



# **Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-2028**

September 2023

The Safeguarding Board for  
Northern Ireland (SBNI)

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

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# 1. Introduction

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland – 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.

We also work, via a service level agreement, with the Business Services Organisation Equality Unit (BSO EQU), as our Equality Partner, to collectively provide a range of equality services such as awareness days, to complement our obligations to promote equality and promote good relations.

The person in our organisation who is responsible for making sure that we do what we have promised to do is Bernie McNally. If you have any questions, you can contact her at:

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

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) is part of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. We were set up in September 2012.

The Government here believes that everyone is responsible for making sure that our children and young people are kept safe. Lots of different organisations are working to protect children – we think they can do an even better job if they work together; so, the Safeguarding Board was set up.

The person in charge of the Safeguarding Board is called the SBNI Independent Chair – she is independent and doesn't belong to the government or to any of the member organisations that make up the Safeguarding Board. She has the power to make sure that the top people in lots of different agencies work together to keep children safe.

The Department of Health, (DoH) is in charge of making sure that the Safeguarding Board works well, and has given guidance on how they should go about their work.

You can access further information about what we do on our website: <https://www.safeguardingni.org/>

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

The main ways in which people can be involved in the work of the SBNI are to:

- Contact us directly and provide feedback to us on all areas of our work. We particularly welcome feedback from children and young people and their parents/carers who experience greater difficulty in getting their voice heard (including those with sensory and learning disabilities).
- Get involved in our face to face discussions with groups of children and young people on child protection and safeguarding issues to ensure your voice is heard.

## 4. What the law says

The SBNI 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 people with disabilities and
- encourage participation by people with disabilities 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.

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 these plans we looked at what we have done so far to promote equality and good relations, to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and to encourage their participation in public life.

For the new plans, we considered two questions:

- In our areas of work, what are the key issues for people in the equality groupings?
- What can we do to address these issues?

We looked 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
- our professional experience and knowledge
- issues raised in consultations or through other engagement with staff and service users.

We engaged closely with Tapestry, the HSC Disability Staff Network, in the development of our Disability Action Plan. Focus groups were held to find out what issues are important to them as a member of staff with a disability or as a carer and what 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:

- We commissioned Barnardo's NI to develop and produce a three-year strategy detailing how the SBNI will engage with children and young people in Northern Ireland. The work was also to identify the best practice methods for capturing these views across a wide and varied audience base.
- Boys and young men are often overlooked as victims of child sexual exploitation. They are also less likely to report abuse or exploitation themselves; practitioners need to be aware of the signs and indicators of abuse that boys may exhibit. We commissioned Youth Action and VOYPIC to facilitate focus groups with boys and young men to explore issues affecting boys and young men, their understanding of the term 'child sexual exploitation' and to evaluate current awareness information and material and to contribute to the potential development of future materials.
- As part of the SBNI Trauma Informed Practice Project Train the Trainer Programme, we developed an Appendix on – 'The impact of trauma for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.' This resource was developed in partnership with the Education Authority. The resource asks the practitioner to reflect on additional Adverse Childhood Experiences and traumatic experiences Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Families may have experienced before, and during, settling in Northern Ireland. Through an evidence-based approach it asks practitioners to consider how using a trauma informed approach and appreciating cultural diversity, these families' needs can be supported.
- Building on the engagement with children and young people from the Section 75 groups, we continued to provide a process for children and young people from Barnardo's NI services to express their views and needs within services.
- They were also able to contribute to the design of ACE/TIP workforce development programmes. These included training, resources and guidance and the SBNI Invictus Play. This was commissioned to raise awareness, kick-start

conversations and build resilience around childhood adversity. It also focussed on the behaviours and core skills that can be nurtured to help children and young people overcome and mitigate the damage of toxic stress and successfully navigate a whole host of critical life moments.

- Along with our Equality Partner, we produced a leaflet targeted at staff who are carers. It highlights the policies and support offered by SBNI and our partner organisations, and also signposts Carers to different local sources of help in each HSC Trust area. Details are also provided on counselling and advice services. The leaflet is included in the Tapestry website, and was forwarded to staff through a series of corporate communications.

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

### **Promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities**

- To date, the BSO EQU, on our behalf, has held 17 disability awareness days for staff. Each looked at a different disability. The aim is to increase the knowledge and awareness of staff on how to support a person with that particular disability. Since the pandemic these sessions have been held online. The sessions are recorded and uploaded to the website of Tapestry, the disability staff network.
- Together with our Equality partner, we have developed a dedicated scenario on disability as part of our eLearning 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.
- BSO EQU, on our behalf, has delivered training sessions on mental health awareness to our staff, including on mental health first aid, mindfulness and managing stress, and courses for staff who are carers.



## **Encourage the participation of people with disabilities in public life**

- As part of the consultation on our Online Safety Strategy on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, we undertook specific bespoke consultation with children and young people with a disability in recognition of their particularly vulnerable status. Specific engagement with children and young people with a disability, both physical and learning, was ensured.
- Together with our Equality Partner, we have the opportunity to participate in Tapestry, a disability network for staff working in SBNI and any of the other ten regional HSC organisations. Part of the role of this network is to raise disability issues with decision makers in our organisation.

## **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 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 days 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.

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.

