



Business Services
Organisation



2024-2025

BSO Annual Quality Report

Prepared by:
BSO Directorate of Strategic Planning
and Customer Engagement

<https://bso.hscni.net/>



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Executive Summary

The BSO's 12th Annual Quality Report 2024–25 highlights a year of significant progress, innovation, and commitment to excellence across the Health and Social Care (HSC) system in Northern Ireland. Despite financial pressures, BSO has continued to deliver high-quality, value-adding services to our customer organisations across HSCNI.

April 2024 marked the launch of our new Corporate Plan (2024–27), which sets out our three new Corporate Objectives: Our Customers, Our People, and Innovation. These priorities are driven by our HSC values, and provides the focus that guides our work and future direction.

In response to the Department of Health's "Quality 2020" Strategy, BSO has driven continuous improvement through the five quality themes of transforming the culture, strengthening the workforce, measuring and improving, raising the standards and integrating the care.

Transforming our Culture

Across our Directorates, BSO transformed its culture by fostering openness, transparency and honesty to collaborate and work in partnership to deliver high quality services to our customers. Key milestones included the rollout of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) process, the BSO People Awards and the launch of the BSO Digital Vision. BSO has also continued to transform the culture by driving staff engagement through various working groups, committees, staff events and the staff publication, Business Matters, whilst fostering customer engagement through over 100 fora.

Strengthening the Workforce

Across the BSO, we invested in high-quality training and leadership development to drive capability, empowerment and confidence to strengthen our workforce. With over 93% compliance in mandatory training and 841 staff participating in additional development programmes, BSO is committed to ensuring that our workforce is ready for the challenges ahead. This commitment was underpinned by our three-year People Strategy, that centres around driving visible leadership at all levels through culture, leadership, transformation and experience.

Measuring the Improvement



BSO has measured the improvement by applying external accreditations and recognised standards to demonstrate and improve the quality of our services. Legal Services retained ISO:9001 and Lexcel; ITS achieved ISO 20000 and ISO 9001; PaLS maintained its Gold Standard in CECOPS and its Micron 2 STS certificate, and was highly commended at the National Go Awards. Payroll gained full accreditation from the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals, whilst Accounts Payable and Receivable were both recognised as Centres of Excellence. BSO maintained its Silver status in Investors in People and, for the first time, achieved Silver status against the Investors in Wellbeing accreditation. Across Directorates, KPIs were re-developed to strengthen how we measure our performance across Service Areas, and drive the continuous improvement of our services.

Raising the Standard

BSO has raised the standard across the HSCNI by embedding evidence-based frameworks and partnering with customers to shape our services. This has been demonstrated by the “Make My Voice Heard” report that engaged 167 women on their experience of accessing health and social care in Northern Ireland. Through active involvement in working groups, audits, service frameworks, and national guidance consultations, stakeholders help to raise standards and drive continuous improvement.

Integrating the Care

BSO supported integrated care through multidisciplinary collaboration and digital transformation. The Digital Directorate successfully rolled out the encompass system across all Trusts, Northern Ireland’s first single electronic health record, accessible by over 35,000 users across HSCNI. This has enabled integrated pathways and continuity of care across acute, ambulatory, mental health, social care, and community care. Additional programmes such as Learn HSCNI, and the Paediatric Ophthalmology Visit Tracker have also delivered unified care pathways and enhanced patient safety.

Looking Ahead

In 2025–26, BSO will continue to build on these foundations with a focus on embedding the Performance Management Framework, optimising our digital programmes, refining SLAs, and driving workforce development. Across BSO, our staff will continue to drive innovation that champions quality improvements across Health and Social Care Northern Ireland. Through our strategic partnership, our innovative approach and a relentless focus on quality, BSO remains committed to making the delivery of health and social care possible.

Foreword from the BSO Chief Executive

Annual Quality Report 24-25

Chief Executive's Statement



Welcome to the Annual Quality Report 2024–25 for the Business Services Organisation (BSO).

Despite the significant financial pressures faced across the health sector during 2024–25, BSO continued to deliver high-quality, value-adding, and specialist professional services to our HSC partners. I am immensely proud of the dedication, innovation, and commitment shown by our staff—qualities that have been recognised locally, regionally, and nationally throughout the year.

As an organisation, we remain committed to delivering safe, efficient, and customer-focused services that provide value for money within HSC. Our collaborative approach continues to strengthen partnerships and improve outcomes across the sector.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the continued hard work of our teams, who consistently drive innovation and champion quality improvements across BSO. Their collaborative spirit not only enhances service delivery but also deepens our engagement with customers and stakeholders.

Each year, BSO adapts and evolves in response to a changing landscape building new skills, embracing innovation, and ensuring our services reflect the needs of our customers and the wider health and social care system.

We are now over halfway through delivering on the outcomes of the BSO Strategic Review and as we await the forthcoming PA Consulting interim report to inform the next stage of the Strategic Review, it is encouraging to reflect on the strong progress already achieved. A key milestone was the development of the BSO Digital Vision alongside the Realignment Project and the successful pilot of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) process (April 2024–March 2025) across key service areas. Building on this success, we rolled the process out across the organisation in Summer 2025—streamlining procedures, strengthening accountability, and embedding greater consistency.

Another significant milestone during 2024–25 was the role of our Digital Directorate in supporting the successful implementation of encompass—Northern Ireland’s new single digital care record system. With all Trusts now live, every citizen who engages with health and social care services will benefit from a unified digital care record, representing a major step forward in service integration and digital innovation.

This positions BSO strongly for the next phase of transformation, ensuring our services remain agile, customer-focused, and aligned with the evolving needs of HSC.

This year also marked the launch of our new Corporate Plan (2024–27), underpinned by three new Corporate Objectives: Our Customers, Our People, and Innovation. These priorities reflect the values that guide our work and our future direction.

I am pleased to confirm that BSO has retained Silver accreditation in Investors in People, and I am especially delighted to share that we have also achieved Silver accreditation in Investors in Wellbeing. This recognition highlights our ongoing commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our staff, which remains central to all that we do.

Our investment in staff continues to be a cornerstone of our success. With strong appraisal rates and a focus on continuous professional development, we remain committed to ensuring our workforce is highly skilled, knowledgeable, and equipped for the future.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on building strong relationships with our customers and stakeholders, ensuring clear communication, and driving improvements across HSC.

It is therefore my pleasure to present the Annual Quality Report 2024–25.

Karen Bailey
Chief Executive
September 2025

Introduction



The Business Services Organisation (BSO) was established in April 2009 to provide a range of business support and specialist professional services throughout the health and social care (HSC) sector. These services include Procurement and Logistics (PaLs), Counter Fraud and Probity (CFPS), Corporate Services, Finance, Equality, Human Resources (HR), Legal, Family Practitioner Services (FPS), and Internal Audit Services. A range of shared services are also provided, including IT, payroll, payments, accounts receivable and recruitment services.

In 2011 the Department of Health launched the “Quality 2020” – a strategy to protect and improve quality within and throughout Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland (NI).

The objectives of the 2020 Quality Strategy are outlined as follows:

- **Transforming the Culture** – to encourage the achievement of a high-quality service, which further promotes, prioritises and develops cross-working partnerships between staff for the benefit of carers, clients and patients;
- **Strengthening the Workforce** – support staff to deliver change and take necessary decisions in delivering a high-quality service through education, empowerment and leadership development;
- **Measuring and Improving** – measure and deliver Quality Improvement through the effective use of accredited techniques to enhance capacity, patient safety and experiences;
- **Raising the Standards** – develop and maintain evidence-based standards in partnership with all stakeholders to establish a clear framework that will guide best practice;
- **Integrating the Care** – using teamworking and shared learning (best practice) to further develop integrated care pathways.

The Clinical Education Centre (CEC) acts as a representative of the BSO on the Quality 2020 Implementation Team. The Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement (SP&CE) Directorate is responsible for co-ordinating BSO's organisational approach to quality excellence.

The preparation of the Annual Quality Report (AQR) is a key activity aligned with the Strategic Goal of measuring and improving in the Quality 2020 Strategy. This twelfth BSO Annual Quality Report highlights significant achievements in quality excellence and continuous improvement during 2024-25.

