



Chapter 3: Equality and Disability Action Plans Report 2025-26

Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan Report on progress made during 2025-26

What we did between April 2025 and March 2026

This document summarises progress made during 2025-26 against the actions in our Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan. The plans are available on our website:

[Corporate Documents \(pcc-ni.net\)](https://pcc-ni.net)

Any request for this document in another format or language will be considered.

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

Statement on Equality Action Plan Progress Report for 2025-26

During 2024-25, the Patient and Client Council (PCC) undertook a review of the current Equality Action Plan and concluded that some of the original targets are no longer fully reflective of the organisation's strategic direction or the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

We acknowledge that, during 2025-26, we did not develop revised and more targeted plans covering the period 2026–28 as we had intended to do. The aim is to ensure that our commitments remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with best practice in promoting equality and inclusion.

We remain committed to upholding our Section 75 and Disability Duties and will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout this process to ensure the new plans are robust, inclusive, and evidence-based.

We commit to revising some of our original targets by 31 January 2027 which take account of work that we are now doing to support our commitment to the outworking of our Action Plan.

Equality Action Plan – Conclusions

- PCC continued to deliver its “Support in the “Community” project which specifically targets some of the Section 75 groups. This was a new pilot programme introduced during the 2024-2025 year and the outworking of this supports areas within the Equality and Disability Action Plan which replaced some of the original plans noted below.
- PCC continued to support the Engagement Platforms, again targeting Section 75 groups. Further details noted below.
- PCC updated its Strategic and Operational Planning processes and an Interim Statement of Strategic Intent 2026-2028 was agreed with four key strategic objectives which have replaced the original operational outcomes noted in each section of the Equality and Disability Action Plans. These are noted under each action below.
- PCC recognise that a lot has changed during the last three years including a review of our delivery model, a substantial change in staffing and the ending of projects previously noted in the plans. A review of actions is noted below.

Equality Action Plan 2023-2028: What we will do to promote equality and good relations

Action 1:

What we will do: Build capacity of service users and carers, including those with a disability, across Northern Ireland to be able to effectively engage on HSC issues, raising awareness of the Section 75 categories.

What we are trying to achieve and who for: Section 75 category: Disability & those with dependents

PCC Strategic Objective 3:

Engage - To provide the public with a range of opportunities to get involved and connected to representatives across Health and Social Care, the voluntary and community sectors and other appropriate bodies.

Performance Indicators and Targets:

Indicator: Regular engagement platform meetings- with platforms involving marginalised groups who face health inequalities:

- Adult protection platform;
- Learning Disability service user platform & Learning Disability families and carers platform;
- Mental Health platform.
- Care of Older People platform.

Target: Increased numbers on engagement platforms from section 75 groups who are more marginalised and face health inequalities.

Indicator: The Adult Protection platform to continue to build capacity and connect engagement platform members (particularly those who are marginalised and face health inequalities) connect with decision makers on the design and implementation of future adult protection legislation

Target: increased engagement between the engagement platform and DoH on the development of the Adult Protection Bill.

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Target: increased engagement between the engagement platform and DoH on the development of the Adult Protection Bill.

By Whom: Service Manager, Senior Practitioner.

Progress 2025-26:

Themed engagement platforms under PCC Engage provide members of the public with a forum for engagement on specific areas of work and connect them with representatives across health and social care and voluntary and community sectors. An Engagement Platform is a space to bring together a group of people, with a common theme or interest and lived experience, to work together and make change in health and social care. Engagement Platforms allow participants to communicate their experiences and thoughts, related to a policy programme, with the PCC, as well as being able to share their views directly with decision-makers in health and social care. Engagement Platforms are a significant opportunity for decision makers in health and social care to have meaningful input from experts by experience, in service areas under review, development and reform.

Adult Protection: The Adult Protection Engagement Platform continued to focus on Adult Protection legislation for Northern Ireland. In 2025, the Adult Protection Bill was formally introduced by the Health Minister Mike Nesbitt and completed the second stage in June 2025. The Bill has since moved to Committee stage.

The Engagement Platform continued to meet with and receive updates from the Adult Protection Bill team on the Bill throughout 2025-26. Platform Members repeated the importance of including lived experience voices throughout each stage of the Bill. The Platform were influential in shaping the content of the Adult Protection Bill.

Care of Older People Engagement Platform: Over the past year, the Care of Older People Engagement Platform underwent a refresh to strengthen membership and expand opportunities for members to contribute to regional work across the Health and Social Care System. From 19 expressions of interest, 12 new members were recruited and attended meetings during this reporting period.

While the Platform held two formal meetings during the year, members have been actively contributing to a wide range of regional programmes, advisory groups and improvement initiatives.

