Western Health and Social Care Trust

Equality Screening Report

1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request

Introduction

The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) must consider by law, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, how we promote equality and remove discrimination for people who use our services and for members of staff. Our obligations are set out in our Equality Scheme. The 9 groups that are specified in the Equality Scheme are:

Black and Minority Ethnic People	Different Marital Status e.g. Single, Married, Divorced, Civil Partnership, Widowed	Disabled People
Carers	Different Political Opinions	Men and Women
Different Ages - Young People/Older People	Different Religious Beliefs	People who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual

We also have to consider how we can promote good relations between people with different religious beliefs, political opinions or racial group (including people from the Travelling Community).

Within the Equality Scheme, the Trust gives a commitment to apply equality screening processes to all new and revised policies/proposals and, where necessary, to subject new policies/proposals to a full equality impact assessment. This process helps us to:

- assess the impact/consequences of our decisions on the people within the 9 equality groups;
- consider how we might better meet their needs (promote equality of opportunity);
- reduce any negative impacts/consequences (mitigating actions).

The Trust is required to have evidence that the following questions have been considered in relation to all policy development, strategic planning and general decision making:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy/proposal, for each of the Section 75 categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?
- To what extent is the policy/proposal likely to impact on good relations, between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)

- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

(*From 'Section 75 of the NI Act: A Guide for Public Authorities': ECNI).*

The Trust's Equality Screening process provides this evidence.

If it is decided that a policy/proposal is likely to have major issues relating to equality, it is then necessary to consider carrying out a more detailed exercise called a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

Equality screening for all the policies/initiatives detailed has highlighted the need to ensure that information relating to them/the service is made available, throughout, to support those service users/families/carers who do not have English as a first language, including the use of foreign language interpreters and written translations etc., in line with Trust guidelines. In addition, service users, their families, carers or staff who require additional communication support including e.g. provision of information in Braille, sign language interpreters, large font or audio, will be provided with this.

Should you wish to obtain a copy of any of the policies and/or screening forms referred to in this document, or require them in an alternative format, please contact:

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Western Health and Social Care Trust: Screening Outcomes for the Period 1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026

Adult Mental Health and Disability Directorate			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Reason for Outcome**	**Date Compl'd**
Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHSCT) Adult Mental Health Services Absent Without Leave (AWOL) Policy 2 January 2026 This guidance aims to identify action to be taken in all instances of a patient being absent without leave (AWOL) from any adult mental health/learning disability hospital, residential, nursing or day care facility. The general principles within this policy should be applied to any patient, detained or voluntary, who has been identified as AWOL. In all such instances, a risk assessment should be carried out immediately to determine the level of risk which will in turn inform the action to be taken.	**Amber:** Minor equality issues/impact: actions identified	This Absence Without Leave (AWOL) Guidance has been updated to reflect changes in best practice and in accordance with the regional AWOL Policy. Its overall aim is to ensure admission structures and processes are consistent, safe, efficient and effective for users of the service and staff. Overall the updated guidance document once operational will improve the quality, experiences and outcomes for users of service and provide up to date guidance for staff to use in the event of an AWOL and will be available to staff via the Trust Intranet.	15/04/2026
Community & Older People Directorate			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Title of Policy and Description**	**Date Compl'd**
To offer GP Practice Staff in practices transferred to the WHSCT the option to transfer from their existing Terms & Conditions to Agenda for Change (AfC) Terms & Conditions This consultation proposal relates to the three GP Practices of Fintona, Brookeborough/Tempo and	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This proposal will give staff the choice to transfer to AfC terms and conditions. It is recognised that some staff may choose not to transfer to AfC terms and conditions and the Trust will continue to support these staff in their continued employment in the GP Practices.	18/05/2026

Racecourse Road locations. Between 1 July 2022 and 1 April 2024 a total of 31 staff transferred employment to the Western Trust from these three GP Practices, in line with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations 2006. The proposal is that all these staff will be offered the choice to transfer to AfC terms and conditions in their entirety, in line with the AfC handbook.		Staff will be supported to transition to the Trust through appropriate induction and introduction to mandatory training and Trust policies. GP Practice staff were updated with reference to ongoing discussions between the Trust and Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG) with regard to transferring GP Practice to AfC terms and conditions. Meetings were held with staff to inform them of the decision as follows: • 3 March 2026, Racecourse Road GP Practice • 4 March 2026, Fintona Medical Centre • 5 March 2026, Brookeborough & Tempo GP Practice	
Family and Children's Directorate			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Reason for Outcome**	**Date Compl'd**
Infant Feeding Policy (revised 2026) This policy has been written to aid WHSCT in the implementation and maintenance of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Standards and the recommendations of the current Breastfeeding Strategy for Northern Ireland. This policy aims to ensure that the care provided improves outcomes for children and families, specifically to deliver an increase in breastfeeding rates at initiation in hospital, 10-14 days, 6-8 weeks, 14-16 weeks, 6 months and 1 year. Furthermore it aims to increase in the number of babies receiving	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	The aims & objectives within this policy will be achieved by staff having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All new staff, who support expectant and new mothers and their partners to feed and care for their baby, will be introduced to the policy within 1 week of commencing employment within the WHSCT in line with the UNICEF Baby Friendly Standards and must complete an infant feeding update within 6 months of commencing employment within the WHSCT. Staff will have access to the policy via the trust intranet. All staff within maternity, health visiting and neonatal will be emailed the policy. The Infant Feeding Policy will also be	30/06/2026