BSO Vision & Objectives

Our Vision:

“BSO – Making delivery of health and social care possible.”

Our Values:

The HSC values are central to everything we do and are aligned to our Corporate Objectives listed below which ensure we deliver against our BSO vision:



Our Objectives:

This year marked the launch of our new Corporate Plan for 2024-2027, underpinned by three Corporate Objectives: Our Customers, Our People, and Innovation. Our focus on these priorities have helped us to fulfill our vision in an increasingly challenging environment. As part of this, during 2024-2025, we aimed to:

Corporate Objective 1: Build strategic partnerships with our customers to deliver high quality services, demonstrating value and effective ways of working.

Corporate Objective 2: Support and invest in our people, their potential and their contribution in ensuring BSO is a great place to work.

Corporate Objective 3: Offer opportunities that continue to enable and support innovative improvements across HSC.

Our Corporate Objectives are underpinned by the HSC values

- Working Together
- Excellence
- Compassion
- Openness & Honesty



By 2026, we aim to have achieved the following outcomes:

- Delivered a high-quality, value for money service to our customers, with enhanced customer engagement and a focus on collaborative approaches.
- Strong leadership with a qualified and focussed workforce, alongside organised succession planning.
- Created a strong positive culture of excellence, equality, alongside a positive health and wellbeing approach.
- Development of a new Performance Management Framework, allowing BSO to track performance and plan future customer service delivery.
- Developed our Digital Approach to modernising and enhancing safer patient care.



Theme 1.

Transforming the

Culture

Theme 1. Transforming the Culture



*The Quality 2020 aim: **We will make achieving high quality the top priority at all levels in health and social care. We will promote and encourage partnerships between staff, patients, clients and carers to support decision making.***

Achieving high-quality care across health and social care services begins with cultivating a culture that reflects our core values of working together, openness and honesty, compassion, and excellence.

Rooted in our values, a culture that is open, honest, transparent, and client-focused is essential to delivering excellence. Through strong governance and meaningful partnerships with our staff and customers, we aim to embed quality at every level of decision-making and service delivery.

This section highlights how BSO is transforming its culture to foster collaboration and work in partnership to deliver high quality services to our customers and

BSO Board

The Executive and Non-Executive Directors of the BSO Board provide dedicated leadership for the organisation and are responsible for ensuring the organisation achieves its strategic objectives. The strategic direction for the BSO is guided by the Board, who are accountable to the Department of Health (DoH) and the Minister for Health. The BSO Chief Executive is accountable to the Board for the performance of the organisation. There were a number of new appointments to the Board during 2024-25. These newly appointed individuals will bring a broad range of experience and expertise to BSO and are well-placed to support the organisation to continue identifying and acting upon opportunities for improvement.

The BSO Board and its Committees maintain a focus on quality by reviewing performance information, including key quality indicators, on a regular basis. This information is presented through:

- Governance and Audit Committee (GAC)
- Business and Development Committee (BaDC)
- Quarterly Report on Performance (Dashboard)
- Monthly Finance Report
- Quarterly Report on Performance against Annual Business Plan
- Quarterly Human Resources and Corporate Services Report
- Annual Service Offering to Customers
- Annual Report
- Compliance with Audit Reports and Controls Assurance Standards
- Quality Awards and Accreditations updates
- Corporate Customer Satisfaction Survey with associated improvement action plans

Legal Services

Customer Engagement Forum

BSO Legal Services worked in partnership with the Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI) team to establish a Customer Engagement Forum. This forum provides a platform for regular and constructive engagement with customer organisations to work together to solve problems and improve the quality of BSO Legal Services in line with customer needs. This has supported open and transparent discussions that provide meaningful feedback to enhance service delivery.

BSO Legal Services Strategic Review

BSO Legal Services commissioned a strategic review conducted in 2021 by Associates from the Leadership Centre and identified a number of recommendations for BSO Legal Services to implement and transform its service provision.

The change programme was guided by a two-year roadmap developed in partnership with staff and customer organisations to transform ways of working to enhance the quality of legal service provision to our clients. The programme achieved the following objectives:

- Ensuring the funding model and resources are appropriate to meet the requirements of both BSO Legal Services and its Customers.
- The development and implementation of a comprehensive workforce strategy, to ensure BSO Legal Services has the workforce required to meet the needs of both the team and its customers.
- Adopting the appropriate modern systems, processes and tools to enable it to meet customer requirements for legal services.

The successful implementation of the transformation programme from 2023 – 2025 demonstrates the commitment of BSO Legal Services to take effective and prompt action to address problems through continuous teamwork and collaboration.

Clinical Education Centre (CEC)

Collaborative Education

The CEC worked collaboratively across the HSC system, developing partnerships with HSC Trusts and other HSC bodies, to shape clinical education provision and improve population health outcomes. During 24/25 CEC delivered several collaborative education events in partnership with DoH, Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency, the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care, Public Health Agency and the Royal College of Midwives.

CEC Education Delivery and Commissioning

The CEC also worked closely with HSC customers to develop the annual CEC Education Delivery and Commissioning Plans. This subsequently informs programme planning, design and delivery to ensure the delivery of a high-quality service that meets customer needs. Continuous Customer engagement throughout the year enabled open and honest discussions to ensure that services continue to work effectively. In 2024-25, HSC CEC delivered 260 different programmes to 72,461 participants, meeting a diverse range of clinical needs across professional staff working in health and social care.

Procurement and Logistics

PaLs have continued to deliver against their five-year strategy, which focuses on delivering in partnership with staff and customer organisations.

Collaboration with Customers

PaLs collaborated with BSO Information Technology Services (ITS) and colleagues from Digital Health and Care to establish an ICT specific Meet the Buyer event. This event was an opportunity for existing and potential IT suppliers to learn more about the procurement and contracting process, driving market engagement.

PaLs also worked closely with customer organisations across the region to identify and agree roles and responsibilities in relation to PA23, which is the new Procurement Act that was launched on 24th February 2025.

PaLs Working Groups

Across the PaLs team, all staff were invited to participate in the Health and Safety Working group which provided a forum for staff of all levels to voice concerns and issues, and offered a platform to resolve these collaboratively.

PaLs have also developed a number of other working groups, including the Quality Working Group, Terms and Conditions and Call For Tender Development Working Groups, which have been put in place to foster open and collaborative discussions that empower staff to make decisions together.

Furthermore, PaLs have continued to develop mental health and wellbeing opportunities for our staff. This has included the development of Health & Wellbeing champions that has fostered a culture of working together across the region.

Family Practitioner Services

Engagement with Community Practitioners

On a quarterly basis, FPS engaged and consulted with Community Practitioners to canvas opinion and to obtain advice and feedback on the payment to family practitioners services provided by BSO. FPS led a collaborative forum in which the Pharmaceutical team were able to identify and respond to coding errors on prescriptions by Community Pharmacies by enhancing pre-payment validation of prescribed inhaler products, leading to improved accuracy of payment.

Refugee Resettlement Group

As part of the Refugee Resettlement Group, GMS staff developed and oversaw the managed pathway for GP registration, working in conjunction with colleagues across BSO Family Practitioner Services, SPPG and DoH.

Dental Payment Team and Information Unit

The Dental Payment Team and the Information Unit worked collaboratively in the redevelopment of Practice Profiles which are released to dentists on a quarterly basis, which would summarise key metrics to help Dentists to understand more about their patients, and the treatments conducted throughout the period. This information will support improved planning across dental practices, and reduce manual workload for the BSO and Dental practice teams, and will be rolled out in 2025-26.

BSO People Awards

In October 2024, BSO People Awards took place which was held in Crumlin Road Gaol, where over 200 colleagues were welcomed from across the organisation. The cumulation of the awards night was with Payroll winning the Chief Executive's Award.

This was an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of all staff in delivering innovative and high-quality services to support the delivery of effective care across Northern Ireland. This event enabled staff across service areas connect and celebrate success, as well as share lessons learnt to develop and improve their service delivery.



Human Resources

Staff Appraisals

BSO has continued to deliver a robust and inclusive appraisal process, through the use of CHATS templates, to encourage staff to reflect on their achievements, identify development areas and suggest changes on a quarterly basis. It is also an opportunity for staff and managers to work together to solve problems when things go wrong. Our strong appraisal rate of 93.03% reflects BSO's commitment to working with staff openly and honestly to address problems and foster continuous improvement.

