

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2021/22

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at: [NIGALA Equality & Disability](#) and [Equality Screening](#)

(ECNI Q28)

During 2021/22, we completed the Five Year Review of Equality Scheme. The report can be found at: [Five Year Review of Equality Scheme](#). Our Equality Scheme is due to be reviewed again by 31 March 2026.

Signature:



This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and disability duties.

This report reflects progress made between April 2021 and March 2022.

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Chapter 1: Summary Quantitative Report

Screening, EQIAs and Consultation (ECNI Q15, 16, 19)

1. Number of policies screened (as recorded in screening reports)	Screened In	Screened out with mitigation	Screened out without mitigation	Screening decision reviewed following concerns raised by consultees
2	0	2	0	0 No concerns were raised by consultees on screening in 2021/22
2. Number of policies subjected to Equality Impact Assessment	0			
3. Indicate the stage of progress of each EQIA	Title N/A		Stage	
4. Number of policy consultations conducted	0			
5. Number of policy consultations conducted with screening presented. (See also Chapter 2, Table 2)	0			

Training (ECNI Q24)

6. Staff training undertaken during 2021/22 (see also Chapter 2, Q6).

Course	No of Staff Trained	No of Board Members Trained
Screening Training	0	0
Equality Impact Assessment Training	0	0
Menopause Awareness Raising Webinar	N/K	
Promoting equality in employment for women affected by menopause (ECNI Webinar)	1	0
Equality Law Update (ECNI Webinar)	1	0
Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Webinar	19	0
Total	21	0

eLearning: Making a Difference

Part 1: All Staff	0
Part 2: Line Managers	0

No members of staff completed this module during 2021/22, however to date a total of **72** members of staff have completed part 1, and **8** managers have completed parts 1 and 2.

Complaints (ECNI Q27)

7. Number of complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme received during 2021/22.

0

Equality Action Plan (see also Chapter 3) (ECNI Q7)

8. Within the 2021/22 reporting period, please indicate the number of:

Actions completed:	1	Actions ongoing:	2	Actions to commence:	1
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Disability Action Plan (see also Chapter 4) (ECNI Part B Q1)

9. Within the 2021/22 reporting period, please indicate the number of:

Actions completed:	6	Actions ongoing:	0	Actions to commence:	1
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Chapter 2: Section 75 Progress Report (ECNI Q1, 3, 3a, 3b, 23)

- 1. In 2021/22, please provide examples of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved. Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.**

Table 1 below outlines progress to better promote equality of opportunity and good relationsⁱ.

All Section 75 groups:

Return to the Office / Hybrid working and Agile working was added as a standing item at all quarterly meetings of the equality forum which brings together representatives from each of the 11 regional HSC organisations. The aim was to facilitate the identification and consideration of the needs of staff in decision-making, in particular for staff with a disability and those who are carers; to share good practice; and to ensure engagement with staff members from various section 75 groups.

This included a presentation on the initial findings relating to staff with disabilities and caring responsibilities from the BSO Human Resources Working from Home Survey 2021.

Members gave updates on what work was being done or decisions being made within their organisations in relation to agile and flexible working.

The need for further in-depth analysis of equality findings in the survey and for assurance that New Ways of Working take account of these findings was recognised.

We also met with Disability Action in the context of the Disability Champions Network (which is facilitated by the BSO Equality Unit and brings together the Champions from the 11 regional HSC organisations) to hear about key considerations and best practice.

Table 1:

Outline new developments or changes in policies or practices and the difference they have made for specific equality groupings.	
Persons of different age	Resources reviewed and amended by NIGALA to broaden the age appeal of About Me and About Court booklets.
Persons of different genders and gender identities	<p>In 2021/22 BSO introduced the Menopause at Work Policy and Domestic violence policy. Domestic violence disproportionately affects women. Given this, it will have an important impact on the HSC workforce which is predominantly female. The policy was adopted by NIGALA during 2021/22. At June 2021, 89% of NIGALA’s workforce were female.</p> <p>The introduction of the Menopause at Work Policy aims to ensure that managers and employees recognise their responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand the menopause and related issues and how it can affect staff and their work colleagues; ▪ Raise wider awareness and understanding among employees and to outline support and adjustments that are available; ▪ Ensure a consistent approach in the management of employees that are struggling whilst at work with menopausal symptoms and subsequently; ▪ Reduce menopause related sickness absence and promote the retention of menopausal employees in an attempt to retain a skilled and experienced workforce within the organisation;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause. <p>Prior to the introduction of the policy, in April 2021, a webinar was facilitated by BSO together with the Clinical Education Centre. The webinar provided an overview of menopause and a number of women shared their lived experience. Siobhan Kirk, Associate Specialist in Gynaecology and Sexual & Reproductive Health from Belfast Trust, spoke at this webinar to providing a clinical perspective on the support and treatment options available. This webinar supported the introduction of the Menopause at Work Policy which was introduced during 2021/22. Attendance figures for the session are unavailable.</p>
Persons with and without a disability	<p>[Please note: Our work on promoting equality for people with a disability in the workplace is reported on in detail in the Disability Action Plan – Progress Report 2021-22. This comprises, for example, our Disability Awareness Days for staff.]</p> <p>Awareness raising of Tapestry, the Disability Staff Network: The June 2021 meeting had to be cancelled due to low attendance at the meeting. As a result of this, a conscious effort was made to raise awareness of the network and its meetings. Meeting notices were issued to all staff before each meeting, articles were included in staff newsletters and corporate communications sent to all staff outlining the purpose and work of the network as well as encouraging attendance. As a result of this, network membership has grown and attendance at meetings has increased significantly. This has meant an increase in the numbers of our staff who have disabilities, or who care for someone with a disability accessing support or making their voice heard through the network.</p>

	<p>Several Tapestry members attended and gave an input at a systems leadership conference attended by senior leaders across Health and Social Care. The members felt that the senior leaders seemed to learn a lot and Tapestry was also promoted as a good practice example of supporting staff. A lot of questions were asked about all three presenters' experiences and they all contributed their differing experiences.</p>
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Where changes resulted from screenings, these will be listed in Chapter 6, the mitigation report.

(ECNI Q4, 5, 6)

2. During the 2021/22 reporting period:

(a) Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within:

	Yes/No	Details
Job Descriptions	No	<p>NIGALA carries out its recruitment through the Business Services Organisation. All recruitment is based on fulfilling section 75 duties.</p> <p>All Job Descriptions are quality assured as part of the recruitment process. All Job descriptions include the following statement for applicants,</p> <p>“Ensure NIGALA’s policy on equality of opportunity is promoted through his/her own actions and those of any staff for whom he/she has responsibility.”</p> <p>HSC values are central to the job descriptions and are clearly stated along with behaviours expected. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Openness and Honesty▪ Working Together▪ Excellence▪ Compassion
Performance objectives for staff	Yes	<p>Section 75 duties are integrated within performance objectives for staff in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Equality of opportunity and diversity.▪ Anti-discriminatory practice.▪ The welfare checklist.

(b) Were objectives and targets relating to Section 75 integrated into:

	Yes/No	Details
Corporate/Strategic Plans	Yes	Objectives relating to section 75 were integrated into corporate, strategic and business plans.
Annual Business Plans	Yes	

(ECNI Q11, 12, 17)

3. Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2021/22 reporting periods, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

NIGALA's people policies are regional in nature and provided by the BSO which carries out consultation exercises and amends policies before releasing for implementation.

NIGALA has not developed any new in-house policies in year.

Please refer to **Table 2** below.

Table 2:

<p>Policy publicly consulted on</p>	<p>What equality document did you issue alongside the policy consultation document?</p>	<p>Which Section 75 groups did you consult with?</p>	<p>What consultation methods did you use?</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Which of these drew the greatest number of responses from consultees?</p>	<p>Do you have any comments on your experience of this consultation?</p>
<p>N/A</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Screening Template</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EQIA report</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> None</p>			

(ECNI Q21, 26)

4. In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies?

~~Yes/No/~~ Not Applicable-(delete as appropriate)

Please refer to **Table 3** below.

Table 3:

Service or Policy	What equality monitoring information did you collect and analyse?	What action did you take as a result of this analysis? AND Did you make any changes to the service or policy as a result?	What difference did this make for Section 75 groups?
N/A			

(ECNI Q22)

5. Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2021/22 reporting periods, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed.

NIGALA's policies are regional in nature and provided by the BSO which carries out consultation exercises and amends policies before releasing for implementation.