breastmilk within the neonatal unit.		communicated to all directorates within the trust as it applies to general wards and A&E settings in particular section 5.0 which promotes keeping breastfeeding mothers and baby dads together when a mother is admitted to an acute general ward setting. This policy will be promoted through team briefings, training and education programmes (virtually & face to face) as well as accessibility to guidance and related documents on trust website.	
Finance, Contracts & Capital Development Directorate			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Reason for Outcome**	**Date Compl'd**
Debt Management and Recovery Policy – Residential Nursing Home Clients The purpose of this policy is to set out consistent and effective processes for the collection, recovery and enforcement of residential and nursing home charges owed to the Trust. Effective financial management is critical to the Trust's ability to fund the range and level of services delivered. The best method of debt collection is prevention – ensuring that debt does not arise in the first instance. This document provides a framework to enable legal enforcement to be undertaken to recover debts where appropriate. The policy was revised to reflect current legislation,	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended .	The purpose of this policy is to set out consistent and effective processes for the collection, recovery and enforcement of residential and nursing home charges owed to the Trust. This policy provides a framework to enable legal enforcement to be undertaken to recover debts where appropriate. The policy will be communicated to staff through Trust-wide email notification, and targeted communication to relevant staff groups. Service users' families and representatives will be informed through financial assessments, written correspondence, and direct engagement as part of routine care and financial management processes.	13/05/2026

regional alignment with other NI Trusts, operational practice, and legal advice, replacing outdated content and strengthening clarity around recovery steps and safeguards.			
Overpayments Investigations and Reporting Procedure This procedure sets out the Western Health & Social Care Trust's approach to identifying, reporting, reviewing and managing staff salary and expense overpayments. The purpose is to ensure robust financial stewardship, compliance with Managing Public Money NI, and consistent processes for recovery, learning and prevention of recurrence.	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This procedure outlines the roles, responsibilities and processes for overpayment of salary or expenses. Under Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), the Trust has an obligation to recover all overpayments. The Payroll Shared Service Centre (PSSC) will apply the Regional Overpayments Policy as a means of recovering these monies. The procedure will be published on the Trust intranet, with targeted communication issued directly to staff whose job roles and responsibilities are impacted.	13/05/2026
Electronic Petty Cash Workbook Guidance The guidance defines the standard process for submitting, approving and processing electronic Petty Cash claims through the Finance Process Manager (FPM). The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Trust Cash Handling Procedures and outlines the process for submitting and processing electronic Petty Cash requests using the FPM system. The aim of this guidance is to, ensure consistent, compliant processing of petty cash transactions across the Trust, support financial governance via standardised workflows and approvals and improve efficiency through digital processing (FPM system)	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This Guidance outlines roles and responsibilities for all staff impacted by providing a standardised, step-by-step process for staff to submit, approve and process electronic petty cash requests using the Finance Process Manager (FPM) system This guidance will be published on the Trust intranet.	21/05/2206
Human Resources Directorate			

Title of Policy and Description	Outcome of Equality Screening	Reason for Outcome	Date Compl'd
Management of Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure The Management of Sickness Absence policy has been developed in partnership with trade unions, to ensure it remains legally compliant, operationally effective and aligned with HSCNI priorities on workforce wellbeing, attendance at work and service sustainability. The revised policy is intended to provide clearer structure, reduce ambiguity, and support managers to act earlier and more confidently to provide and maintain the appropriate support for staff with health conditions.	**Amber:** Minor equality issues/impact: actions identified	Any issues highlighted by affected staff will be able to be mitigated by support from management and access to support from employment policies, the application of terms and conditions and advice from human resources and occupational health. Staff are also encouraged to liaise with their Trade Union representatives for advice and support throughout the application of the policy and procedure. There is an awareness programme available prior to the policy going live in April 2026. This includes virtual awareness sessions, an e-learning module and the awareness slides and policy available on the intranet. There is currently in depth Attendance Management training being developed on a regional level which will be rolled out later in the year. These sessions are communicated via Trust Comms, email, line managers, Senior Management Team messaging, email signature links and HR Knowledge Hub.	14/04/2026
Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional Directorate			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Reason for Outcome**	**Date Compl'd**
Volunteering Policy The aim of this policy is to detail the arrangements and procedures necessary to provide a volunteer service within the Western Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) including ensuring those undertaking voluntary roles are correctly recruited, trained and supervised. The arrangements detailed within this policy ensure that it is operated	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This policy sets out the purpose and processes of delivering a volunteering service within the Trust. This policy aims to involve anyone with an interest in supporting the Trusts work through offering appropriate volunteer roles that add value to Trust services and aims to enhance the patient/client/service user experience. This policy clearly outlines roles and responsibilities in relation to volunteering for Trust staff and volunteers.	**21/05/2026**