Pulse Surveys

Pulse surveys were issued throughout 2023-24 to encourage staff to give open and honest anonymous feedback and suggest improvements to the workplace environment. Each survey focused on the following areas:

- > Recognition & Appreciation
- > Talent Management, Training, Development & Progression
- > How connected staff feel to the team and organisation
- > HSC Values

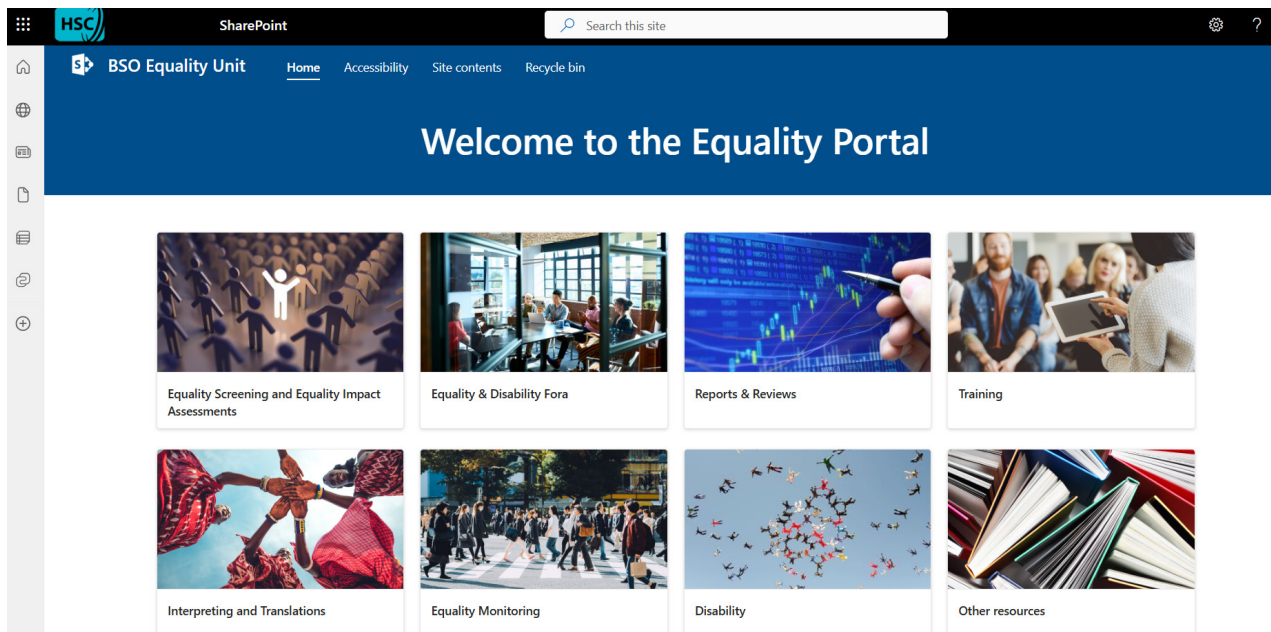
People and Place Working Groups

Pulse surveys were issued throughout 2023-24 to encourage staff to give open and honest anonymous feedback and suggest improvements to the workplace environment. Each survey focused on the following areas:

- >
Investor in People Steering Group
 Led by HR with representation across BSO, this group drives the organisation's reaccreditation against the Investor in People standard. It promotes a culture of continuous improvement, staff engagement, and excellence in people management
- >
Workforce Development Group
 This group is led by HR with representation from across BSO to work on some key actions to support the development of staff and the organisation.
- >
Health & Wellbeing Champions
 This group is led by HR with representatives across BSO to support and champion good health and wellbeing in the organisation.
- >
Mental Health Advocates
 This group is led by HR with representatives across BSO who have volunteered to take on the Mental Health Advocate role, and are subsequently trained to deal with staff who are experiencing poor mental health.
- >
ER Tracker
 This group is a partnership between HR and ITS to develop a system for tracking and monitoring employee relations cases. This supports transparency and consistency in decision-making and case management.
- >
EDRMS Group
 This regional group is sponsored by the Director of People and Place, and in a partnership between HR and ITS. The purpose of the group is to oversee the procurement and implementation of a new employee records management system.
- >
Industrial Action Committee
 This group is led by HR and has representatives from across BSO to help prepare the organisation for potential industrial action and when it does occur to manage implications on service delivery.

Equality Unit

In collaboration with our customer organisations and BSO colleagues, BSO developed the Equality Unit Portal and it was launched during 2024-25. The new Portal provides comprehensive access to equality services for both the BSO and Customer organisations. This ensures immediate and easy access to a variety of resources and has resulted in the standardisation and efficiency of processes which better meet customer needs.



During the year, the Equality Unit worked with staff from individual HSC client organisations to design more strategic, efficient and effective approaches to equality screenings. Subsequently, learning resources were produced and made accessible for all staff in HSC client organisations via the newly developed Equality Portal.

Digital Directorate

Staff Engagement and Communication

The Directorate has promoted a culture of openness, encouraging staff to share feedback, raise concerns, and celebrate achievements. Initiatives such as “Day in the Life” interviews, lunchtime briefings, and town halls have fostered a sense of belonging and continuous improvement.

Between July and September 2024, ten staff engagement sessions were held, attended by 147 staff members. These sessions highlighted key themes such as collaboration, standardisation, and communication. As a result, several initiatives were launched to strengthen internal engagement and knowledge sharing:

- > Creation of the BSO Digital Team Site to share updates and best practices
- > Improved cross-directorate communication
- > Publication of the Summer Brief
- > Introduction of Talking Heads videos
- > Directorate-wide recruitment initiatives, including expressions of interest
- > Integration of the Honest Broker Service and OREC into the BSO ITS structure
- > Collaboration between the BSO ITS PMO and the Equip and Evolve programme
- > Launch of the Digital Job Families site

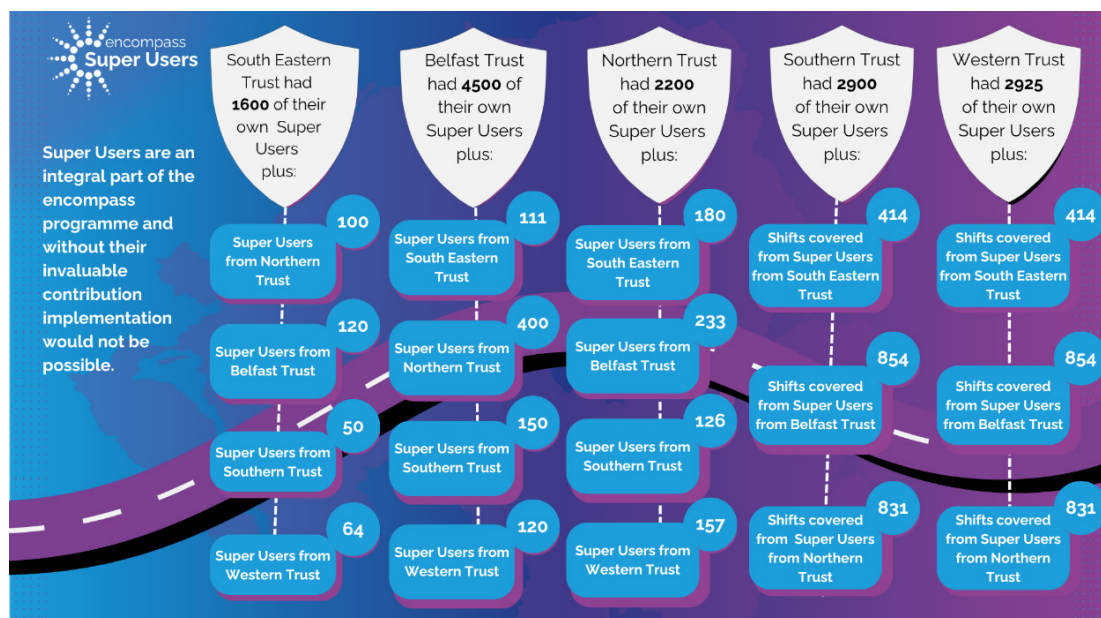
Encompass

Following the first Encompass launch in November 2023 in South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, 2024-25 saw the roll out of the remaining Encompass “Go Lives” within the other four Trusts. This integrated care record system established a single, unified way of working that prioritises quality in service delivery. The team has established robust governance structures that have kept quality at the forefront, with feedback from staff and service users actively shaping roll-out strategies across each Trust.

