



Northern Ireland  
Blood Transfusion Service

# **Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-28 October 2023**

Northern Ireland Blood  
Transfusion Service (NIBTS)

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We will consider any request for this document in another format or language.

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## **1. Introduction**

As Chair and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service we are committed to promoting equality and good relations. For people with a disability, we recognise that we have to do more to promote positive attitudes and to encourage their participation in public life.

We want to make sure we do this in a way that makes a difference to people. We will put in place what is necessary to do so. This includes people, time and money. Where it is right to do so, we will include actions from this plan in the yearly plans we develop for the organisation as a whole. These are called 'corporate' or 'business' plans.

We will also put everything in place in the organisation to make sure that we do what we have to under the law. This includes making one person responsible overall for making sure we do what we say we are going to do in our Equality and Disability Action Plans.

We will make sure we let our staff know of what is in our plans. We will also train our staff and help them understand what they need to do.

The person in our organisation who is responsible for making sure that we do what we have promised to do is Gladys McKibbin. When you have any questions you can contact her at:

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## **2. Who we are and what we do**

The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

We do things like:

- Supply blood and blood products to hospitals
- Process and test blood
- We receive and test blood samples from antenatal clinics.

### **3. How people can be involved in our work**

The main way in which people can be involved in public life positions in NIBTS is via the Agency's Non-Executive Board positions. The role of such post-holders is primarily to oversee the running of the Agency. These posts are advertised publicly by the Department of Health (DoH) and appointments are made through the DoH.

Additionally, people can participate in our Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) events which seek to help in shaping our service.

### **4. What the law says**

NIBTS has to follow the law under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**. It says that in our work we have to promote equality and good relations. We have to treat people fairly and based on their needs and to make things better for staff and people who use our services. It also says that we have to build better relationships between different groups of people.

There are nine different equality groups that the law requires us to look at:

- Gender (and gender identities)
- Age
- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Having dependants or not.

There are three good relations groups we need to consider:

- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity.

We also have to follow the law under the **Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006**, which says that we have to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

This includes people with any type of disability, whether for example, physical disabilities; sensory disabilities (such as sight loss or hearing loss); autism; learning disabilities; dyslexia; mental health conditions (such as depression); or conditions that are long-term (such as cancer or diabetes). Some of these disabilities may be hidden, others may be visible. This also includes people with Genetic Haemochromatosis.

Both pieces of legislation require us to develop an action plan: an Equality Action Plan and a Disability Action Plan. We have to send these plans to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and then report every year on what we have done.

## **5. How we reviewed our last plans and developed these new plans**

In starting off to develop this plan we looked at what we have done so far to promote equality and good relations, to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their participation in public life.

As part of our Five Year Review, we asked all teams in our organisation to think through the following questions:

- What has worked well?
- What hasn't worked well?
- What lessons have we learned?
- Did we do what we said we would do?
- Has this made a difference for people in the way we thought it would?

For the new plans, we asked them to consider two questions:

- In your area of work, what are the key issues for people in the equality groupings?
- What can you do to address these issues?

We encouraged our staff to look at a range of sources of information such as:

- our Five Year Review of Equality Scheme
- monitoring data
- new research or data
- equality screening exercises that have been completed
- their professional experience and knowledge
- issues raised in consultations or through other engagement with staff and service users.

We engaged closely with Tapestry, our Disability Staff Network, in the development of our Disability Action Plans. We held a focus group with them to find out what issues important to them as a member of staff with a disability or as a carer they think the organisation should address as a priority.

We also read up on what the Equality Commission says would be good to do. All this helped us think about what else we could do to make a difference.

## **6. What we have done so far**

This is some of what we have done to promote equality under our previous Equality Action Plan:

- Following Ministerial and Departmental approval in June 2020 NIBTS reduced the deferral period to 3 months for men who have sex with men. Following on from this, during 2020, the FAIR (For the Assessment of Individualised Risk) group assessed the feasibility of developing an individual risk-based approach to donor selection to minimise the transmission of Transfusion Transmitted Infections due to sexual risk factors. The outputs were reviewed by SaBTO in October 2020 and were accepted by all UK Ministers and the report published on

14th December 2020. NIBTS implemented this recommendation in August 2021.