NIGALA has not developed any new operational policies in year.

Please refer to **Table 4** below.

Table 4

Policy previously screened or EQIAed	Did you gather and analyse any equality monitoring information during 2021/22? (Please tick)	What were the adverse impacts at the point of screening or EQIA?	What changes to these occurred in 2021-22, as indicated by the equality monitoring data you gathered?
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

(ECNI Q25)

6. Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: Making a Difference

The aim of Making a Difference is to show how staff can make a difference to the culture of their organisation by:

- Promoting positive attitudes to diversity;
- Ensuring everyone is treated with respect and dignity
- Behaving in a way that is in keeping with HSC values and equality and human rights law

This eLearning package on equality awareness now forms part of mandatory training for all staff in our organisation. To date **72** members of staff (92%) completed the section for all staff and **8** members of staff also completed the section for line managers.

There were no additional members of staff who completed this during 2021/22.

Domestic Abuse – Awareness Raising

A webinar was organised for staff, facilitated by Women's Aid, to support the Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse and addressed a range of topics including:

- Definitions of domestic violence and strategy development.
- Myths and stereotypes
- Forms of domestic violence and associated behaviours, and
- Trauma and the impact of domestic violence.

19 members of staff attended the webinar. There are a further 2 sessions which have been arranged to take place during 2022/23.

Menopause – Awareness Raising

In April 2021 a webinar was facilitated by BSO together with the Clinical Education Centre. The webinar provided an overview of menopause and a number of women

shared their lived experience. An Associate Specialist in Gynaecology and Sexual & Reproductive Health from Belfast Trust, spoke at this webinar to providing a clinical perspective on the support and treatment options available. This webinar supported the introduction of the Menopause at Work Policy which was introduced during 2021/22. Attendance figures for the session are unavailable.

(ECNI Q29)

7. Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused on in the next reporting period? (Please provide details)

During 2022/23 we will focus on:

- Developing and consulting on new Equality and Disability Action Plans, jointly with our partner organisations.
- During the next reporting period, NIGALA will focus on the production of the five-year corporate plan, which will require consultation.
- A regional Hybrid Working Policy is being developed for staff which will require screening prior to implementation.
- Implementing key commitments identified in our 5 Year Review of Equality Scheme report. See below.

During this reporting period we will begin to take forward key commitments relating to the following particular areas:

- (i) In response to emerging equality and diversity issues as regards to the delivery of our functions, we will begin to focus on:
 - Gender identity issues for children and young people.
 - Issues relating to same-sex couples as carers and foster carers.
 - Black and minority ethnic children and young people who have been subject to trafficking and child sexual exploitation.
- (ii) We will begin work on the Corporate Services Plan for the period 2022-2027 to include equality objectives. Equality objectives to be included in annual business plans.
- (iii) We will begin to engage with Guardians Ad Litem in order to review and monitor information captured and assessed if there is a need to specially capture other equality and diversity information.

- (iv) The content of job descriptions will be reviewed in relation to Section 75 implementation prior to being published to ensure the duties are clearly identified.

Chapter 3: Equality Action Plan Progress Report

Our action plan outlined actions related to our functions and took account of our equality scheme commitments relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our equality scheme is available on our website

<https://nigala.hscni.net/publications/equality-disability/>

The law requires us when we carry out work to promote equality of opportunity across nine equality categories: age, gender, disability, marital status, political opinion, religion and ethnicity.

We have kept our equality action plan under review and reported annually to the Equality Commission on what we have done.

Equality Action Plan Progress Report

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
2	Revise and implement guidance to achieve consistent corporate branding to ensure that our website and all the information (operational and corporate) generated by the Agency is accessible and complies with best practice guidance.	All information and materials produced by NIGALA comply with Agency guidance.	Consistent house style (font, format) in compliance with Agency guidance.	Corporate Services March 2022 Ongoing

What we did over the last year:

Further development of the Agency branding will form part of a new 5-year Corporate Plan, to be developed in line with HSC guidance. The planning process for HSC bodies in year was suspended due to the Covid Pandemic.

During 2021/22 NIGALA revised its report formats and amended templates to ensure the font and format is consistent across the various report templates. These are available on the case management system for staff to download when preparing a report for court proceedings. There is further work to be done regarding the introduction and promotion of a house style. New legislation will be shortly introduced with a new name, the Northern Ireland Guardian Court Service. The organisation will undergo a full rebrand after the passage of the legislation.