Lessons learned from each HSC Trust have helped to improve Encompass implementations. Staff were encouraged to report issues and share learning to drive improvements through feedback loops. There is ongoing collaboration across HSC organisations and professions to deliver regional pathways and continuous improvements.

Encompass Super-User Programme

The Encompass super user programme has empowered staff to take a leading role in the implementation of Encompass. With support from peers, staff gained new confidence and improved system adoption. Nearly 15,000 staff members participated as super users during the implementation phase, playing a vital role in ensuring a smooth transition and embedding best practices.



Furthermore, the Encompass Focus Content Design Group (FCDG) and Encompass Decision Group (EDG) bring the HSC Trusts together to collaboratively develop and implement a unified reporting action plan, ensuring shared accountability and continuous improvement across the region.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate

Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI)

SLA Pilot

In 2024-25 SP&CE worked cross-functionally across several Service Areas, including PaLs, Payroll and Legal Services to successfully pilot a new SLA process. This initiative came as an outworking of the BSO Strategic review. This involved collaboration with our customer organisations and collaborative working with our internal service areas to co-design and redevelop the SLA framework, which included:

- > Clearly defined contract managers on both sides
- > Robust and measurable KPIs
- > Defined exclusions
- > A structured schedule of review meetings for agreement and sign-off

Following the success of the pilot, a full organisational rollout of the SLA process commenced in March 2025, alongside the income realignment project.

SLA Reviews

The Director of SP&CE also collaborated with the Director of Finance to meet annually with each customer organisation for SLA Review meetings, to seek feedback around service delivery. This encouraged open and transparent communication with customers, placing our customers at the centre of our organisational culture and service delivery. As part of this, the Directors were able to share positive feedback from customers with staff across BSO to celebrate success and identify areas for improvement.

Annual Business Planning

The SEI team played a pivotal role in shaping a culture of strategic alignment and shared purpose by supporting and coordinating the Annual Business Planning cycle during 2024–25. Through inclusive and collaborative engagement, the team facilitated strategic discussions that empowered BSO staff to co-create a clear and focused business plan, that put our people, customers and innovation at the centre of our culture.

Customer Engagement



Since 2009, the BSO has grown significantly and currently lead customer forums that foster partnerships that support decision-making to enable high quality service delivery. They include:

Arms' Length Bodies (ALB) Forum

This Forum was established to support the smaller customer organisations providing them an opportunity to work more collectively with the BSO. The forum meets quarterly to discuss the quality service delivery.

Legal Services Customer Forum

The Legal Services Customer Forum was established in February 2023 to provide a mechanism for customer organisations to work more closely with BSO Legal Team to improve the quality of services provided. The Forum meets quarterly.

Strategic Customer Forum

After customer feedback this Forum was established to allow conversations to be held at a more strategic level to support customer need, this Forum meet bi-annually.

Additional Customer Fora

BSO continue to work closely with all customers to drive customer-focused service delivery. BSO Directorates continue to engage with customers on a variety of platforms including over 100 Fora facilitated by the following service areas:

- Shared Services
- PaLS
- HSC Leadership Centre/CEC Centre
- HSC Pension Services
- ITS
- Equality Unit
- Counter Fraud and Probity Services
- Family Practitioner Services (Including Interpreting Services)

Chief Executive's Office

The Chief Executive's Office continues to play a pivotal role in shaping and supporting the leadership culture across BSO. As a central coordination point for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Board, the office is instrumental in driving forward a culture of openness, collaboration, and excellence.

In December 2024, to enhance the office's capacity and responsiveness a Head of the Chair and Chief Executive's Office role was appointed, designed to provide dedicated support to both the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Board. This marked a significant milestone in the transformation journey, ensuring the office is well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of the organisation and its leadership.

To further embed a culture of continuous improvement and transparency, the office developed an Improvement Roadmap for 2024–25. This roadmap focused on strengthening governance, digitising operations, and enabling informed decision-making across ELT and the Board.

- Centralised and standardised meeting processes, improving consistency and accessibility for all users.
- Resource efficiencies through automation, reducing time spent on manual tasks such as agenda preparation, paper distribution, and action tracking.
- Enhanced collaboration and transparency, with features that allow users to review and approve documents, cast votes, declare interests, and engage securely in real time.
- Improved version control and reduced risk of misinformation, ensuring meeting packs and documents are always up-to-date and accurate.

This transformation reflects BSO's commitment to a culture that is more agile, transparent, and collaborative.

BSO Communications and Engagement



Business Matters

The internal staff publication, Business Matters, continues to grow in popularity, providing monthly updates to over 2,000 staff, with each edition now exceeding 50 pages. It promotes and encourages partnerships between staff within and across Directorates, and celebrates achievements from across the organisation.

Digital Programmes and Projects

The BSO Communications and Engagement team provides essential and strategic marketing and communications partnership with Digital Programmes and Projects, working collaboratively to enhance the lives of staff, patients and service users regionally.

Finance Directorate

Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI)

Staff Engagement and Communication

Across the Directorate, staff are actively encouraged to contribute to decision-making through a range of engagement opportunities. These include weekly and monthly meetings, quarterly engagement sessions, annual business planning days, and team-building exercises. These forums provide space for sharing new ideas, exploring alternative approaches, and identifying innovative solutions to challenges—ultimately helping to drive more efficient and effective ways of working.

Accounts Receivable (Shared Services)

The Accounts Receivable team have developed a more unified approach between receipting and credit control teams with the integration of debtor receipting staff into credit control teams to create a more collaborative working unit to drive quality service delivery.

Payroll (Shared Services)

Payroll continued to work in close partnership with customers through the Payroll Customer Forum, regular operational level meetings and created new working groups to standardise and improve end to end Payroll delivery with customer organisations.

Pensions

In administering the HSC Pension Scheme, HSC Pension Service (HSC PS) engages in numerous partnerships including Scheme Members, Employers, Department of Health (DoH), Oversight committees such as the Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Board through workshops and engagement sessions where feedback from service users is taken on board in a bid to improve services where appropriate and to ensure we are working effectively for our client base and stakeholders.

Business Services Team

During 2024-25, the final stages of the Finance, Procurement and Logistics IT system data management project were completed with the Directorate's Business Services Team who worked in close collaboration with suppliers and colleagues across BSO.

Sustainability Working Group

BSO's commitment to transforming organisational culture is reflected in the work of the Sustainability Working Group, a multi-Directorate leadership team driving change through collaboration, innovation, and staff engagement. By embedding sustainability into everyday decision-making and service delivery, BSO is fostering a culture that is forward-thinking, values-led, and responsive to environmental and social responsibilities. Some examples of collaborative sustainability projects that have transformed how we work within BSO during 2024-25 include:

Procurement and Logistics (PaLS)

PaLS has led the way in integrating sustainability into operational delivery. In 2024–25, nine diesel trucks were transitioned to Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO), with refuelling infrastructure established at the Boucher site. Six Electric Vehicles are scheduled to enter service in 2025–26, and EV chargers are being installed across PaLS locations to support this shift.

Sustainable procurement practices have also advanced, with suppliers being onboarded to the Evergreen Sustainable Supplier Assessment Tool and the Social Value Procurement Policy Notice (PPN01/21) has now been embedded into supplier contracts.

