacy group of men and women with a learning disability.

Through this translation service, TILII Translates have been translating information for Belfast Trust into easy-to-understand formats so that people with a learning disability understand difficult information, make informed choices and are more independent in terms of health care.

The team of experts by experience find that not only is their translated information used by people with a learning disability but also is popular with people who find reading and writing difficult or do not speak English as their first language!



## Celebrating Belfast PRIDE 2024

Committed to ensuring that our services, facilities and workplace are inclusive and welcoming to everyone regardless of who they are or who they love Belfast Trust were delighted to mark Belfast PRIDE week again this year. Activities included walks, singing, artwork and attending a festival! The theme this year was **Love Your Mind**.



The Trust reminded staff where to get help:

- Self Help Guides on [Bwell](#)
- Short [Guided Meditation Downloads](#)
- [Animation about self-compassion](#) as a tool for improving mental health
- [Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing Information Session](#)
- [Mind Ur Mind Information Sessions](#)

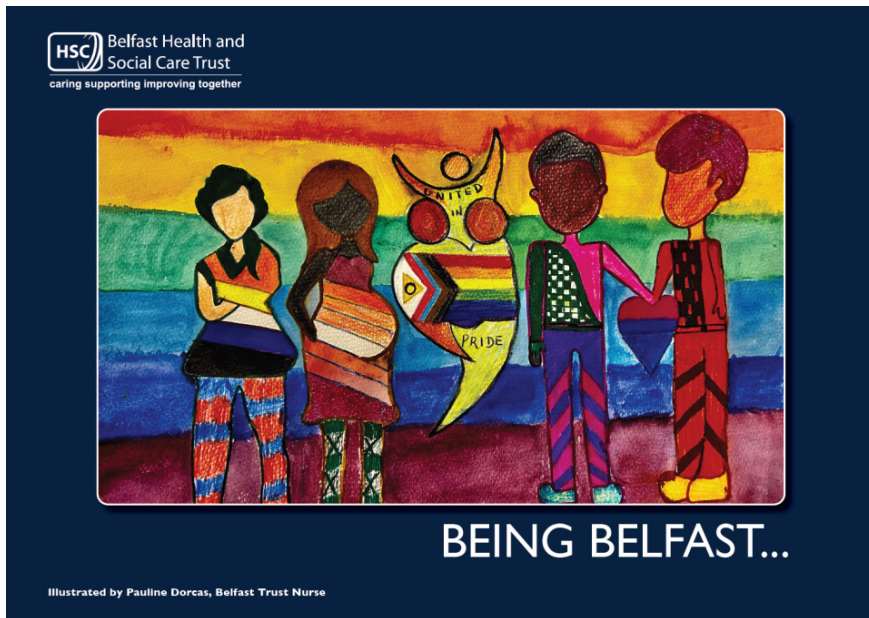
**Walking:** Two lunchtime walks for staff were organised on a number of Trust sites. The sun shone and participants enjoyed an opportunity to stretch their legs over lunchtime and a bit of craic – not to mention the much needed heat!

**Singing:** The Trust shared a recording of QUIRE on the intranet as some of our talented staff are choir members. Quire are a choir with its roots firmly set in the LGBTQ+ community, and their mission is to excite, empower, educate, encourage, entertain and enrich the wider community through the celebration of music making, diversity and friendship. It was great news to learn that they were awarded Belfast Pride Entertainer of 2024.

[Click here to watch the video of Quire](#)



**Artwork:** The Trust had held an art competition last year for its staff and the winning artist received a monetary voucher. The winning entry was made into a poster and distributed across the Trust - any Trust service who would like a copy please contact [equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net).



Belfast PRIDE 23 Art Competition Winning Entry by Pauline Dorcas

**Festival Going:** Belfast Trust was proud to join the whole HSC family in the PRIDE parade and village on Saturday 27th July! For anyone who has not previously attended, the day has a real carnival atmosphere with people from every age, different cultural backgrounds, different religious backgrounds and different genders and sexual orientations. A definite date for your diary!

## Belfast Pride Festival



## Continuing to Support Carers

### Did you know?

1. We have a Trust **Carers Strategy Committee** which works to support & guide the work with Carers across all Trust services.
2. 20 carers work with the Trust in our **Carers Network** to make sure the support provided is what is needed and is delivered in a way that is carer focused.
3. A co-produced **Carers Strategy** called 'Caring Together in Belfast 2023 onwards' exists with 4 key priorities including:

- Reach all carers
- Navigate carer support
- Support carer health and wellbeing
- Actively connect and involve carers.

During the public consultation, we received 250 responses and hosted a variety of engagement activities including:

- Draft strategy launch
- Face to face community based events
- On-line events
- Focus group with Deaf carers
- On-line questionnaire through Citizen Space
- 1000 newsletters posted to carers promoting opportunity to give feedback
- Use of our Carer Information list (3,600 Carers) to ask for feedback.