This work is ongoing.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
6	Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff as part of the roll out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy	Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more supported in the workplace.	90% of staff have been trained.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2021 Not completed.

What we did over the last year:

The roll-out of the Making a Difference eLearning for all staff, which includes a dedicated scenario in relation to gender identity, continued during 2021/22. We updated the module to reflect changes in same-sex marriage legislation. No additional awareness and training initiatives were delivered to staff during the year.

The BSO, as our provider of Human Resources as well as Equality services, contacted TransgenderNI during the year to explore the possibility of the organisation providing dedicated training to teams where a member of staff comes forward to disclose that they identify as transgender or non-binary. It is the intention to follow up on these efforts in 2022/23.

We did not complete this action.

We did not complete this action.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
7	<p>Making a Difference eLearning:</p> <p>Add module to suite of mandatory training for all staff</p> <p>Deliver on training targets</p>	<p>Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights</p>	<p>Making a Difference eLearning included in mandatory training for all staff.</p> <p>75% in the first year and 100% thereafter of staff have completed the eLearning module.</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

What we did over the last year:

To date 72 members of staff (92%) completed the section for all staff and 8 members of staff also completed the section for line managers. There were no additional members of staff who completed this during 2021/22.

This work is ongoing.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
8	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 are better supported.	Awareness raising undertaken with 100% of staff.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2022 Complete

What we did over the last year:

Domestic Abuse – Awareness Raising

A webinar was organised for staff, facilitated by Women’s Aid, to support the Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse and addressed a range of topics including:

- Definitions of domestic violence and strategy development.
- Myths and stereotypes
- Forms of domestic violence and associated behaviours, and
- Trauma and the impact of domestic violence.

19 members of staff attended this webinar. A further 2 sessions have been arranged to take place during 2022/23.

This action was completed.

Conclusions for Equality Action Plan Report 2021-22

- In 2021/22, we completed **1** actions (action 8).
- We didn't do what we said we would do for **1** action (action 6).
- We still have some work to do to complete **2** actions (actions 2 and 7).
- All of the actions in our action plan are at regional and at local level.
- Our action plan is a live document. We will tell the Equality Commission about any changes.

Disability Action Plan Progress Report

Awareness Days

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
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)	Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs	Two annual awareness days profiled. >50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days.	NIGALA Annually Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

During 2021/22 we held 2 Awareness Days, facilitated by the BSO Equality Unit. We asked staff which disabilities they wanted to know more about. They told us they wanted to know more about Dementia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Both sessions were held using Zoom.

We emailed staff to let them know about the Awareness Days. The information was also added to the Tapestry website <http://tapestry.hscni.net>

On the Dementia awareness day, Dr Duffy who is the Consultant Lead Clinical Psychologist for Older People in the Northern Trust gave a presentation about Dementia, with a particular focus on caring for a loved one who has dementia. The other Awareness Day was about ADHD. Siobhan McErlane, a Specialist Health Visitor from the ADHD/ Behaviour Assessment Service in the Northern Trust gave a presentation. Siobhan talked about ADHD, from assessment and diagnosis to management of the condition.

Videos of both of the days have been published on the Tapestry website. This way, staff who couldn't be part of the live sessions on the day, are able to watch the presentations whenever it suits them.

We held a survey asking staff what they thought of the Awareness Days. 68% of those who responded reported knowing more about ADHD, including supporting a friend or family member or work colleague with ADHD. This figure was 61% in relation to Dementia.

This action has been completed for 2021/22.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
2	Link the Awareness Days to the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Information and materials provided through the awareness days is collated and stored centrally for ease of access and future reference.	Staff have access to relevant information and support services.	NIGALA Annually Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

As point 1 above.

Information and materials provided through the awareness days is shared with staff beforehand and stored centrally for future reference.

This action was completed.

Placement Scheme

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
3	Consider how the organisation can create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.	People with a disability gain meaningful work experience. Staff gain insight into the reality of the supports and adjustments required to enable a person with a disability gain employment opportunities.	Placement considered and where possible offered each year. Feedback indicates that placement meets expectations.	NIGALA Annually Not Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

Due to Covid related government guidelines the Placement Scheme did not go ahead in 2021/22.