## **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: <https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources>

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:

<https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources>

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, training, awareness events and staff evaluations of these. we ask our staff about what learning they are taking away with them.

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 (i.e. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Action.1</b></p> <p>The SBNI will communicate and or engage with children and young people by consistently applying the principles and best practice methods detailed in the SBNI Communications Strategy and the SBNI Engagement with Children and Young People Strategy.</p>	<p>The voices of children and young people are heard and responded to. All safeguarding and child protection messaging is informed by them. Their needs and views are at the heart of what the SBNI does.</p> <p>Communication and engagement is informed by best practice.</p>	<p>All safeguarding and child protection messaging from the SBNI will be informed by children and young people and where specifically applicable by those from an ethnic minority community and/or living with a disability in a format they have requested and which they can access.</p>	<p>All SBNI statutory and non-statutory committees (including commissioned services)</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p><b>Action. 2</b></p> <p>When procuring services that require any communications and or engagements with children and young</p>	<p>The voices of children and young people, representative of the Section 75 categories,</p>	<p>Tender specifications and awarding of contracts meet the requirements to</p>	

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (i.e. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
people by external suppliers, all contracts and tenders will include a clause that will require the suppliers to ensure that these include representatives from all relevant Section 75 categories.	will be heard and responded to.	include all relevant S75 responsibilities for children and young people.	All SBNI statutory and non-statutory committees.  Annually
<p><b>Action 3</b></p> <p>Development of a process for gathering feedback from children and young people where English is not their first language.</p>	Children and young people whose first language is not English are facilitated to provide feedback.	Method of collecting feedback to be put in place.	Director of Operations
<p><b>Action 4</b></p> <p>We will ensure our decision makers at Senior Leadership and Board level</p>	We want our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Board to lead our agenda in	The Board and SLT provide an oversight,	SBNI Board and SLT Bi-Annually.

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve and who for (i.e. which Section 75 category specifically)	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
are trained on equality, diversity and good relations.	relation to equality and its role in supporting the workforce and our business.	leadership and challenge role in relation to equality.	

## 11. Disability Action Plan 2023-28: What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of people with disabilities 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>Raise awareness of the lived experience of people with specific disabilities and conditions.</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>Equality Unit</p>
<p><b>Placement scheme</b></p> <p>The SBNI will create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice.</p>	<p>We want to support people with a disability to gain meaningful work experience.</p>	<p>A placement is considered and where possible offered each year</p> <p>We will ensure the person appointed is provided with a positive and fulfilling</p>	<p>The SBNI Central Support Team with support from the BSO Equality Unit.</p>

What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
		<p>experience, including training.</p> <p>Feedback through annual evaluation of scheme indicates that placement meets expectations</p>	Once each year.
<p><b>Tapestry</b></p> <p>Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its priorities.</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>Tapestry staff survey.</p> <p>Staff are actively encouraged to attend all relevant and applicable Tapestry events/</p>	Annually by BSO Equality Unit SBNI Central Support Team
<p><b>Neuro diversity</b></p> <p>Promote an increased understanding of neuro diversity in the workplace</p>	Create an inclusive and safe working environment	The delivery of awareness raising sessions to the SBNI staff	Annually



What we will do	What we are trying to achieve	Performance Indicator and Target	By whom and when
<p><b>Action 1</b></p> <p>The SBNI will utilise the expertise and advice of reference groups drawn from SBNI committees and from the voluntary sector to promote positive attitudes of people with disabilities and encourage participation of people with disabilities in public life</p>	<p>Recognition of the positive contribution made by the inclusion of people with disabilities in SBNI activity</p>	<p>Report on the activity undertaken to promote positive attitudes by the use of reference groups</p>	<p>All SBNI statutory and non-statutory committees</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p><b>Action 2</b></p> <p>The SBNI will support and proactively access and utilise inclusive images and language to promote core messages</p>	<p>To ensure that the promotion of positive attitudes of people, particularly children and young people, with a disability is undertaken on a corporately consistent basis</p>	<p>The production of all public documents (plans, guidance and reports) are proofed for access and inclusivity by external specialists</p>	<p>All SBNI statutory and non-statutory committees</p>
<p><b>Action 3</b></p> <p>The SBNI will undertake a review of our website to:</p>	<p>We want to ensure that that our website and associated</p>	<p>A review is conducted annually to check that all</p>	<p>The SBNI central Support Team</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>• Identify key information that could be made available in signed video format</li> <li>• Ensure relevant contact details are available and up-to-date</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>important documents are appropriately made available as a signed BSL so that people who are D/deaf are receiving the same information as others.</p>	<p>relevant key information has been/will be made available in the appropriate format</p>	
<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>The SBNI will enhance the accessibility arrangements in respect of our equality and disability action plans to make sure they are accessible and provide alternatives to table format.</p>	<p>We want to ensure that accessibility is a theme considered throughout to development and production of our plans both in relation to the content and actions and also the accessibility of the actual documents</p>	<p>As part of the quality assurance and control mechanisms of development and production of plans, appropriate and relevant accessibility checks will be carried out.</p>	<p>The SBNI Central Support Team</p>

Signed by:

Bernie McNally OBE



Helen McKenzie



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SBNI Independent Chair

SBNI Director of Operations

Date: 04/09/2023

Date:04/09/2023



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