4. Each year we celebrate **Carers Week** by working with a range of partners to provide a wide variety of support activities including yoga, tai chi, set dancing and a Bog Meadows walk. In 2024 **196 people attended events amounting to 603 short break hours of support - including to over 50 carers** who had never attended an event prior to carer's week.



## Shaping Caring Together in Belfast 2023 onwards

**Setting out to:**

<p><b>Reach all Carers</b></p> 	<p><b>Navigate Carers Support</b></p> 
<p><b>Support Carer Health and Wellbeing</b></p> 	<p><b>Actively Connect with and Involve Carers</b></p> 

For further information, please contact the Carers Support Service

T: 028 9504 2126

E: [CarerSuppSvcs@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:CarerSuppSvcs@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

<http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/carers-services>



Quotes from carers include:

'I feel seen, understood, less isolated'

'We all came home elated and exhilarated'

- 5.** Belfast Trust provides support to **Trust staff** with caring responsibilities including the monthly HR 'Let's Talk Carers' sessions.
- 6.** **Carer grants** or one-off payments are awarded to support carers . From April – September 2023, a total of **1468** grants were awarded, totalling **£244,136** and **66** Young Carers grants totalling **£7,750**.
- 7.** A **Carer Counselling service** delivered by Lifeline exists. From April to June 23, **25** referrals were received and **92** sessions delivered.

## Joint Forum on Equality, Human Rights & Good Relations continues

The Joint Forum comprising the Equality Leads from each of the 6 HSC Trusts and the DoH continue to meet with representatives from the NI Equality Commission, the NI Human Rights Commission, and the Community Relations Council.

The purpose of the forum is to provide a regular forum to enhance communication and collaboration between HSC, the respective Commissions & Council and to better optimise outcomes for people protected by the relevant legislation.



### Mater Staff put Carers First: Kindness Trolleys and Carers Chairs

Using funding from the Mater Young Philanthropists, a fantastic team of staff led by the Mater Hospital Supportive & Specialist Palliative Care Team and including site staff, ward sisters & clinical nurse educator introduced kindness trollies and 8 sleeper chairs to support carers, relatives & friends of patients who are nearing the end of their life.

The kindness trollies provide tea, coffee & toiletry items within patient's rooms which mean



their loved ones do not have to leave their side for long times. The sleeper chairs provide a little bit of comfort too.

### 'Care Partnerships' pilot in 11 wards across Belfast Trust

We are delighted to announce that plans are still continuing at pace to pilot Care Partnerships in 11 of our wards in the Mater, Musgrave, Royal and City Hospitals

With Care Partnerships, carers work with staff with the consent of the patient to be directly and actively involved in the care of their loved one whilst in hospital. It is different to visiting a patient and is voluntary.

This exciting initiative is being introduced in recognition that a care partner often has valuable experience and first-hand knowledge of the patient which can help improve the care of the patient whilst in hospital. The care partner role may include, for example: aiding communication, eating, drinking, being an advocate for the patient (particularly about what matters to them) and or/providing personal care.

If you are interested in Care Partnership, please contact: [Katrina.Hughes@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:Katrina.Hughes@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## Belfast Trust Supporting Staff: The Belfast Way

Staff within our Human Resources and Organisational Development Directorate work with staff and managers to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion, to tackle inequality and prevent discrimination and harassment.

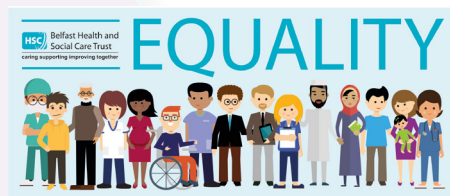
The team achieve this not only by giving advice, signposting and training but also through an extensive range of online and in person resources, initiatives and projects that have been developed with staff, trade unions and colleagues across the Region. An integral part of this work is supporting staff to achieve a balanced work/home life and the promotion of good health and wellbeing.

A page tiger resource was created to inform staff about the extensive range of support staff can access to improve their Working Life, Work Life balance and to improve their Wellbeing: [Improving Working Lives Staff Support](#) [Supporting Employee Wellbeing Staff Resource](#).



## Disability Accreditation Achieved

The Trust has been accredited as Disability Positive with AAA\* Accreditation Status from the NI Employers for Disability Forum. The award recognises the commitment demonstrated by Belfast Trust in implementing an array of practical measures to attract and retain employees and service users with disabilities.



If you have any comments or if you require this newsletter in alternative formats or translated into another language please contact: The Equality & Planning Team at [equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net) or Michelle Growcott on 028 9504 6060