- Alongside the BSO Procurement and Logistics Service, we took action to proactively promote equality of opportunity with regards to our contracts with recruitment agencies. Together with our HSC partners, we included in tender specifications a requirement for bidders to demonstrate how they promote equality with reference to: training their staff; gathering feedback from agency workers; their provisions on making reasonable adjustments for agency workers; and outreach work to attract a diverse range of agency workers. We have collected monitoring data for all nine equality groupings. This enables us to monitor the diversity of agency workers placed with us and, where necessary, to engage with recruitment agencies in relation to the undertaking of measures to address under-representation of specific equality groupings in the cohort of agency workers.

This is some of what we have done to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

### **Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people**

- We have held a number of disability awareness days for our staff. Each looked at a different disability. The aim is to increase the knowledge and awareness of our staff including on how to support a person with a particular disability. Since the pandemic the sessions have been held online, improving accessibility for all staff including those who may be disabled. The sessions are recorded and uploaded to the website of Tapestry, our disability staff network.
- We have developed a dedicated scenario on disability as part of our e-learning resource called 'Making a Difference'. It is available to all Health and Social Care staff. All our staff have been asked to complete the programme at induction.

### **Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life**

- Together with our partners, we set up Tapestry, a disability network for our staff. Part of the role of this network is to raise disability issues with decision makers in our organisation.

- We have participated in a disability work placement scheme, facilitated by the BSO for all the 11 regional Health and Social Care organisations. We hosted one person. We trained the participant on how to apply for a job in Health and Social Care organisations, including mock interviews.
- We have engaged with primary and secondary care to promote blood donation within the Genetic Haemochromatosis community.

## **7. What we have learned so far**

Some of the key points we have learned from developing and implementing our action plans are described below.

### Disability Placement Scheme

- We learned that it is important to bring people together not just at induction stage but also at the end. Thus, we now run an End of Year event too, to celebrate the achievement with everyone involved (participants, placement managers, Employment Support Officers, and the facilitators).
- It is vital that participants are reimbursed for their travel cost quickly. Therefore, we have agreed the principle that no participant be out of pocket for their expenses for more than 1 week.
- The work environment plays an important role for many participants so we have built in this aspect into the written information that placement managers provide upfront on the placement offered.
- A high turn over amongst Employment Support Officers poses particular challenges for ensuring consistency in the implementation of the scheme. An internal briefing for new officers before the scheme kicks off should address this issue.

### Disability Awareness Days

- Since we moved our days online we have seen a huge rise in numbers of staff attending our events. Also, they come from a wider range of locations.



- Recording the sessions has been a great success. This means staff who can't attend on the day can access the event whenever it suits them.
- There is a huge information need of staff who are carers of a person with a disability, for example of a person living with ADHD or with dementia.
- Staff are interested in learning more about how to support a family member, not just colleagues in the workplace.

We have found that attendance at awareness day events is greatest when the subject is most relevant to staff. This can be because they have the condition themselves or they know or work with someone who has the condition. We will continue to ask staff which areas relating to disability they would like more information on.

#### Tapestry – Disability Staff Network

- Staff fora need refreshed and promoted on an ongoing basis.
- For a forum to be effective in its supporting and influencing role, a committed HR presence at senior level is essential as is the timely engagement and consultation on policies/decisions/strategies etc. to inform the development of these.

#### Disability Champions

- From our partners we have learned that a Champion can be a powerful advocate for the consideration of disability issues in decision-making and its scrutiny.

On a general level, organisational change and staff turn-over can pose a big challenge. It is the personal commitment of staff and leaders to the equality agenda that drives progress. When such individuals leave, actions are at risk of not being taken forward and of ending up merely being rolled over.

## **8. What is in the new plans**

There are two separate tables below. The first table lists all the actions that we will do to promote equality and good relations. This is our Equality Action Plan.

The second table describes what we will do to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage their participation in public life. This is our Disability Action Plan.

In both plans we also say what difference we hope to make and when we will do these actions.

## **9. How we will monitor these plans**

Every year we will write up what we have done. We will also explain when we haven't done something. We send this report to the Equality Commission. We also publish this report on our website: [Equality and Disability – Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service \(hscni.net\)](http://hscni.net)

We will have a look at the plans every year to see whether we need to make any changes to them. If we need to, we will write those changes into the plans. Before we make any big changes we talk to people in the equality groupings to see what they think.

When we finish an action we will take it off the plans for the next year. That way we will keep our plans up to date. They will show what we still have to do.