In relation to the Scheme for 2022/23, which commenced on 1 March 2022 NIGALA was unable to offer a placement.

We did not complete this action.

Tapestry

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
4	Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan.	Staff with a disability feel more confident that their needs and experiences are understood and inform relevant planning and decision making.	Tapestry meeting notes indicate that actions to support staff have been delivered.	NIGALA Annually Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

- During 2021/22, we tried to promote Tapestry in a number of different ways and to encourage staff to get involved. We sent emails to all staff to raise awareness. Tapestry gained a few new members who attended meetings and joined the Tapestry mailing list.
- Tapestry were approached by BSO HR to give input into many projects including user testing of the new HR portal and input into a new line manager resource which will now have a section on managing staff with disabilities due to suggestions put forward by members.

- Three Tapestry members presented at a system leadership conference which was attended by senior leaders across HSC. The members presented on the barriers they have faced in work and the things that have been put in place to address these. Tapestry was also promoted as a good practice example of supporting staff. A lot of questions were asked about all three presenters' experiences and they all contributed their differing experiences.

This action has been completed for 2021/22.

Monitoring

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
6	Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff on the importance of monitoring	More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability	Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90%	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

Email communication was sent during 2021/22 (November 2021) encouraging staff to input monitoring data to their profile on HRPTS. The communication providing the reasons monitoring data is collected and how the data would be used. A guide was sent to all staff advising how to complete same if they wished to do so.

Due to low staff resources staff monitoring data has been unavailable, the most recent data received was in June 2021 and showed that 80% of NIGALA staff told us whether they had a disability or not. 1.5% told us that they have a disability. This figure is almost the same as last year. This means that we have to keep encouraging staff to complete the information.

We completed this action for 2021/22.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
7	Prompt staff to keep their personal equality monitoring records (via self-service on new Human Resources IT system) up to date.	Create an open and inclusive workplace culture that is proactive in supporting staff with a disability.	Annual reminder issued to staff to update their personal details on HRPTS.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually Completed for 2021/22

What we did over the last year:

As above.

This action has been completed for 2021/22.

Training

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
9	In collaboration with disabled people design, deliver and evaluate training for staff and Board Members on disability equality and disability legislation.	Increased staff and Board Member awareness of the range of disabilities and needs. Supports and complements NIGALA's Health and Wellbeing initiatives.	All staff trained (general and bespoke) within 2 years through eLearning or interactive sessions and staff awareness initiatives delivered Training evaluation forms.	BSO Equality Unit Annually Completed for 2021/22
<p>What we did over the last year:</p> <p>The Making A Difference e-learning programme includes a number of scenarios that involve people with a disability and asks staff to think through how best to support individuals, as well as giving information on disability legislation. All our staff have to complete the programme. During 2021/22, 0 staff completed the Making A Difference Training, however to date a total of 72 members of staff have completed part 1, and 8 managers have completed parts 1 and 2.</p> <p>Disability Awareness eLearning (module 5 of Discovering Diversity). Since much of the content of Discovering Diversity is based on Flash Player, which is no longer supported, registration requests for this eLearning package can no longer be processed. We are working on a fix for this issue.</p> <p>This action has been completed for 2021/22.</p>				

Additional Measures

- We always include disability on our list of things to talk about at our quarterly Equality Forum with our partner organisations.
- We report on progress against our Disability Action Plan to our Board and Senior Leadership Team (the people at the top of our organisation) every year.

Encourage Others

- We include questions relating to the two duties in our equality and human rights screening form. The screening form is completed for all policies and decisions. This includes work that other organisations will do for us, for example, contracts that we have with voluntary sector organisations for health and wellbeing promotion work.

Monitoring

We monitored progress on joint actions in our plans together with our partner organisations at our quarterly forum meetings.

Revisions

We have made some small changes to our Disability Action Plans 2021/22

Conclusions from Disability Action Plan report 2021/22

- We completed **6** actions (actions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9)
- We didn't do what we said we would do under **1** action (action 3)
- We still have some work to do to complete **0** actions.
- All of the actions in our action plan are at a regional and local level.
- Our action plan is a live document. If we make any big changes to our plan we will involve people with a disability. We will tell the Equality Commission about any changes.