Corporate Services

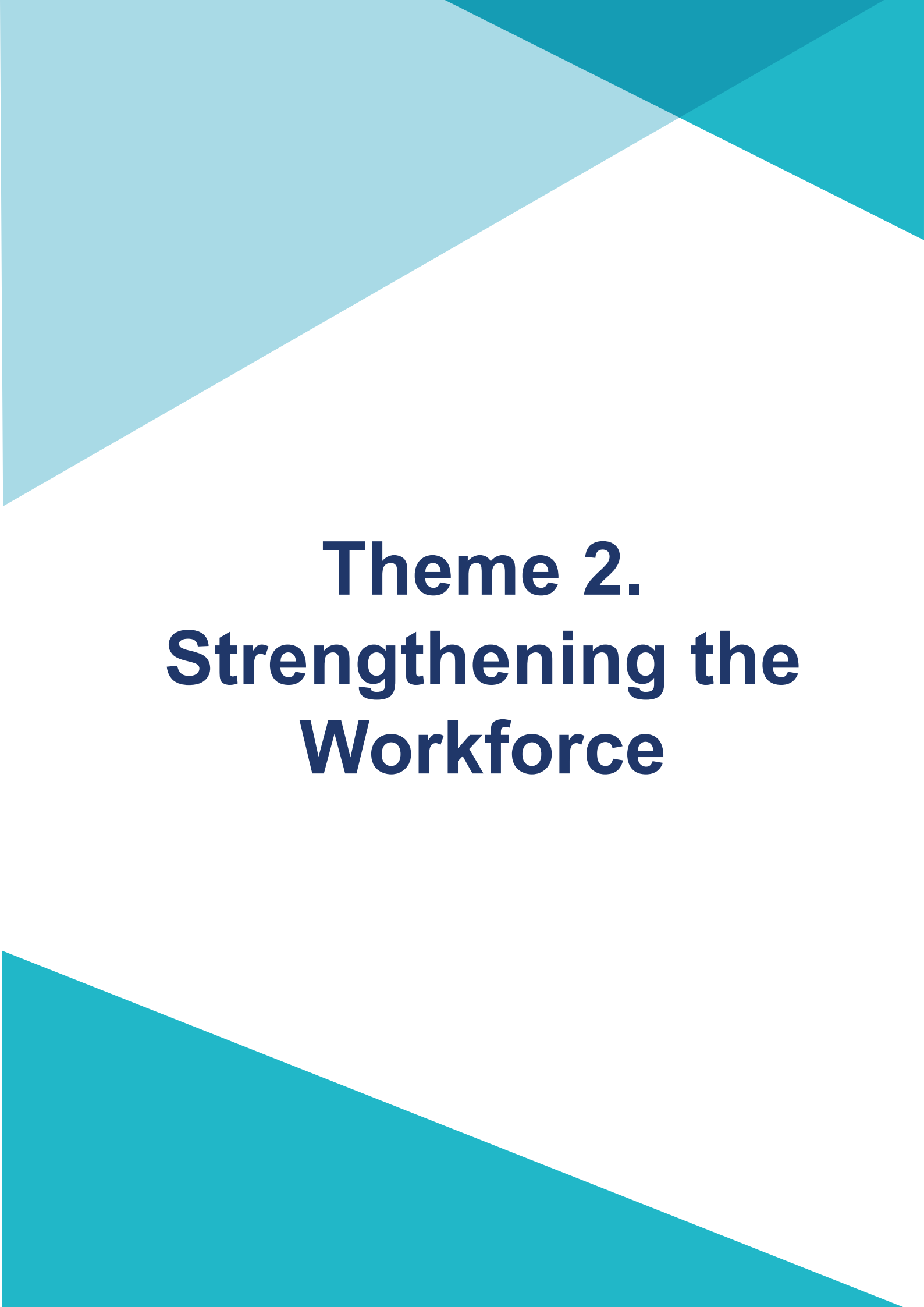
BSO has made significant progress in reducing its physical footprint, reflecting a more agile and efficient use of space. In 2024–25, the Corporate Services team consolidated office space, achieving a reduction of 58,430 sq ft. PaLS estates rationalisation is ongoing, with a further 126,500 sq ft reduction in warehousing planned for September 2025–26.

Information Technology Services

ITS has taken steps to decouple IT service provision from carbon emissions through the refresh of air conditioning units in the data centre. ITS has reduced power consumption by increasing the acceptable temperature thresholds in the data centre and through server power profiling, which aims to dynamically lower the power consumption of hardware during less busy periods, such as through the night.

Directorate of Finance

During 2024–25, efficiency measures within Finance have contributed to the overall reduction in estate footprint. Staff relocations were successfully managed without disruption to services, demonstrating effective planning, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement.



Theme 2.

Strengthening the

Workforce

Theme 2. Strengthening the Workforce



*The Quality 2020 aim: **We will provide the right education, training and support to deliver high quality service. We will develop leadership skills at all levels and empower staff to take decisions and make changes.***

Delivering high-quality services depends fundamentally on the capability, confidence, and empowerment of the workforce. By investing in high-quality training and leadership development, we are not only building capability—we are nurturing a workforce where staff are empowered to pursue excellence in everything they do. This approach ensures that our workforce is not only prepared for the challenges ahead, but also united in a shared commitment to excellence, compassion and better outcomes for those we serve.

This section focuses on BSO's approach to strengthening the workforce through targeted education, training, and leadership development, that empowers our staff.

Operations Directorate

Legal Services

Staff Training and Development

Legal Services continue to encourage staff training and development as an integral part of their function. During 2024-25:

- 1 x apprenticeship completed with a fully qualified solicitor complementing the team.
- 3 x law students joined the team to complete their year placement.
- 6 x members of staff trained in Advanced Advocacy skills.

This showcases their commitment to ensuring staff feel supported, valued and empowered in their role. Advanced advocacy skills also equip staff with critical skills in legal procedures, case analysis and key strategies to support clients throughout the legal process, ensuring we continuously improve our service to customer organisations.

Staff Learning

Across Legal Services, staff are also empowered to drive quality service delivery through sharing best practice at a monthly Learning Schedule which has been put in place to support legal professionals Continuous Professional Development requirements and to raise awareness of the full suite of services of BSO and BSO Legal Services.

Clinical Education Centre (CEC)



Staff Training and Development

HSC CEC have continued to invest in staff professional and development opportunities. All staff have an appraisal completed and HCPC and NMC registered staff are offered clinical supervision sessions throughout the year, in line with their professional requirements. In 2024-25, the Department of Health funded six CEC staff to complete their Post Graduate Certificate in Education for Healthcare from Ulster University (UU). All six staff have now successfully achieved this qualification, which has empowered them to pursue continuous improvement in the clinical education that they deliver across our customer organisations.

Clinical and Professional Conferences

In addition to professional qualifications, CEC staff have also had opportunities to attend clinical and professional conferences both within Northern Ireland and across the UK. Examples include the RCN Education Conference, Bowel and Bladder Conference, Association of Learning Technology 2024 Conference and European Wound Management Associations (EWMA) & Society of Tissue Viability (SoTC) Conference. This has ensured that they have the up-to-date capabilities and knowledge to deliver high quality clinical education to our customers that reflects latest best practice.

Leadership Centre

Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Programme

In 2024-25, the HSC Leadership Centre and the HSC Clinical Education Centre worked together to delivered the first Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Programme: Embracing Your Leadership Journey programme. This programme was commissioned by the Chief Nursing Officer for Northern Ireland and was highly evaluated by participants. The programme delivers training to nursing and midwifery staff across our customer organisations, giving them the leadership skills and confidence to make decisions and enact change that drives quality.

Ignite Programme

The HSC Leadership Centre developed and delivered two cohorts of Ignite, the new regional programme for service managers successfully over the past year, and were attended by 33 staff working across a wide spectrum of areas across HSC. The programme was co-designed by service managers from across the region, and has been tailored to meet the needs of attendees. They engaged in 4 modules, bite-sized online sessions, coaching and action learning sets, all of which challenged their thinking and developed new skills, supporting enhanced leadership across our customer organisations.

Procurement and Logistics (PaLs)

Throughout 2024-25, PaLs have continued to deliver annual appraisals with staff members, and are proactively assessing the training and development needs of staff. This has been underpinned by regular team building days, and an annual briefing that focuses on innovation and achievements for the past 12 months, recognising success within our teams.

Undergraduate Placement and Graduate Programmes

PaLs have continued to champion development of staff through the undergraduate placement program, with two students from Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster having completed their placement year. Furthermore, over the past two years, PaLs have welcomed five graduates as part of the graduate training programme.

Technical Training

PaLs worked in partnership with HCSA to deliver Negotiation Training for Procurement staff, which delivered negotiation training to support staff in delivering high quality services to our customer organisations.

