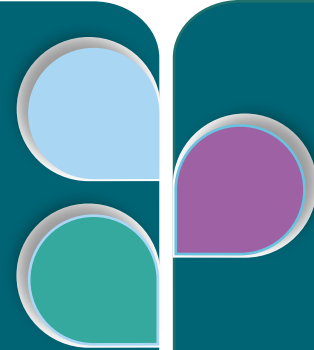


Equality Bites

Edition 10: May 2022



Welcome to our Spring edition of Equality Bites 2022 - this is our 10th edition! The Trust's Planning and Equality Team are delighted to share with you some of the innovative work that has been underway to promote equality of opportunity and help people access our services and information.

This edition focuses heavily on some of the work being taken forward to enhance accessibility to our sites for people with disabilities. Improving accessibility and way-finding provides many benefits for disabled people, for older people, for parents or carers with children or babies and for people who are not familiar with the site. Being able to get around with ease is something that many people tend to take for granted.



Launching the Sighted Guide Scheme at the Royal Victoria Hospital.
Photograph by Houston Green

Having more accessible facilities enhances the experience for anyone visiting a health and social care facility or for anyone coming to the workplace and promotes independence and inclusiveness. People with disabilities are protected under the law about the use and access of services without being subjected to disability discrimination. Not only is there a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility of services for people with disabilities, it is the right thing to do in terms of experience, safety and equity.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and please don't hesitate to contact us for further detail on any of the initiatives or for suggestions on content going forward. You can contact the team on equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net or telephone 028 9504 8734.



Charlene Stoops

Charlene Stoops
Director of Planning Performance and Informatics

Enhancing Access

Accessing a large and busy hospital site for necessary health and social care interactions can be daunting at any time and for someone with a disability, the issue of access can further compound concerns about coming to a hospital. Pre-pandemic, the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) treated more than 80,000 people as patients and 350,000 as outpatients each year. RVH provides local services to the people of Belfast and regional specialist services to people from across Northern Ireland. As a team, we have worked with various internal and external stakeholders and disabled people to improve access to our facilities for people with a range of disabilities and many others. We recognise that accessible design means good and inclusive design.

Sighted Guide Scheme

A Sighted Guide Service has been launched at the Royal Victoria Hospital as part of Belfast Trust's continued commitment to deliver accessible services to disabled people. The service was launched on 3rd December – International Day for Persons with Disabilities to demonstrate our commitment to meeting our equality obligations, whilst also striving for best practice, and ultimately to enhance our service user, patient and visitor experiences.

The Sensory Support Team at Belfast Trust has trained more than 30 staff and 'Meet and Greet' volunteers as Sighted Guides, to assist a person who is blind or has a severe sight impairment to access their appointment.

The Sighted Guide Service is one of the outcomes of a pilot project the Trust has been involved in called 'Every Customer Counts.' This is an initiative of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, aimed at increasing access to services for people with a disability. The project was greatly enhanced through the involvement of Mystery Shoppers – service users with disabilities who partook in the project and lent their own experiential advice.

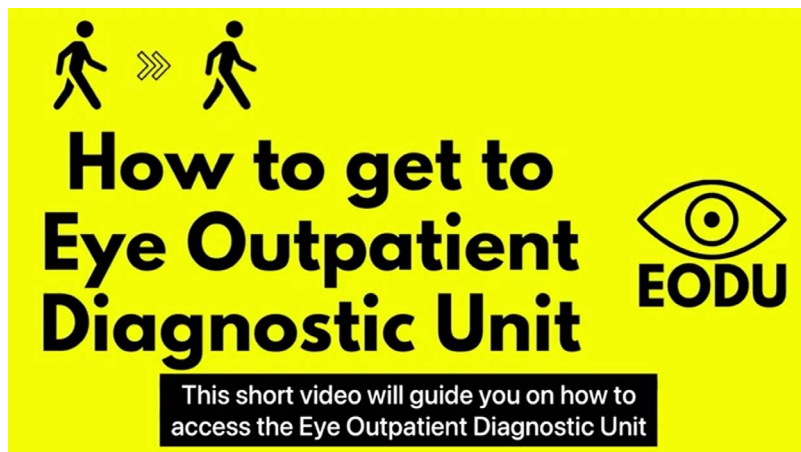
If you or a service user wish to book a sighted guide, please telephone or text 0738 594 1991 or email info@shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk



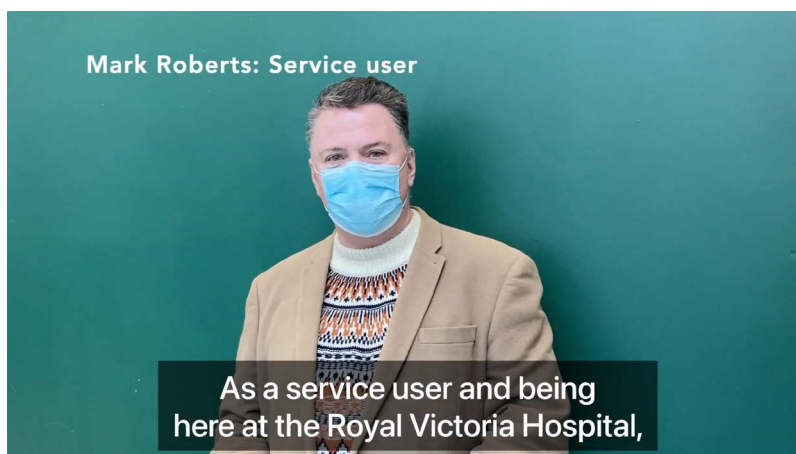
Every Customer Counts

In addition to the launch of the Sighted Guide scheme on the Royal site, progress continues to be made on other actions arising from our Every Customer Counts work, aimed at making services more accessible for people with a disability. A review of signage is underway to improve way-finding, along with plans to install seating in the ground floor corridor of the Phase 1 Royal building, to provide a rest stop for those with a disability or mobility issues who are travelling along this long corridor.

We created a walk-through video for people attending the EODU Clinic in the RVH:



View the [EODU Walkthrough Video - YouTube](#)



Mark Roberts, a service user who took part as a 'Mystery Shopper' in Every Customer Counts, and had the idea of developing a Sighted Guide Scheme.

Media coverage of the launch on BelfastMedia.com - [WATCH: New sighted guide service launched at RVH \(belfastmedia.com\)](#)

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Every Customer Counts work will soon be extended to other areas across the Trust, as we aim to improve access and the overall experience for people with disabilities. If you are interested in taking part to see how your area could benefit from enhanced access, please contact:

louise.neeson@belfasttrust.hscni.net or call 028 9504 6519.

Assistance Dogs Policy

The Trust is currently reviewing its policy in regard to assistance dogs and has created a poster for Trust facilities, to share advice on how to welcome and respect assistance dogs and their owners. Assistance dogs are dogs that have been trained to work in partnership with disabled people to assist them in accessing services and to help them to improve their mobility, independence and quality of life. Assistance dogs support people with a wide range of disabilities; including visual impairments, deafness, physical disabilities and hidden disabilities. Assistance dogs are highly trained working dogs - they are not pets! Assistance dogs can be recognised by the harnesses and coloured jackets that they wear. A jacket will usually display the name of the organisation that trained the dog in question. The purpose of the policy is to facilitate access to our facilities for Assistance Dogs in order to improve the experience of the person, the dog, staff and other patients and to fulfil Trust legislative duties.



HSC Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
caring supporting improving together

BHSCT welcomes all assistance dogs and their owners

Assistance Dogs

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

DOs ✓

- ✓ Speak to the owner first
- ✓ Respect and allow the dog to work
- ✓ Allow the dog to rest
- ✓ Let the dog owner know if the dog approaches you as this may be unwanted behaviour that needs correcting

DON'Ts ☒

- ☒ Approach, touch or speak to the dog without the owner's permission
- ☒ Use eye contact with the dog
- ☒ Offer the dog food
- ☒ Allow other pets to interact with the dog
- ☒ Be offended if the owner does not want to interact or allow you to pet the dog – they may be in a hurry



**STOP
ASK FIRST**

PLEASE RESPECT ASSISTANCE DOGS AND THEIR OWNERS

For more guidance please see the Belfast Trust's Policy on the Accommodation of Assistance Dogs ([link](#)) or Contact equality.team@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Did you know?

Did you know? Over 7,000 people are partnered with service dogs certified by Assistance Dogs UK and it takes 20-24 months to train a disability assistance dog.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility, based on the Royal site, continues to provide electric scooters and manual wheelchairs for free to any service user, patient or visitor who requires it. Signing up to become a member is simple and quick enabling a person to avail of Shopmobility services in some other hospital sites, as well as in Belfast City Centre.