Learning Disability Engagement Platform: The Learning Disability Engagement Platform have continued to meet with the PCC and the DoH leads throughout 2025-26. The Platform have voiced their concerns over the content of the Learning Disability Service Model which is due to

be rolled out over the next three years; highlighting the Service Model does not reflect the needs of individuals with more complex needs. Concerns included day centre provision being replaced by day opportunities. Whilst this move may suit many in the Learning Disability community, the Platform felt it would not be suitable for individuals who are currently thriving in day centres. They also raised concerns about day centres opening hours, transport arrangements and respite.

Mental Health Engagement Platform: The Mental Health Engagement Platform has continued to influence and shape Mental Health strategies and policy. This year the Platform grew in number, having successfully recruited 11 new members. These new members have broadened the range of lived experiences represented on the Platform. The Platform has frequently met with both the DoH and SPPG. The Platform's lived experience has been instrumental in the development of the Regional Mental Health Service (RMHS) refreshed implementation plan. Additionally, the Platform is an enabling structure of the Regional Mental Health Service, and its input has been acknowledged in the DoH's Mental Health Deliverability report.

Citizens Hubs: As part of the revised Statement of Strategic intent, the work to facilitate citizens hubs was stood down. PCC has prioritised themed engagement platforms as noted above.

Action Status: Complete.

Action 2

What we will do: Increase reach and membership of engagement structures with marginalised groups and those facing health inequalities

What we are trying to achieve and who for: Section 75 groups: people from Black and Ethnic Minority Groups, Disability.

Indicator: Build and increase our networks with organisations that actively work with service users from marginalised group. Build on the work that has been carried out previously with deaf and hard of hearing and ethnic minority community.

Progress 2025-2026

PCC Support in the Community

We initiated PCC Support in the Community in November 2024 to reach members of the public who may not usually access our services and to help combat health inequalities through the provision of advocacy support. We target locations based on information of under-representation obtained through intelligence from our Lucid Talk poll, which shows awareness of the PCC amongst different groups, along with NISRA Multiple Deprivation Measures to help us target certain locations.

Through a programme of locally delivered outreach clinics, PCC Support in the Community has brought independent advocacy directly to underrepresented communities who often face health inequality issues, ensuring that geography, background, or personal circumstances are not barriers to being heard.

Some members of the public received immediate advice and guidance on the day, while others were supported through more complex advocacy processes requiring follow-up and ongoing casework.

The 38 venues included local advice centres, migrant support hubs, community and wellbeing centres, men's sheds, primary care MDTs, and organisations within the voluntary and community sector. By building trust and relationships within these settings, the PCC has created regular and accessible touchpoints for advocacy support and engagement with the public.

Support in the Community has proven effective in reaching individuals who may feel hesitant to approach statutory services or navigate complaints systems. By embedding advocacy within trusted local settings, Support in the Community has built confidence, reduced anxiety, and enabled timely resolution of issues and complaints.

Positive Passporting

The PCC has continued to develop the 'Positive Passporting Initiative' recognising the wealth of knowledge and expertise across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. Adopting a 'positive passporting' approach means that PCC take time to explore the needs of people engaging with the PCC, identifying what action is possible through PCC support, and the additional services needed that PCC may not be able to provide. The aim is for PCC to connect individuals, through a 'positive passport', into those other services. PCC is committed to engaging with other organisations to enhance the support available for members of the public on issues or concerns they may have. This includes receiving referrals from partner organisations.

Formal referral pathways have been developed with 30 plus organisations. Further relationships with the Voluntary and Community Sector continue to develop through the PCC Support in the Community pilot which includes specific targeting of groups from ethnic minority communities, older people and disability.

Action Plan Changes

As noted earlier, PCC has developed a revised Interim Statement of Strategic Intent coupled with new operation plans to support the change in our work. Our Health and Social Care system is under tremendous strain and significant challenges exist across all health services in Northern Ireland. This has resulted in both a significant increase in demand for PCC advocacy services, and a noted increase in the complexity of cases requiring PCC input. In response to the greater demand for our services, we continue to strive to maximise our resources and work in partnership with the public, community and voluntary sectors. Reflecting on the operational outcomes listed in the Statement of Strategic Intent 2022-2025, while there have been huge developments in many of the areas noted, reprioritisation of resources has meant that we will no longer focus on some of these. These changes have impacted in some of the target areas within the Equality and Disability Action Plans for 2023-2028.

Action Status: Complete

In summary these are noted below:

Action 3

Over the next five years we will review how information is collected.

Update: PCC has introduced a new Case management System (June 2026) which will provide greater opportunities for data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

Action 4

PCC will put in place a targeted engagement program to meet with ethnic minorities, men, young people, the travelling community and those with a learning disability.

Update: This action is supported through PCC engagement platforms noted above and the introduction of the Support in the Community project in November 2024.

Action 5

Over the next five years, we will widen our efforts to draw attention to equality and diversity issues relating to ethnicity and sexual orientation in the first instance.

Update: This action is supported through the introduction of the Support in the Community project in November 2024. Focused support to ethnic minority groups but limited to date for sexual orientation.