After five years we will look at our plans again to see how we have done. We will also see what else we could do.

Whenever we develop or look at our plans we will invite people who have a disability to help us.

The plans are also available on our website: [Equality and Disability – Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service \(hscni.net\)](http://hscni.net)

We will send our plans to all organisations and individuals on our consultation list when we have finalised them and also when we have made major changes to them.

To find out whether what we do makes a difference, we will do a number of things, for example:

- For training and awareness events, we ask our staff about what learning they are taking away with them.
- We check summary figures to see whether, for example, more people from a particular under-represented group are availing of a service after promoting it to them specifically.

You can find further information on how we will monitor each action in the plans themselves.

## 10. Equality Action Plan 2023-28: What we will do to promote equality and good relations

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (ie. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Donor Review</b></p> <p>1. Complete a strategic review of donor services to ascertain the needs of donors and the accessibility of services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review donor complaints process to ensure its easily accessible.</li> <li>• Identify donor complaints which are submitted which have suggestions to improve accessibility for people with all types of disabilities.</li> <li>• Review the donation process, documentation and procedures</li> </ul>	<p>Access to the blood donation services is streamlined and more accessible to all.</p>	<p>Identification of trends and volume of complaints via donors – development of quarterly reports</p> <p>Develop further KPI's following analysis of information from donors.</p> <p>To include KPIs for Genetic Haemochromatosis donors.</p> <p>As we do not ask about language in our donor profile we will require time to develop KPIs to gauge</p>	<p>Donor Service will take the lead.</p> <p>Medical Team will lead on the Genetic Haemochromatosis donors.</p> <p>Quarterly update on complaints.</p> <p>Autumn 2023 for updates on processes for alternative languages.</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (ie. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p>to ensure that the needs of donors with disabilities has been considered and are being met where possible. Specifically review the management of Genetic Haemochromatosis donors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the donation process, documentation and procedures to ensure that the needs of donors whose first language is not English have been considered. Identify any areas for improvement</li> <li>• Review current monitoring data collected for donors and consider the scope for widening this in order to inform this review</li> </ul>		<p>the number of donors and their needs throughout the strategic review.</p>	<p>Year of Completion: 2028</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (ie. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p>2. Engage with a range of organisations from across a number of diverse groups to ensure a diverse spectrum of voices and offer a range of engagement opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To include wider promotion of FAIR project &amp; partnership with the Rainbow project.</li> <li>• To develop partnership with local minority groups to ensure we hear their voices. Listening exercising to be done with these groups.</li> <li>• To include engagement with the UK Genetic Haemochromatosis Society and primary and secondary care providers to</li> </ul>	<p>Better engagement of people from all groups helping with shaping our service.</p> <p>Better understanding of the FAIR project within our local LGBTQ community.</p> <p>Improved relations with our LGBTQ community.</p> <p>Better representation in all of NIBTS engagement of Ethnic minority groups.</p> <p>Better engagement of people with Genetic Haemochromatosis and their care providers.</p>	<p>To get a better understanding of what our current engagement level is within Section 75 and seek to improve upon this.</p> <p>In order for us to specify clear targets this will require us to have completed our surveys and listening exercises.</p>	<p>Donor Services</p> <p>2024 listening exercise</p> <p>2024 updated targets</p> <p>2025 implementation of learning</p> <p>Medical Team</p> <p>2024 Genetic Haemochromatosis engagement</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (ie. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p>promote awareness of blood donation within this community.</p>			
<p><b>Interpreting</b></p> <p>3. Engage with the Polish community and other ethnic groups in Northern Ireland in order to look at interpreting / translation issues during donation sessions and improve access to blood donation services for these groups. Work initially with members of the Polish community in order to identify key barriers and to pilot translation services during donation sessions.</p> <p>Following the pilot evaluate feasibility for extending this service to other languages / sign language.</p>	<p>Donors whose first language is not English are facilitated where possible to donate blood, thereby increasing the pool of donors and accessibility to our services.</p>	<p>The use of interpreting service for donors whose first language is not English is in place.</p> <p>Use of interpreting service increases for Blood donation services.</p>	<p>Medical Team</p> <p>Year of completion: Polish community pilot - 2025</p> <p>Feasibility for extending interpreting service - 2028</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (ie. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Policy Development</b></p> <p>4. Develop a Gender Identity Policy in relation to Donors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope best practice in other Blood Transfusion Services</li> <li>• Engage with gender identity groups and individuals</li> <li>• Develop, screen and consult on policy</li> </ul>	<p>Needs and dignity of donors who identify as transgender, non-binary and intersex are better met.</p>	<p>Policy in place providing clear advice and support for donors and staff.</p> <p>Feedback from donors indicates their needs and dignity have been better met.</p>	<p>Medical Team</p> <p>Year of Completion: 2025</p>
<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>5. Equality Diversity &amp; Good Relations e-learning to be offered as mandatory training to all staff.</p>	<p>Increase staff awareness of Equality Diversity &amp; Good Relations.</p>	<p>75 % of staff completed the e-learning training.</p>	<p>Human Resources Department</p> <p>Figures generated annually.</p> <p>End: 2028</p>