The Shopmobility staff member can meet a person at their car, or anywhere on the Royal site, and deliver their equipment to them. This service is completely free of charge and service users can hold onto the scooter or wheelchair for the duration of their appointment. This allows the service user to reach their appointment and make their way back to the foyer or their car independently.

The Shopmobility unit is currently based next to the accessible car parking spaces in the ground floor of the main RVH car park. The Trust is having a new, modern unit constructed there in the coming months.

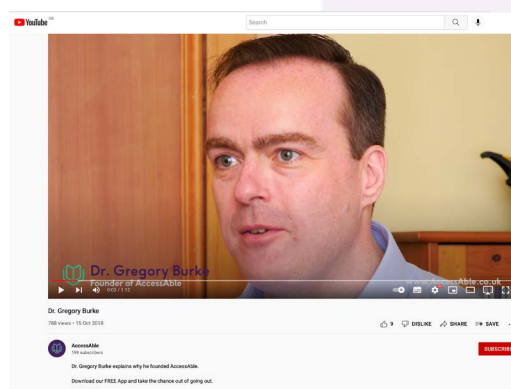
The Shopmobility Steering Group is actively working to promote the service throughout the Royal site. If you would like to highlight Shopmobility to your service users via posters, leaflets or a pop-up in your area, please contact louise.neeson@belfasttrust.hscni.net to arrange. To contact Shopmobility, please telephone or text 0738 594 1991 or email info@shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk



AccessAble

The Trust is delighted to announce that it has been successful in its application to Charitable Funds to secure a programme of work through AccessAble (a not for profit organisation) to enhance accessibility across the Royal Hospital site, in the first instance. The programme will improve wayfinding for disabled patients/service users, carers and visitors, in relation to one of our busiest acute sites. AccessAble will produce detailed access guides to ensure that people will know what to expect when they arrive – from parking, the distance and route to the clinic, to the toilet facilities. The guides will be online and will feature facts, figures and photos and will be regularly updated. We hope to commence this work over the coming months and will share our progress with you.

BSL Video of AccessAble history



Changing Places

Changing Places toilet facilities meet the needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. It has recently been announced that there will be changes to current building regulations, which will make provisions requiring Changing Places toilets in certain buildings commonly used by the public. This new requirement for Changing Places toilets will be in addition to the current requirements for standard accessible toilets and will benefit around 7,000 people here. The new statutory guidance will come into effect on 30 June 2022.

The Changing Places campaign has been greatly influenced and informed by people with disabilities and carers of people with disabilities, who described the indignity and unhygienic practice of disabled children having to be changed on toilet floors. These new regulations will not only bring increased safe, dignified and convenient toileting opportunities for disabled people and many older people too, it will also bring new opportunities for inclusion and participation right across society. The campaigners have declared the new regulations as an advancement for equality and rights of people with disabilities.



Photograph used with permission from the Changing Places Consortium

Up to date with



Forthcoming training

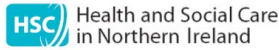
Every Trust staff member regardless of their job, their location or their rank, needs to complete mandatory equality training. The Planning and Equality Team offer the following training on an ongoing basis throughout the year, or can arrange bespoke sessions for teams. Sessions are currently facilitated online in light of Covid restrictions. Please contact Lesley.jamieson@belfasttrust.hscni.net or telephone 028 9504 8734 if you are interested in attending. The following dates are listed for your ease of reference:

Course	Date					
Mandatory Equality Training	23/5/22	23/8/22	12/10/22	8/12/22	31/1/23	27/3/23
Disability Awareness	20/6/22	13/9/22	5/12/22	21/3/23		
Human Rights	14/6/22	14/9/22	13/12/22	29/3/23		

Don't forget you can also complete your training online via www.hsclearning.com at a time and in a place that suits you. The Making a Difference programme is provided in two modules – a general module applicable to all staff and an additional module for those with management responsibilities.