Chapter 4: Equality and Disability Action Plan 2018-2023 Updated July 2021 (ECNI Q8, 9)

Introduction

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 Sean Brown. When you have any questions you can contact Sean at:

4th Floor, Centre House
79 Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 4JE

Telephone: 0300 555 0102

sean.brown@nigala.hscni.net

Who we are and what we do

NIGALA is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland. We were set up in November 1996.

NIGALA is a special agency which employs social workers, called Guardians, to advise the courts of children's wishes and feelings and to independently represent and safeguard the interests of children in care and adoption proceedings in Northern Ireland.

We do things like:

- Read the Trust files to understand what work has been undertaken with the family and the decisions made and plans for the child.
- Appoint a Solicitor, someone who knows about the law, to help the court understand all about the child and make good decisions about the child's care.
- Assist the court to make sure that all the right information is available and avoid delay in making decisions.

As an organisation we have a number of important issues that we have to manage such as:

- Finance: Making sure that we spend the money that we get from the Department well and provide a good quality service.
- Information Technology: Using computers to support the work that we do.
- Managing Information: Ensuring that the personal and sensitive information that we have is safe, secure and only available to people who need it.
- Human Resources: Employing staff, taking care of their salaries, general wellbeing and providing support for them to do their job.

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 Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency. NIGALA engages with relevant stakeholders from the HSCT's, Judiciary, Solicitors and relevant organisations e.g. Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to inform and influence practice developments.

The Agency developed "About Me" and "About Court" resources for Guardians to use with children and young people to support their engagement and participation in court proceedings. The resources were piloted and feedback from children and young people was incorporated into the documents. The consultation process involved educators in the learning disability sector who provided tools and images used for children and young people with learning needs.

NIGALA 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 new 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?

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:

- 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 then consulted publicly on our draft plans. When we started the consultation we informed all consultees on our consultation list of the details of the consultation and how people could engage with us directly or respond in writing. We invited consultees to attend one of two consultation events, one in Belfast and one on Derry/Londonderry. In addition we offered to meet in person with anyone preferring to do so.

We engaged closely with Tapestry, our Disability Staff Network, in the development of our Disability Action Plans. We also drew on the learning from a survey that we carried out with our staff who have a disability or who care for someone who has a disability. The survey focused on what would make an organisation an “Employer of Choice” for them.

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 undertook “An evaluation of Social Work practice in the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency in Working with Children and Families from Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in Northern Ireland”. The findings were published in the Child Care in Practice Journal 30/11/16.
- We devised a policy to inform the appointment of Solicitors from the NIGALA Solicitor Panel to support an equitable and transparent process. This is reviewed by the Senior Management Team and an anonymised report is issued to Solicitor bi-annually.

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 seven disability awareness days for our staff. Each looked at different disabilities: Epilepsy, Sight loss and blindness, Depression, Hearing loss and deafness, Learning disabilities, Cancer, and Arthritis and Musculoskeletal conditions. Information was e-mailed to our staff and displayed within the organisation. With our colleagues in the NI Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery we also hosted a number of information sessions for staff involving speakers and volunteers from local voluntary groups.
- 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.
- 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 checked our website to make sure it is accessible.

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. NIGALA facilitated a placement in 2015/16.
- We have developed standards and guidance for the involvement of people with a disability and a checklist for organising inclusive meetings.
- We have put in place a process for publishing screening templates as soon as they are completed. A disability organisation had suggested that we do so. We do the same for publishing the quarterly screening reports.

- We developed a resource for line managers on reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability.
- 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 was 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 elearning 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: <http://www.nigala.hscni.net/>

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: <http://www.nigala.hscni.net/>

We 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 and what they may do differently as a result of what they have learned.
- We do a survey with people from a particular equality group after we have delivered an action targeted at them to ask whether they feel better supported as a result.
- 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.

