



Equality and Disability Action Plan 2018-2023

Social Care Council

Updated June 2021

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

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Introduction

As the Chair and Chief Executive of the Social Care Council, we are committed to promoting equality and good relations. We recognise that we have to do more to promote positive attitudes and to encourage the participation of people with a disability 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 Plan.

We will make sure we let our staff know of what is in our plan. 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 committed to do is Declan McAllister. When you have any questions you can contact him at:

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Who we are and what we do

The Social Care Council is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

We do things like:

- Maintain the register which has around 39,000 social workers, social care workers and students on it.
- We carry out investigations about the conduct of social workers and social care workers who are registered with us. Social workers have Standards of Conduct and Practice (previously referred to as Codes of Conduct) which they must comply with.
- Review the Standards to ensure they are always up to date and reflect good practice.
- Ensure those who are registered complete all the necessary training they need. Take into account the views and experiences of service users and carers when we are planning and delivering our work.

How people can be involved in our work

There are a number of ways in which people can be involved in the work of the Social Care Council –

- Meetings of Council are open to the public and can provide a way to observe how Council works. Minutes of meetings are also published on our website and can be provided in hard copy if necessary.
- Users of social care services and carers are encouraged to be members of our Participation Partnership which challenges how the Social Care Council designs and delivers its business and policies.
- We publicly consult on a wide range of policies and initiatives and encourage the public to respond and help us ensure our business best meets the needs of those who use social care services.
- We advertise for lay members (members of the public with experience of social care) to apply to be panel members for Fitness to Practise and committee hearings.
- We openly recruit for staff to cover a wide range of posts on a regular basis.

What the law says

The Social Care Council 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 take account of their differing 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 take account of:

- 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; autism; learning disabilities; mental health conditions; or conditions that are long-term. 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.

How we reviewed our last plans and developed these plans

In developing these plans 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.

We asked all teams in our organisation to consider 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?

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:

- 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 also learned from what we heard when we:

- Held coffee mornings to talk with staff about issues important to those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability
- Surveyed staff to find out what they think an Employer of Choice for people who have a disability or those who care for somebody with a disability looks like
- Spoke with the members of our staff disability network "Tapestry" to find out what we should do to promote equality for those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability

- In collaboration with our colleagues in the Health and Social Care Trusts ran an engagement event with people from different equality groupings to find out what they think we could do to better promote equality.

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. We think it is important to involve people from different groups in developing our plan. This is why we will set up meetings as part of this consultation. This will include speaking to our staff, especially the two networks we have in place: Tapestry – our disability staff network, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Forum for the whole of Health and Social Care.

What we have done so far

This is some of what we have done to promote equality.

- We produced a signposting resource for our staff. It provides information on support networks in the community for people from each of the nine equality groups. We update this resource every year.
- We put in place an Accessible Formats Policy; this policy relates to all of the nine equality groups including age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political opinion, dependants, religion and marital status. It addresses specific needs in relation to sensory impairment, learning disability, sexual orientation, older people, younger people, translation and interpreting for minority ethnic groups and more general literacy levels that are of particular importance.
- We compiled a directory of resources and services to assist staff access information in respect of the Section 75 groups.
- We ensured that all our job descriptions and advertisements for open competition positions included a full welcome statement to support our commitment to encouraging all people to apply for appointments.
- We ensured that equality awareness formed part of our induction programme for new staff and newly appointed managers.
- We collected equality data on our workforce including the social care workforce to help us ensure that our policy and decisions would not adversely impact on any one of the Section 75 groups.

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.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- To date, we have held 11 disability awareness days for our staff. Each looked at different disabilities: Epilepsy, Sight loss and blindness, Depression, Hearing loss and deafness, Learning disabilities, Cancer, Arthritis and Musculoskeletal conditions, mild to moderate mental health conditions, fibromyalgia, Multiple sclerosis (MS) and autism. We also spoke to staff to find out about the issues which they felt we needed to raise awareness about and this included promoting the help and support available to carers.
- We developed an e-learning resource on disability. It is available to all Health and Social Care staff. This was identified as one of our mandatory e-learning training inputs at induction.
- We include the disability duties in all Equality Awareness and Equality Screening Training that the BSO Equality Unit delivers.
- We have 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.
- We developed a staff resource on disability etiquette, a resource and checklist on how to positively portray people with a disability in their work.
- We have arranged face-to-face sessions for all our staff on disability awareness.
- We have checked our website to make sure it is accessible.
- We have commissioned a programme called 'Synergy' which enabled staff to work alongside a range of individuals including those with a disability to help promote awareness and understanding.
- We actively produced easy read materials on a range of subjects – in particular when we were consulting on new policies.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- We participate in a disability work placement scheme together with our Health and Social Care partner organisations. To date, the Scheme has provided between 5 and 15 placements for people with a disability in our organisations every year.

- We have engaged one individual through the placement scheme in a job role in Social Care Council who went on to successfully complete and attain a full-time paid employment role in Social Care Council.
- We arranged for the translation of written material into braille on a number of occasions to support committee work along with facilitating the use of interpreting services and the provision of materials in specialised formats for registrants or witnesses requesting alternative formats.
- We developed standards and guidance for the involvements of people with a disability and a checklist for organising inclusive meetings.
- We have developed standards and guidance for the involvement of people with a disability and a checklist for organising inclusive meetings.
- We set up a disability network for our staff. Part of the role of this network is to raise disability issues with decision makers in our organisation.