Access to Health and Social Care Booklet – available in 15 languages



ACCESS TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE GUIDANCE

Cognisant of the fact that arriving in a different country can be an overwhelming experience, Belfast Trust has led on work on behalf of the region to put together some information which newcomers to Northern Ireland might find useful. This booklet aims to inform about health and social care services and how to access them. This booklet advises on the various Trusts across Northern Ireland and the health and social care system and services, along with the rights of a person who is not proficient in English, to have professionally trained interpreters. The booklet has been translated into 15 languages and will be a timely resource for engagement with those who have come to Northern Ireland from Ukraine. Please click [here](#) to access the booklets.



Access to Health and Social Care Guidance

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English	Dari	Bulgarian	Pashto
Arabic	Ukrainian	Hungarian	Russian
Mandarin	Polish	Portuguese	Romanian
Slovak	Tetum	Lithuanian	

Did you know?

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

Trust Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Service

Belfast Trust has worked in partnership with Trade Unions to offer a support service for staff who are experiencing domestic and sexual abuse and/or violence. Staff can access emotional support and practical help in confidence from a trained support officer.

The most recent development to help raise awareness and share information about domestic and sexual violence and the resources is a [new online toolkit](#). This has been co-produced by Planning and Equality and Employment Equality colleagues and was well received at the Trust Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Senior Leadership Group. It has also been shared with the members of Belfast Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership.

The Safe Leave bill has been enacted and the Trust will make provision for an entitlement to paid safe leave for victims of domestic abuse. Our Domestic And Sexual Abuse Policy and Flexible Working policies will be reviewed in light of this new entitlement.

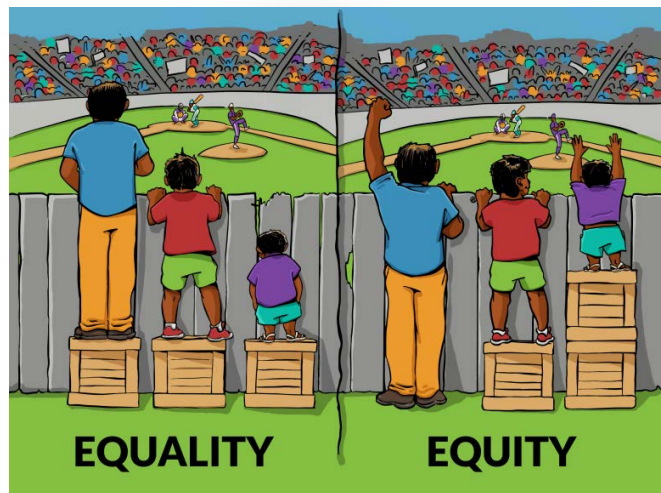
Did you know?

Evidence suggests that d/Deaf and disabled women are two times more likely to suffer physical abuse from an intimate partner than non-disabled women and Women's Aid Northern Ireland report that 41% of women in refuges and 41% of women accessing outreach services have a disability.



Equality Screening Masterclass

On 22nd March, a masterclass was delivered to a range of policy and decision makers to equip them with the requisite skills to undertake an equality screening. Undertaking a screening of a policy or a proposal is a legal requirement to ensure that where there is a potential adverse impact that mitigating measures are introduced to lessen it, or to better achieve equality of opportunity or good relations. This masterclass was convened for 32 attendees during the month of March to Safety; as equality screening is an important element of safe, effective and compassionate policy formulation and decision making. To find out more about Equality Screening you can access the [Equality Screening Toolkit](#) here.



©“Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire.”

Developing a regional HSC Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan

Health and Social Care Trusts are commencing work on developing a new audit of inequalities and we would welcome any research or information sources that you have to be included in this audit. This audit will help us establish the key inequalities in regard to health and social care and inform the actions that we will propose in our 5 year Equality Action Plan. We will also be jointly drafting a five year Disability Action Plan in response to the dual disability duties – to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to ensure their active participation in public life.

Regionally, we will also be conducting a series of online engagement sessions in May/June 2022 to ensure that the actions in our 5 year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan accurately meet the needs of patients, service users, carers and staff. If you would like to be involved in these engagement sessions, please contact:

Lesley.jamieson@belfasttrust.hscni.net or telephone 028 9504 8734 to register your interest and we can arrange for an invite to be issued.

Did you know?

Every year the Commission receives calls from disabled people who believe they have experienced discrimination as they try to access goods, facilities and services. Last year 47.21% of all enquiries received by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland, related to disability discrimination and of these just under 24% were calls from disabled people trying to access goods, facilities and services.



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

HSC Values