Disability Action Plan 2023-2028: What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Action 1:

What we will do: Develop tools for engagement with people with a disability specifically those partially sighted, registered blind or with poor literacy skills.

What we are trying to achieve and who for:

The PCC and its external communications to be more accessible to those who are partially sighted, registered blind or with poor literacy skills.

Performance Indicator and Target:

Ensure PCC external communications are translated to easy read & translated versions.

Action Status: Complete

PCC website fully accessible using “Reachdeck” for translation services. All documentation produced in “plain English”. Videos include the use BSL and ISL for those with hearing impairments. Additional advocacy support provided to those with visual impairments and poor literacy skills.

Action 2:

What we will do: Explore methodology to diversify engagement with section 75 groups.

What we are trying to achieve:

Exploration and scoping of IT technology development, both equipment and software, that would maximise and diversify PCC’s reach in its engagement and advocacy work in a post-pandemic environment, and support practice, including making PCC’s services more accessible to section 75 groups.

Performance Indicator and Target:

PCC IT technology equipment and software are more accessible to section 75 groups.

Action Status: Complete

PCC website fully accessible using “Reachdeck” for translation services and external consultation held on accessibility.

Action 3:

What we will do: Awareness Days - Raise awareness of the lived experience of people with specific disabilities and conditions.

What we are trying to achieve and who for: Promoting positive attitudes:

Increased staff awareness of a range of disabilities and conditions.

Performance Indicators and Targets: 2 awareness days profiled every year.

By Whom: Senior Management with support from BSO Equality Unit.

Progress 2025-26: Our first Awareness Day covered Autism and ADHD. It was held on 3 December 2025, facilitated by Specialisterne. The second Awareness Day, held on 24 March 2026, focused on Chest, Heart and Stroke Conditions. Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke staff provided presentations on the day. Materials have been made available for staff and board members unable to attend on the day.

How we met the performance indicator: 2 days delivered

Action Status: Action complete - this is an annual action

Action 4:**What we will do: Co- Production Associates**

Provide a model of remuneration for service users to become Co-production associates and use their lived experience in Health and Social Care to influence legislation, policy and practice

What we are trying to achieve:

PCC was to implement a Co-Production Associate approach in April 2023 to build capacity of our members to be representatives of Lived experience in Health & Social Care and how to influence legislation, policy and practice within HSC

Performance Indicator and Target:

Co-production associates trained as representatives of lived experience across PCC.

Action Status: Target removed

While PCC produced a “Remuneration Options Thought Paper” to accompany this target, no policy from DoH and no resources to support the initiative so target is stood down at this time.

Action 5:

What we will do: Tapestry - Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its priorities.

What we are trying to achieve and who for: Encouraging participation in public life:

Staff with a disability feel more confident that their voice is heard in decision-making.

Staff with a disability feel better supported.

Performance Indicators and Targets:

Increase in Tapestry membership or in participation at meetings

By Whom: Senior Management with support from BSO Equality Unit

Progress 2025-26: Tapestry, the staff disability network, met in July 2025. Subsequently, the chair resigned due to competing work commitments and a number of active members have now moved on to new employers. In the absence of a chair, secretary and treasurer, face-to-face meetings were paused. Tapestry has continued as a network via

email and staff queries, advice and support requests continue to be responded to.

Action Status: Action complete - this is an annual action

Future changes to action: Reworded Action: Advise staff of the existence and contact details of the Tapestry staff network.

Action 6:

What we will do: Placement Scheme - Create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities.

What we are trying to achieve and who for: Promoting positive attitudes and Encouraging participation in public life:

People with a disability gain meaningful work experience.

People with a disability are successful in applying for paid employment after they have completed a placement.

Performance Indicators and Targets: At least one placement offered every year.

Feedback through annual evaluation of scheme indicates that placement meets expectations.

At least one placement participant is successful in applying for paid employment within 12 months of completing their placement.

Progress 2025-26: During this year, the Framework for Disability Placements was finalised and signed off in the BSO, who led on this joint initiative for BSO and partner organisations. Further consideration was given to safeguarding issues and it was agreed that having in place Adult Safeguarding Arrangements will be a prerequisite for hosting placements. This has pushed back timelines for commencing placements into 2026-27.

Action Status: No progress made in offering a placement, but arrangements are now in place

Future changes to action: PCC will be supported by the BSO Human Resources team, who have taken the lead on this work

(5) 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 Management Team (the people at the top of our organisation) every year.

(6) Encourage Others

- Other than the activities reported in relation to disability in Chapter 2, we did not undertake any additional activities to encourage others.

(7) Monitoring

- We did not undertake any monitoring activities in addition to what is listed above.

(8) Revisions

- None during 2025-26.

Disability Action Plan 2025-26 - Conclusions

- We completed 4 actions.
- One action has been removed.

We commit to revising some of our original targets by 31 January 2027.