Furthermore, all procurement staff successfully completed the Government Commercial College Transforming Public Procurement eLearning training, ensuring consistent skills and capability across the team. In addition, PaLS Superusers completed the Government Commercial College Deep Dive Training on Public Procurement

All Sourcing staff completed training in relation to Cabinet Office Mid-tier terms and attended follow-up internal workshops for first tenders published under PA23, empowering staff in their roles to deliver a quality service to our customer organisations.

Leadership Training and Professional Qualifications

PaLs staff also attended the BSO Aspire Programme and HCSA Personal Development Programme to support the development of leadership skills at all levels.

Additionally, 17 staff have commenced studies in Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supplies, and 28 staff completed Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Training, giving staff the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Family Practitioner Services (FPS)

As part of our approach to developing leadership skills across the team, managers at all levels undertook various aspects of leadership training e.g. PRINCE II, Customer Care Training and a number of FPS staff participated in the Lean Made Simple Tour, which focuses on eliminating waste, to focus on value-added activities through continuous improvement, empowering staff at all levels to make small, incremental improvements in service delivery.



People and Place Directorate

People Strategy

During 2023-24, the People and Place Directorate launched a three-year People strategy, with four pillars: Culture, Leadership, Modernised Workforce and Staff Experience. This strategy was driven by the BSO Strategic Review, the HSC Collective Leadership Strategy and the HSC Workforce Strategy 2026.

This strategy is centred around driving visible leadership at all levels of the organisation to foster a safe and thriving culture that focuses on continuous improvement. This culture provides staff with development opportunities, support and recognition, so that they are ready for the future.



As part of this strategy, People & Place have made a commitment to drive and expand development opportunities for staff through our Assistance to Study policy and Learning Management System, as well as establishing a Coaching Network that will foster personal development and continuous improvement through the provision of trained coaches.

Staff Training and Development

Mandatory Training

During 2024-2025, BSO staff had high levels of compliance with mandatory training, with all rates across the organisation remaining above 80%. This showcases the commitment across all Directorates to ensure that staff have a consistent basis of knowledge in key areas, such as Health and Safety, Equality and Risk Management, enabling staff to perform their roles and work with customer organisations effectively and safely.

Directorate	Compliance
Chief Exec & Director Support	66.67%
Financial Services	92.86%
Operations	97.74%
SP&CE	100.00%
Digital Directorate	84.42%
People & Place	98.43%
TOTAL COMPLIANCE	93.03%

Additional Training

In addition to mandatory training, 841 staff attended additional training courses to enhance their skills, expertise and knowledge across a range of subjects, including appraisal training, attendance management & wellbeing support and managing challenging conversations courageously.

Training Course	Attended
Appraisal Training for Managers	68
Attendance Management & Wellbeing Support: A Managers Approach	94
Band 2-4 Development Programme (Cohort 1)	44
Band 2-4 Development Programme (Cohort 2)	38
Band 2-4 Development Programme (Cohort 3)	30
Band 2-4 Development Programme (Cohort 4)	24
Conflict, Bullying & Harassment Awareness	69
Get to know Learn HSCNI	44
Managing Challenging Conversations Courageously	34
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 1	50
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 2	31
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 3	32
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 4	18
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 5	20
Middle Managers Programme (Band 4-6) - Cohort 6	30
Minute Taking Skills	20
Recruitment & Selection Face-to-Face	195
Grand Total	841

These training courses support the development of visible leadership at all levels, giving managers the confidence and skills to support staff in their roles.

For example, 68 managers attended appraisal training which provided them with the skills and knowledge to ensure a consistent approach to delivering more effective performance evaluations across BSO. This drives continuous improvement one staff member at a time, ultimately improving service delivery to our customer organisations.

94 staff attended the Attendance Management and Wellbeing Support training, providing them with the skills and expertise to ensure that staff feel safe and supported, enabling open and honest conversations that drive innovation and quality service delivery.

34 staff attended Managing Challenging Conversations Courageously, which empowers staff to challenge negative behaviours, fostering a safe and thriving culture.

Equality Unit

The Equality Unit have continued to strengthen the BSO workforce during 2024-25 having supported and established new arrangements for facilitating work placements for those with a disability.

In collaboration with voluntary sector partners, two distinct placement pathways were established with Disability Action and Supported Employment Solutions, aiming to broaden access and flexibility. The programme will offer placements year-round, lasting between two to six months, tailored to meet individual needs. By March 2025, key policy documents and a Memorandum of Understanding were drafted, with implementation planned for early 2025–26. This highlights BSO's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, driving a stronger workforce that reflects the society we live in and serve.

Digital Directorate

Training and Development

Career Pathways Portal

The Digital Directorate has launched a new career pathways portal, and has prioritised investment in training based on both business needs and individual personal development plans.

Management Skills Programme

36 staff members from across the Directorate attended the Management Skills Programme, which was delivered by the Leadership Centre to equip staff with the tools to manage teams, lead change and drive strategic outcomes.

Digital Band 4-7 Management Skills Programme

Planned by ITS Training and delivered by Leadership Centre for the Directorate of Digital

Equipping mid-level Digital professionals with the tools to manage teams, lead change, and deliver strategic outcomes.

This is a 4 day program that equips mid-level Digital managers with key leadership, strategic, and managerial skills. It focuses on improving team and project management, aligning Digital services with organisational goals, navigating change, and enhancing communication with staff and stakeholders. Participants also learn performance management and decision making to tackle complex problems and drive team success.

Total cost: £9,058

Attendees:
Encompass: 9
Equip: 2
ITS: 25

Total: 36

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the training?

4.71

Average Rating



Content

Day 1 – Induction & Key Skills

- Induction – Introductions/Participants
- HSC Values & Behaviours and Collective Leadership
- Quality Improvement

Day 2 – Management & Leadership Skills

- Management Skills vs Leadership Skills in a Hybrid Working Context
- Individual and Team Performance Management
- Managing Workload – Time Management, Prioritisation and Delegation

Day 3 – Communication & Conflict

- What is Communication
- Conflict Resolution in line with Regional Policy
- Difficult Conversations
- The Coach Approach
- Emotional Intelligence & Self Awareness

Day 4 – Supporting Your Team within a Hybrid Working Environment

- Mentoring
- Team Development Stages (Tuckman) & Team Roles (Belbin)
- Staff Induction and Continuous Development
- Stress Management & The Importance of Self-Care
- Interview Skills & Career Planning

OREC & Honest Broker Service (HBS)

In December 2024, OREC organised a celebratory event for present and past HSC REC members to celebrate its 20 Year anniversary. Our external partners within the HSCT R&D Teams, PHA R&D Division, and key stakeholders in Ulster University and Queens University Belfast were invited to provide opportunities for networking and exchange of ideas.

Training sessions at this event included Artificial Intelligence and Ethical Considerations; and Secondary Use of Data in NI, which was co-presented by Alan Harbinson from the BSO Honest Broker Service (HBS). The event received positive feedback from attendees, fostering connectivity and shared learning across the Health sector.



Information Technology Services (ITS)

Across ITS, 100% of appraisals were completed for staff in 2024-25, driving honest conversations that support continuous improvement one staff member at a time, improving the quality of service delivery to our customer organisations.

Across ITS, mandatory training compliance rates are above 90% in most areas. ITS have improved staff compliance by increasing communication to raise awareness across teams, manager awareness days, and improved induction processes. This increased level of compliance has enabled staff to perform their roles and work with customer organisations effectively and safely.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate

Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI)

Risk Management Training

To support a consistent and organisation-wide understanding of risk management, the SEI team, in collaboration with an external facilitator, developed targeted risk management training for the Board, Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Assistant Directors, and Heads of Service. This initiative aimed to build shared knowledge and confidence in identifying, assessing, and managing risks as a core component of delivering high-quality care.

In addition to formal training, SEI delivered Risk Management Tool sessions to the same leadership groups. These sessions focused on embedding a standardised approach to risk management, ensuring that leaders across the organisation apply consistent principles and language when evaluating and responding to risks.