## 11. Disability Action Plan 2023-28: What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

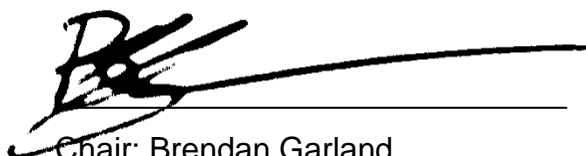
What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Awareness Days</b></p> <p>1. Raise awareness of the lived experience of people with specific disabilities and conditions.</p>	<p><b>Promoting positive attitudes:</b></p> <p>Increased staff awareness of a range of disabilities and conditions.</p>	<p>2 awareness days profiled every year.</p> <p>&gt;50% of staff taking part in the evaluation indicate they know more about people living with disabilities and conditions as a result of the awareness days.</p>	<p>Human Resources Department with support from BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>End: 2028</p>
<p><b>Placement Scheme</b></p> <p>2. Create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities.</p>	<p><b>Promoting positive attitudes and Encouraging participation in public life:</b></p> <p>People with a disability gain meaningful work experience.</p> <p>People with a disability are successful in applying for paid</p>	<p>At least 1 placement offered every year.</p> <p>Feedback through annual evaluation of scheme indicates that placement meets expectations.</p> <p>At least 1 placement participant is successful in</p>	<p>Senior Management with support from BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>End Mar 2028</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
	employment after they have completed a placement.	applying for paid employment within 12 months of completing their placement.	
<p><b>Tapestry</b></p> <p>3. Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its priorities. Promote it through emails, bulletins, screensavers, discussions.</p>	<p><b>Encouraging participation in public life:</b></p> <p>Staff with a disability feel more confident that their voice is heard in decision-making.</p> <p>Staff with a disability feel better supported.</p>	<p>Increase in Tapestry membership or in participation at meetings</p> <p>Tapestry staff survey</p>	<p>Human Resources Department with support from BSO Equality Unit</p> <p>End: 2028</p>
<p><b>Personal &amp; Public Involvement (PPI)</b></p> <p>4. Encourage people with disabilities to participate in NIBTS Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) events and get involved in donor focus groups:</p>	<p>Better engagement of people with a disability in shaping our service.</p>	<p>Wide range of disability groups targeted.</p> <p>Increased participation of people with a disability in</p>	<p>Donor Services</p> <p>Year of Completion: 2026</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute through disability organisations, staff disability network (Tapestry) and on the NIBTS website.</li> </ul>	Improved accessibility and increased blood donations from people with a disability.	PPI events and donor focus groups.	
<p><b>Reasonable Adjustments</b></p> <p>5. Provide disability awareness training for managers with a focus on reasonable adjustments. Produce a reasonable adjustment guide.</p>	Provide training. Issue guidance / signpost to information.	Clear advice and support for managers and staff. 75% of feedback post training indicates an increase in knowledge in dealing with reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities.	Human Resources Department with support from BSO Equality Unit  Year of Completion: 2025
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p> <p>6. Undertake an audit of our website to review accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure relevant contact details are available and up to date</li> </ul>	Accessibility to our information is easily available to all Section 75 groups	Relevant contact details are up to date.  Determined feasibility of key information being	Human Resources Department  Year of Completion 2026

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review feasibility to provide key information in British Sign Language</li> </ul>		available in Sign Language actioned.	

Signed by:



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Chair: Brendan Garland

Date: 21 September 2023



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Chief Executive: Karin Jackson

Date: 21 September 2023



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