Signed by:

Mr Peter Reynolds

Chief Executive

Date: 30 March 2018

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
2	Revise and implement guidance to achieve consistent corporate branding to ensure that our website and all the information (operational and corporate) generated by the Agency is accessible and complies with best practice guidance.	All information and materials produced by NIGALA comply with Agency guidance.	Consistent house style (font, format) in compliance with Agency guidance.	Corporate Services March 2022
Gender Identity				
6	Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff as part of the roll-out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy	Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more supported in the workplace	90% of relevant staff have been trained.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2022
Training/Practice Development				
7	Making a Difference: e-learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver on training targets 	Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights.	Making a Difference e-learning included in mandatory training for all staff. 75% in the first year and 100% thereafter of staff have completed the e-learning module.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually

Domestic Violence				
8	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 are better supported	Awareness raising undertaken with 100% of staff	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2022

Disability Action Plan 2018-2023:

What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When	
Awareness Days				
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)	Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs.	Two annual awareness days profiled >50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days.	NIGALA Annually
2	Link the Awareness Days to the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	Information and materials provided through the awareness days is collated and stored centrally for ease of access and future reference.	Staff have access to relevant information and support services.	NIGALA Annually

Placement Scheme				
3	Consider how the organisation can create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.	People with a disability gain meaningful work experience. Staff gain insight into the reality of the supports and adjustments required to enable a person with a disability gain employment opportunities.	Placement considered and where possible offered each year. Feedback indicates that placement meets expectations	NIGALA Annually
Tapestry				
4	Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan	Staff with a disability feel more confident that their needs and experiences are understood and inform relevant planning and decision-making. Staff with a disability feel better supported.	Tapestry meeting notes indicate that actions to support staff have been delivered	NIGALA Annually
Monitoring				
6	Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff on the importance of monitoring.	More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability	Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90%	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually

7	Prompt staff to keep their personal equality monitoring records (via self-service on new Human Resources IT system) up to date.	Create an open and inclusive workplace culture that is proactive in supporting staff with a disability.	Annual reminder issued to staff to update their personal details on HRPTS.	
Training				
9	In collaboration with disabled people design, deliver and evaluate training for staff and Board Members on disability equality and disability legislation.	Increased staff and Board Member awareness of the range of disabilities and needs.	All staff trained (general and bespoke) within 2 years through eLearning or interactive sessions and staff awareness initiatives delivered Training evaluation forms	BSO Equality Unit Annually
10	Sign up to Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts	Agency commitment to creating an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health. Supports and complements NIGALA's Health and Wellbeing initiatives.	Absence figures reduced Increase in % of staff who declare that they have a mental health condition	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2023

Chapter 5: Equality & Human Rights Screening Report (ECNI Q18)

NIGALA screening can be viewed by accessing the following link:

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3086.htm>

Policy / Procedure and Screening Documentation	Policy Aims	Date	*Screening Decision
Menopause at Work Policy	This menopause policy and supporting guidance are intended to provide clarity and direction on how NIGALA should deal with menopause related issues, for individuals experiencing difficulties associated with the menopause.	Sep-21	Screened out with mitigation
Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse	The purpose of this policy is to signal a clear commitment of the NIGALA's support to any member of staff affected by domestic abuse.	Jan-22	Screened out with mitigation

No concerns were raised by consultees on any of the screenings published in 2021-22.

Menopause at Work Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
<p>Gender Whilst menopause occurs in women, it was important to highlight how it can affect different genders both directly and indirectly. This policy and supporting guidance are intended to provide clarity and direction on how NIGALA should deal with menopause related issues, for all individuals irrespective of their perceived gender who are experiencing difficulties associated with the menopause.</p> <p>Age Although menopause is part of the natural ageing process, medical conditions or surgical intervention can bring on menopause irrespective of age. This policy and supporting guidance highlights how variance exists in age and will raise wider awareness and understanding of menopause. In many cases it is an individual experience, not comparable with colleagues of the same age or stage of menopause.</p> <p>Disability Menopause of itself is not a disability, however, depending on the severity of and longevity of menopause-related symptoms experienced by the individual it may be classified as such. Davies v</p>	<p>This policy shall be reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every 2 years or; following receipt of new information; ▪ upon implementation of new agreements which may affect the procedure <p>Regular communication to staff on awareness/education on menopause</p> <p>Consultation with appropriate groups from the voluntary sector via Employment Equality Network Group</p> <p>Ensure appropriate language is used and update where necessary Provide awareness sessions on Menopause on a regular basis</p> <p>Update Health and Wellbeing SharePoint site with up to date information, webinars, infographics, toolkits where appropriate</p>

Scottish Courts & Tribunal Service in May 2018, an employee's menopausal symptoms were deemed to be a disability for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Therefore when dealing with employees who have menopausal symptoms, NIGALA will need to be mindful of the need to consider if an employee is disabled as a result of those symptoms and if it is concluded that they are reasonable adjustment(s) will be considered in line with relevant policies and related legislative provisions such as the DDA 1995. Case law has also recognised the importance of putting in place 'timely' reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability.