consistently and fairly across the Trust.		This policy will be made available to staff on the Trust intranet, volunteers via email (and hard copy on request) and is available on the Trust website.	
Certifying Med3 Certificates by Designated Registered Nurses – Overarching Policy This policy provides instruction and guidance to Directorate Leads and Registered Nurses, ensuring that standardisation, assurance and governance processes are in place for the certifying of Med3 fit notes by designated Registered Nurses working in primary and secondary care settings in the Trust. A Med3 certificate is a statement of fitness for work provided to a patient to enable them to access health related benefits or statutory sick pay. A Med3 certificate can be used by patients who are employed, self-employed or unemployed to: receive statutory sick pay (SSP), receive Occupational sick pay from their employer, and apply for other benefits including Universal Credit (UC) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This policy outlines roles and responsibilities for Registered Nurses as well as outlining the expected standards required to be followed by Registered Nurses who will be involved in the issue of Med3 certificates. The policy will be communicated to staff via Trust Communication and will be available on the Trust Intranet.	**29/06/2026**
Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHSCT) Verification of Life Extinct Policy This policy outlines the Trust procedures for staff to follow and provide guidance on the appropriate action to take when Verifying Life Extinct.	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	The policy details the steps that Trust staff must take to verify life extinct and how this should be documented in both Primary and Secondary Care settings. The policy outlines roles and responsibilities for staff as well as steps to allow legal registration of the death and for a funeral to take place and sets out key principles and time frames for completion of Verification of Life Extinct. The policy will be shared with staff via a Trust communication and also via Trust Nursing and Midwifery	**24/04/2026**

		Group (Lead Nurses / Midwives), Ward Managers and Directorate meetings for dissemination to all staff.	
Planning, Performance & Corporate Services			
Title of Policy and Description	**Outcome of Equality Screening**	**Reason for Outcome**	**Date Compl'd**
Environmental Waste Management Policy The purpose of this Policy is to detail the Chief Executive and Trust Board commitment to eliminate or minimise, in so far as reasonably practicable, the risks to the environment arising from the installation, maintenance and operation of Trust Estate, and to outline Trust environmental management arrangements	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This policy outlines roles and responsibilities of staff. This Policy will be reviewed regularly to take cognisance of changes in legislation and guidance. This Policy will be communicated to staff on the Trust SharePoint Site and via Trust communications. Wards Departments and Facilities have an Environmental log book which contains environmental paperwork including the policy and manual, checked during audits by Trust Environment officers. This Policy, its scope and where to obtain a copy is also covered in waste training sessions by Trust Environment officers.	23/04/2026
Security Access Control Policy/Identity Card Operation Procedure 2025 To protect patients, clients, staff and property the Western Health and Social Care Trust operates identification badging/electronic access control in a number of its facilities. Staff in these locations are provided with a plastic 'swipe' card which allows them access to those areas relevant to their duties. Reports can be run from the swipe access system if there is suspected misuse or for criminal investigation. These cards are also be used for	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	This Policy will increase security for staff, patients and visitors. It will improve Trust reputation, as the policy shows that the Trust takes security seriously. This Policy and the use of Access Control on Trust sites is to protect staff, patients and visitors and Trust assets. This Policy and procedures gives details on Roles and Responsibilities including; - how to get your card, what to do if you lose your card - how it should be used and worn - returning your card when you leave	23/04/2026

identification purposes. Community based staff are issued with identity cards in order to assure clients that people calling with them are authorised Trust personnel. Students and agency staff will receive a swipe access card from the ward or department they work in. The ward or department will keep a supply of generic cards that they are responsible for and must ensure that they are signed in and out for traceability. Contractors will be issued a generic swipe access card from the Estates team who will be responsible for signing in and out the cards for traceability.		- who and how to request a report on door access This Policy will be shared in a Trust Communication and will be available on the Intranet and the Support Services Hub	
Introduction of a Regional Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Car Parking Management Solution at Hospital Sites – updated to reflect the deferral of legislation to remove hospital car parking charges Implementation of a new car parking management system, including Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), to support the Hospital Parking Charges Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which prohibits the imposition of charges ANPR will be used primarily for monitoring and data collection purposes, with limited operational enforcement at designated hospital drop-off and collection areas only. Existing traffic management arrangements will remain in place across the wider hospital sites.	**Green:** No Impact: A full EQIA is not recommended.	The Trust will implement a communication plan for staff and the public through the Trust website, social media, site signage and patient information. These communications will explain the parking arrangements in place on each site. The revised car parking management arrangements will: • help to protect disabled parking bays • help to protect blue light routes and emergency access points • help to protect patient and visitor spaces, particularly in areas close to hospital entrances • support continued management of spaces for staff • reduce illegal and unauthorised parking on site • provide monitoring information to support future service planning for car parking	27/05/2026