Chief Executive's Office

One Advanced training

As part of BSO's commitment to our Digital Vision, the Chief Executive's Office led targeted training to support the rollout and embedding of the OneAdvanced Meeting Module. Delivered in collaboration with OneAdvanced, this training was designed to equip members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Board with the skills and confidence to navigate the system, access meeting agendas, and engage with papers through review and commentary.

By building knowledge and experience around the tool, senior leaders are now better positioned to maximise its functionality, streamlining meeting preparation, improving document control, and enhancing decision-making.

Corporate Communications and Engagement



Staff Learning and Development

The BSO Communications and Engagement team has secured new Prince 2 Training courses for colleagues who work with BSO Digital Directorate Programmes and Projects team.

The BSO Communications and Engagement team has secured free Adobe Training in 'Premier Pro' and 'InDesign', which will support future plans to improve the quality of content created by the team.

Driving Learning across BSO

The BSO Communications and Engagement team lead, develop and implement the BSO Corporate Communications Strategy reflecting the BSO vision, HSC regional direction and NI Public Sector Communication Forum's programme for Communications excellence.

Accordingly, the BSO Communications and Engagement provide strategic leadership guidance and advice to BSO Senior management and colleagues across the organisation, on all reputational learning and management, empowering colleagues to make informed decisions.

Complaints

Raising Concerns Advocates (formerly Whistle-blowing)

During 2024-25, 18 BSO staff were trained as raising concerns advocates, reflecting BSO's commitment to providing a safe and transparent culture in which staff are empowered to safely report any unethical or fraudulent activities. This strengthens BSO's ability to uphold our Whistleblowing Policy to safeguard staff, patients, and the public and demonstrate that BSO carries out its affairs ethically, honestly and to high standards. Furthermore, it enables us to foster a open and transparent culture that drives continuous improvement, by identifying when things go wrong and improving services to better support our customer organisations.

Training and Development

Finance Directorate management are fully committed to supporting staff to provide the highest quality of service through regular and effective communication networks, promotion of working well practices including health and wellbeing and the encouragement and support in the professional development of staff through internal training or external professional courses. For example, we actively participate in the HSC Graduate Trainee Programme to support the building of our future workforce as well as providing development opportunities through leadership programmes and bespoke business specific training to enhance service delivery, ensuring that it is up-to-date with best practice.

Payroll (Shared Services)

The Payroll team celebrated their 10 year anniversary with a staff engagement, wellbeing and training day, driving continuous improvement and shared learning across the team. As part of our 10 year Birthday Celebration, PSS proudly announced an investment in training for all staff.

Alongside The Payroll Centre, we enrolled all our staff in a voluntary exercise to avail of a unique and innovative training tool, The Payroll Centre's, ACT Assessment, which uses a series of quizzes to measure each individuals legislative payroll knowledge across a number of core functions. An overall PSS score was produced showing our collective strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities to improve. These reports provided insights that were then used alongside other information to formulate Learning and Development Plans for the centre going forward.





Theme 3.

Measuring the

Improvement

Theme 3. Measuring the Improvement

The Quality 2020 aim: We will improve outcome measurement and report on progress for safety effectiveness and the patient/client experience. We will promote the use of accredited improvement techniques and ensure that there is sufficient capacity and capability with the HSC to use them effectively.

Improvement is only meaningful when it leads to better outcomes for those who use our services. We are committed to ensuring that progress is not only tracked, but understood, shared, and acted upon.

While data collection is essential, its true value lies in learning and acting on it. Data offers powerful insights that must be shared and used to drive change. External accreditations, licensing, and achievement of recognised standards also play a key role in assuring and demonstrating quality, reinforcing our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

This section explores how, by working together, and applying recognised standards with compassion and excellence, BSO can ensure that every customer organisation receives a high standard of service delivery, and that our services continue to evolve and improve.

Operations Directorate

Legal

ISO:9001 and Lexcel Standards

During 2024-25 BSO Legal Services maintained its 3-year reaccreditation in ISO:9001 and Lexcel practice management standards. Lexcel is the Law Society's quality mark for client care, compliance and practice management for law firms. Membership of the accreditation lasts for 3 years with an annual maintenance visit at the end of year 1 and year 2 with full re-assessment at end of year 3. Areas covered include:

- legal framework
- management structure
- accountability
- client care
- control of legal and operational risks
- instruction of counsel and experts
- strategic planning, training, business planning, communication and technology
- financial management, and business continuity,
- time recording, peer and file review
- internal Legal Services audit procedures and outcomes
- fraud and complaints



General Legal Advice (GLA) team nominated for BSO People Awards 2024 category "Team of the Year"

These ISO:9001 and Lexcel accreditations demonstrate our continued commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

General Legal Advice Project

During 2024-25, General Legal Advice Project provided a structured approach of information sent to BSO Legal Services through the use of an online e-form which tracked responses and analysed query type to support the development of training programmes, reducing query volume throughout the year, and improving the quality of services provided to our customer organisations.

Clinical Education Centre (CEC)

The Regional Quality Improvement Programme

In 2024-25, two CEC staff successfully completed the Regional Quality Improvement Programme for Social Work, Nursing and Midwifery. This Level 2 programme aims to develop knowledge and skills that will help deliver change using QI methodology. CEC's two projects were:

- Improving the quality of Simulation Facilitator Assisted Debrief in an Education Setting (SIMFADES).
- Improving the Did Not Attend (DNA) rate on teacher-led, virtual education programmes delivered at HSC CEC.

Both staff were awarded their certificates at the programme celebration event on the 5th February 2025, giving them the knowledge and skills to improve the quality of services delivered to patients and clients.

Evaluation Feedback

An integral component to education is seeking feedback and learning from participant evaluations. The CEC encourages all participants to complete an evaluation within four weeks of completing a teacher-led programme, and also at the end of an eLearning. Evaluation feedback is shared with BSO customers throughout the year, and is used to inform changes to education programmes to be delivered in future, ensuring that they continue to evolve and improve.

Leadership Centre

The HSC Leadership Centre has partnered with PeopleCert to become an Authorised Training Organisation for Prince2® and have two accredited trainers to provide the HSC with Foundation and Practitioner level training.

The HSC Leadership Centre also has an accredited Microsoft 365 Expert trainer who is now delivering new IT training programmes to help HSC staff leverage the Microsoft cloud-based application and collaboration opportunities and efficiencies they afford.

Procurement and Logistics (PaLs)

External Awards

The PaLs team was awarded highly commended status for the Best Procurement Delivery Award for Local Government and Health Organisations by the National Go Awards.

External Accreditations

PaLs has continued to maintain a Gold Standard in Community Equipment Code of Practice Standard (CECOPS), which gives customer organisations and service users confidence in the quality, safety, performance and user experience that PaLs offers, and drives continuous improvement through the assessment process.

PaLs has also maintained its Micron 2 STS certification, which gives customer organisations and service users confidence that PaLs comply with UKAS-accredited STS Standards for Food Safety.

Performance Monitoring

PaLs have enhanced transparency and data accuracy through the ongoing refinement of Customer Dashboards, the launch of a Customer Portal, and the expansion of Housekeeping Reports. These tools support informed decision-making and enable stakeholders to monitor performance in real time.

Regular performance review meetings via Trust Procurement Boards, along with engagement through their Sub Groups, ensure that operational issues are addressed promptly and service standards are upheld. Supplier performance is closely monitored through weekly SLA KPI reviews and direct engagement, driving accountability and improvement.

We remain compliant with all Procurement Policy Notes (PPNs), ensuring they are incorporated into relevant procurements and formally reported to the Department of Finance. Our Operational KPIs reflect a culture of quality and are reviewed at multiple governance levels including LOG, PLT, and the BSO Board.

Counter Fraud and Probity Service (CFPS)

CFS continued to monitor the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are agreed with all HSC customer organisations to ensure that the cases reported and referred for investigation are progressing in accordance with the timeframes agreed. The Probity Service also worked closely with colleagues in SPPG to review quarterly targets with a view to ensuring that all agreed targets were met. This transparent approach to reviewing our progress has ensured that all agreed targets have been met, ensuring a high-quality service is provided to our customers.