Marital Status/Ethnicity/Sexual Orientation

Menopause Assessment and action plan guidance for managers and employees included in appendices to support the policy outlining how the menopause can have an effect on marital status, and how the menopause can affect people differently depending on their ethnicity and sexual orientation. This policy covers the impact of the menopause of employees working within HSC organisations recognising that severe menopausal symptoms can adversely affect health and wellbeing, work performance absenteeism, presenteeism, staff retention and/or health and safety at work.

The policy sets out the key principles to which NIGALA should adhere to, to ensure that individuals affected by the

<p>menopause or peri-menopause are treated fairly and given appropriate support and any reasonable adjustments if applicable.</p>	
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Workplace Policy on Domestic Abuse

<p>In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?</p>	<p>What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?</p>
<p>Disability: Ensure that this policy (and others) is in accessible formats for e.g. size 14 for those who are partially sighted and consideration given to all those with disabilities. Also, all staff are to be made aware of the policy, though such avenues as Awareness Sessions. There may be a need for support and any reasonable adjustments to practice to ensure a fair hearing.</p> <p>Age Younger (or older) members of staff may lack experience or confidence to report incidents of domestic abuse, and therefore the policy states clearly what constitutes incidents of domestic abuse and gives examples.</p> <p>Sexual orientation In order to give LGB people more confidence in reporting incidences of domestic abuse, the policy states that staff can approach HR if they are uncomfortable approaching their manager. Support sources and organisations for people of different sexual orientations have been included in the policy.</p>	<p>For all issues identified under Section 75 it is important that this policy is shared with all, and targeted with the section 75 groups. Therefore communication is key when this policy is released. NIGALA will continue to gather data in regards on all incidences of domestic abuse) and gather equality data in order to monitor the progress of this policy and procedure.</p> <p>To ensure the on-going effectiveness of this policy and procedure, a review will be undertaken at regular intervals, and not more than 3 years from the date of implementation.</p>

Ethnicity

It is recognised that cultural differences exist between different ethnic groups, and that staff from minority ethnic groups may be reluctant to report incidents of domestic abuse. Sources of help and information on agencies who can help people experiencing domestic violence are included in the policy. This includes details of the PSNI, including the availability of Domestic Violence Support Officers. Details for Victim Support, Women's Aid, and the Simon Community are also included, who can provide legal advice, and information on housing and benefits available to those leaving situations of domestic abuse/ violence.

Gender

As most cases of domestic abuse involve a female victim, and that people are especially vulnerable leaving work, the policy suggests support with transport arrangements to and from work if necessary. A safety at work plan is also included in the guidance policy.

In recognition that men may be less likely to seek help when experiencing domestic abuse, details are provided of organisations specialising in providing support to male victims of domestic abuse.

Dependents

The policy includes arrangements for Special leave, if for example the employee needs to find suitable

alternative accommodation. Also included is flexibility in shift patterns to suit additional or more complicated caring arrangements as a result of domestic abuse.	
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Appendix 1 – Further Explanatory Notes

1. Consultation and Engagement

(ECNI Q10)

Targeting:

We did not undertake any public consultations or pre-consultation exercises during the year.

(ECNI Q13)

Awareness raising for consultees on Equality Scheme commitments:

During the year, in our quarterly screening reports we raised awareness as to our commitments relating to equality screenings and their publication.

(ECNI Q14)

Consultation list – During the year, we reviewed our consultation list every quarter.

2. Audit of Information Systems

(ECNI Q20)

We completed an audit of information systems at an early stage of our Equality Scheme implementation, in line with our Scheme commitments.

i This includes as a result of:

- Screening/Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)
- Monitoring
- Staff training
- Engagement and consultation
- Improvements in access to information and services
- Implementation of Equality and Disability Action Plans

In most cases, it is not possible to ascribe developments and changes to one single factor. New initiatives, such as the Gender Identity Employment Policy for instance are not necessarily an outcome of screenings or Equality and Disability Action Plan implementation.

As mainstreaming progresses and the promotion of equality becomes part of the organisation culture and way of working, the more difficult it becomes to ascribe activities and outcomes to the application of a specific element of Equality Scheme implementation.



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