

22nd August 2022

BY EMAIL

████████████████████
Our Ref: FOI 1620

Dear ██████████

Your request for information was received on 15th December 2021 and was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please be advised that the Business Services Organisation (BSO) has now completed its search for the information you requested with regards to Equality within Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

I wish to take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in responding to your FOI request.

You have asked for how employees in HSC are monitored. I have to advise at this point that the BSO can only respond on behalf of itself and the following HSC organisations:

- Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG and formerly Health and Social Care Board)
- Public Health Agency (PHA)
- Patient & Client Council (PCC)
- NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA)
- NI Social Care Council (NISCC)
- NI Practice & Education Council (NIPEC)
- Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)
- NI Medical & Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)

We are not in a position to respond on behalf of the other Health Trusts in Northern Ireland, therefore you will have to contact each of them directly. However, their practice is something similar to the below response.

BSO and the above organisations are statutorily required to monitor their employees in line with the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 and

Providing Support to Health and Social Care



Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations (NI) 1999 (As Amended). On a yearly and three yearly basis the BSO monitors current employees, applicants and progression of employees. To help us complete this requirement:

- Applicants to BSO and the above organisations are required to complete an online monitoring form which covers the 9 categories under the S75 legislation. Whilst all applicants are encouraged to complete this form, it is not mandatory.
- Employees have access to a self-service portal which enables them to update their equality information.
- The above organisations uses this information to monitor their employees who are progressing, starting and leaving each of the above organisations and report back to the Equality Commission.
- Recruitment Agencies are required to monitor those workers who register with them. BSO and the above organisations do not monitor recruitment agency workers. Recruitment agency workers do not have access to this portal.

The above organisations do not normally interact or have patients on their premises, however, they do have some contact with patients/clients outside of healthcare settings. All staff are required to complete an e-learning course on Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights: Making a Difference. Employees must complete this course every three years. This e-learning course is reviewed to ensure its content accurately reflects current legislation and best practice. Recruitment Agency workers who are placed in the above organisations should complete this course also. Other e-learning courses available to help educate staff on equality are as follows:

- LGBT – Creating Inclusive Workplaces
- Recruitment and Selection Training for panel members

These courses help ensure that our employees are consistently treating staff, clients and suppliers with dignity and respect.

The grievance procedure for BSO staff is as per attached document. This procedure is similar to what the other above organisations use and is developed in line with legislation. Currently, the HSC is developing a regional Grievance Procedure and should be launched in the coming months. I am not in a position to provide this new procedure until it goes live.

With regard your request on the number of grievances raised annually relating to areas of equality, the BSO would require a more specific timeframe (e.g. last 3 years) in order to provide a response. If you can provide such a timeframe, the BSO will aim to provide this information as soon as possible.

I hope that the information provided assists you. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter, as the BSO, along with all other public authorities are not obliged to accept internal review requests after this period has lapsed.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to

Information Governance Manager,
2 Franklin Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8DQ

If, following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision making panel, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the BSO has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can contact Information Commissioner at:

Website: www.ico.org.uk
Phone: 0303 123 1113
Email: casework@ico.org.uk
Post: Information Commissioner's Office
3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place
Belfast
BT7 2JB

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Yours Sincerely,



for Karen Bailey
Chief Executive