What we have learned so far

Monitoring

Even with proactive encouragement, our staff seem reluctant to declare their disability. We need to keep working on this, including trying to find out why staff do not declare their disability. We will work closely with our disability staff network on this.

Placements

The placement scheme is evaluated each year and changes were made in the next year's scheme to improve the experience for participants. We will carry this learning into our new plan. Managers and staff who have been involved in the scheme to date have told us that they have gained a better understanding of disabilities through working side by side a person who has a disability. Many have been impressed by the attitude and performance of the individual on placement.

Awareness Days

We have found that attendance at awareness 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.

Training

We have found that our e-learning training on Disability is a really useful resource to train our staff. We have also found that sometimes we need to run specific training courses, for example on autism awareness or deaf awareness when the need is identified. We will continue to take this approach of a combination of e-learning and classroom based training. People have told us that they take away a lot from sessions that are delivered by people with a disability themselves.

What is in the new plans

There are two separate tables below. The first table lists all the actions that we will undertake 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 plan to complete these actions.

How we will monitor

Every year we write up what we have done. We 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://niscc.info>

We have a look at the plans every year to see whether we need to make any changes to them. If we need to, we 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 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://niscc.info>

Equality Action Plan 2018-2023: What we will do to promote equality and good relations

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/When
<p>Carers</p> <p>1. Promote information for staff who are carers on available policies and measures that might meet their needs; including sign-posting to relevant support organisations.</p>	<p>Staff who are carers feel more supported in the workplace</p>	<p>Baseline staff survey and after 3 years (quantifiable targets to be determined following baseline survey)</p>	<p>BSO Human Resources, supported by Equality Unit</p> <p>By March 2021</p>
<p>2. Develop a protocol to ensure that service users who are carers are accommodated and facilitated at meetings organised by Social Care Council.</p>	<p>People who are service users and who are carers are better able to participate on a voluntary basis with Social Care Council</p>	<p>Increased attendance at events and meetings</p> <p>More flexible ways to communicate and engage introduced</p>	<p>Social Care Council</p> <p>By March 2021</p>
<p>Gender Identity</p> <p>3. Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff and managers as part of the</p>	<p>Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more</p>	<p>Feedback from staff who have drawn support through the policy indicates a positive experience.</p>	<p>BSO Human Resources with support from BSO Equality Unit</p>

roll-out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy	supported, in the workplace.		By March 2021
4. Undertake a review including engagement with representative groups and individuals to take account of gender identities and develop an action plan as a result.	Service users who identify as transgender, non-binary and intersex feel more supported.	Evidence of consideration and actions to address any issues reported on in annual review of progress.	Social Care Council By March 2021
Training 5. Making a Difference e-learning: Deliver on training targets	Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights.	95% of staff have completed the e-learning module	Social Care Council Annually
Domestic Violence 6. Undertake awareness raising relating to new support mechanisms (developed by BSO) to support staff with experience of domestic violence	Staff with experience of domestic violence feel better supported	Feedback from staff who have drawn support through the mechanisms indicates a positive experience.	BSO Human Resources By March 2021

Disability Action Plan 2018-2023: What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When
<p>Awareness Days</p> <p>1. Raise awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities including through linking in with National Awareness Days or Weeks (such as Mind your Health Day)</p>	<p>Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs</p>	<p>Two annual awareness days profiled</p> <p>>50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p>Placement Scheme</p> <p>2. Create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.</p>	<p>People with a disability gain meaningful work experience</p>	<p>1 placement offered per year.</p> <p>Feedback through annual evaluation of scheme indicates that placement meets expectations</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>Annually</p>

<p>Tapestry</p> <p>3. Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan.</p>	<p>Staff with a disability feel more confident that their voice is heard in decision-making. Staff with a disability feel better supported.</p>	<p>Tapestry staff survey in 2022/23</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p>Monitoring</p> <p>4. Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness and providing guidance staff on the importance monitoring. Prompt staff to keep up to date their personal equality monitoring records (via self- service on new Human Resources IT system).</p>	<p>More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability.</p>	<p>Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90%</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Human Resources and BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>Annually</p>

<p>Training</p> <p>5. In collaboration with disabled people design, deliver and evaluate training for staff and Board Members on disability equality and disability legislation.</p>	<p>Increased staff and Board Member within 2 years awareness range of the disabilities and needs</p>	<p>All staff trained (general and bespoke) within 2 years through e-learning or interactive sessions and staff awareness initiatives delivered</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Equality Unit</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p>6. Promote, encourage and identify opportunities more engagement for people with a disability in key work areas</p>	<p>Better engagement by people with a disability</p>	<p>Annual review of progress to ECNI.</p> <p>Engagement programme developed.</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Equality Unit</p> <p>By March 2021</p>
<p>7. Sign up to Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts</p>	<p>Staff with mental health conditions</p> <p>Feel better supported in the workplace</p>	<p>Tapestry survey in 2022/23</p>	<p>Social Care Council with support from BSO Human Resources and BSO Equality Unit.</p> <p>By March 2023</p>

Signed by

Chair

Date:

Chief Executive

Date:

Northern Ireland



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