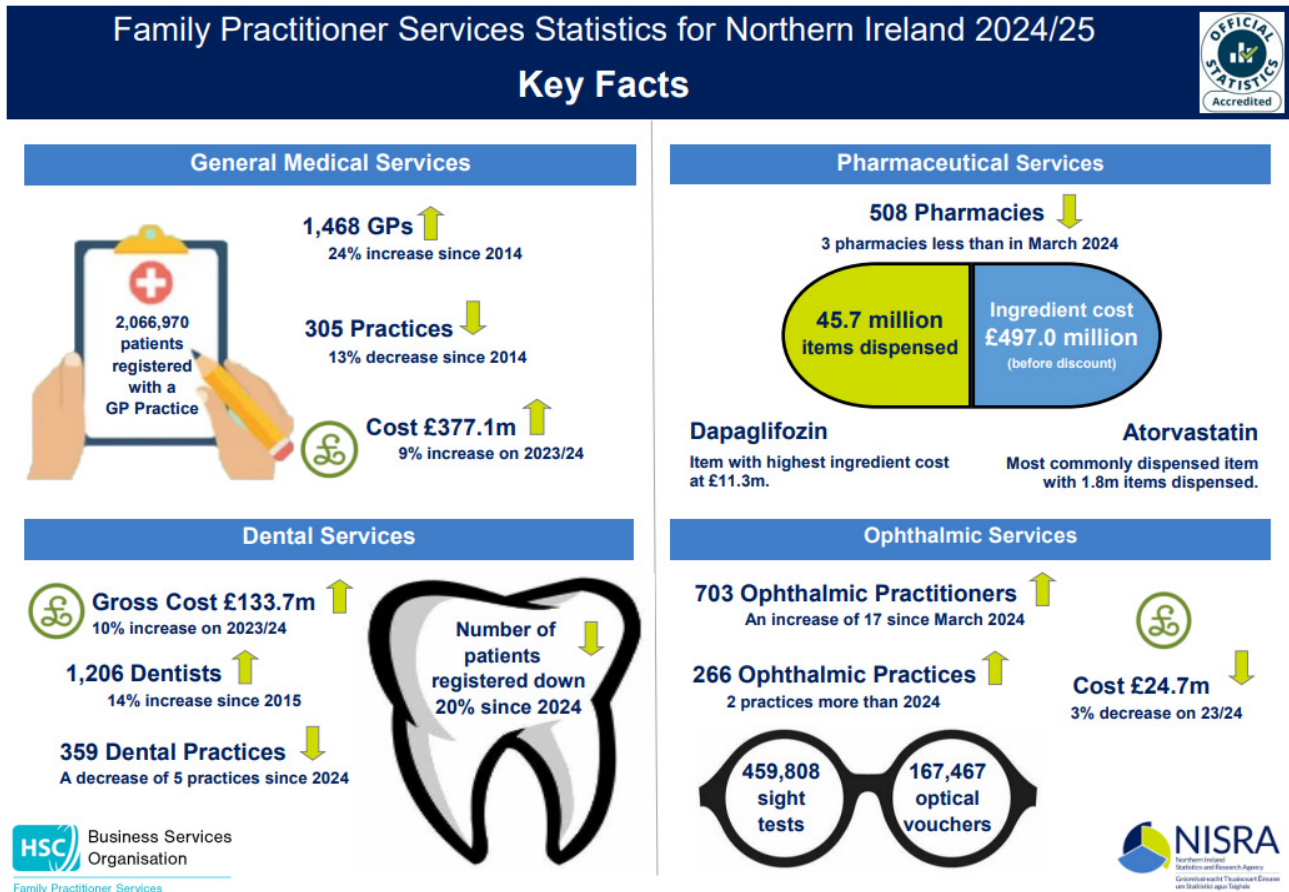
Family Practitioner Services

During 2024-25, Family Practitioner Services utilised Qlik software to enable managers and customers to have immediate self-service access to data or information in context, driving improvements and enhancing decision-making.

Furthermore, Family Practitioner services built new automated and interactive reporting solutions to facilitate the monitoring of key service areas of interest for our customers organisations – examples include the Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness (PCE) programme and Dental Registration Activity.

FPS Information Unit: Statistics

During 2024-25, the FPS Information Unit publicised 26 Official Statistics (majority formally accredited) relating to Primary Care activity. This work supports that provision of data in context that informs policy, planning and decision making in relation to Family Health Services in Northern Ireland.



FPS Information Unit: Ophthalmic Practice Reports

Furthermore, as part of our commitment to improving outcomes through better measurement and governance, a significant enhancement was made to the ophthalmic remittance process in October 2024.

Following initial automation development by the Information Unit, the Ophthalmic Payment team began issuing monthly patient-level claims data, covering sight tests, vouchers, repairs, and enhanced services—directly to ophthalmic practices via secure email. This replaced a previously manual, paper-based process that required printing and posting up to eight separate reports per practice.

This change was driven by two key improvement goals:

- Strengthening data governance: The previous process posed a risk due to the handling of identifiable patient data (e.g., names and dates of birth). The new digital delivery model ensures secure transmission and better compliance with data protection standards.
- Enhancing efficiency and reliability: By automating report generation and distribution—building on skills Information Unit developed during a previous project to automate Ophthalmic Practice Profiles—the Information Unit achieved a substantial monthly resource saving. Reports are now consolidated and sent in a single email, eliminating manual collation and postage.

This initiative exemplifies how delivering timely, data-driven insights can lead to targeted improvements that benefit both service users and staff, enhancing service delivery, reducing risk, and supporting continuous improvement across HSC.

People and Place Directorate

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™

We invest in people Silver

Since 2018, BSO have been accredited with Investors in People Silver. In 2024–25, BSO retained its Silver accreditation by Investors in People (IiP), a globally recognised framework that assesses how organisations lead, support, and improve their people.

The Investors in People framework is built around three core principles—Leading, Supporting, and Improving—and includes indicators such as building capability, delivering continuous improvement, and creating sustainable success.

The assessment process gave staff across BSO a voice, gathered cultural insights, and provided independent feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. This external validation reinforces our commitment to excellence and provides a benchmark for future progress, aligning with our strategic goals to measure outcomes, apply improvement techniques, and evolve our services to better meet the needs of our customers and service users.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™

We invest in wellbeing Silver

During 2024–25, BSO sought accreditation against Investors in Wellbeing for the first time. The organisation was delighted to achieve this at Silver after the first assessment. This achievement demonstrates how we assess, improve, and sustain a culture of wellbeing across the organisation.

The framework evaluates how organisations lead, support, and improve wellbeing, using a four-stage maturity model. Silver status confirms that BSO has embedded strong practices in shaping a wellbeing culture, involving staff in its development, and creating a safe and supportive environment.

The assessment enabled staff to give feedback on their experience at work, and turn this into actionable feedback that enabled us to measure the impact of our Health and Wellbeing initiatives, and drive continuous improvement.

Recruitment (Shared Services)

Performance Monitoring

The RSSC compiles recruitment performance data as agreed with customer organisations to cover the three stages in the process which the RSSC are involved in:

- Recruitment following approval and transfer of a recruitment requisition to RSSC, the centre will either publish an advertisement or if a matching waiting list exists, make an offer to the next highest ranked candidate.
- Selection where a post is advertised, the RSSC will act as the conduit of information between the panel and candidate. Shortlisting and interviews will be planned, conducted and co-ordinated by the hiring manager.
- Safeguarding the pre-employment checking process is undertaken by the RSSC. Where any decisions are required to be made about the checks these will be sought from the hiring manager

End-to-end Review

During 2024-25, the RSSC team led on a 'End to End' Recruitment Service review and design process, and also had full functionality of Amiquis in Phase one during 2024-25 with improved 'time to hire' through the new system.

Across the Digital Directorate, customer engagement has significantly increased, with 88% of the customer base engaged by year-end. Surveys indicate high satisfaction with Service Desk responsiveness and professionalism. Complaints and FOI requests are tracked and reviewed as part of ongoing service improvement.

A customer report, derived from a more detailed Board report, provides insights across all areas of delivery. Engagement is monitored through online platforms to assess customer responses, and the captured user experience and satisfaction results are analysed to inform future improvements to service delivery.



BSO ITS has recently celebrated the achievement of securing ISO 20000 and ISO 9001 accreditations. These internationally recognised standards reflect our commitment to delivering high-quality, resilient, and customer-focused digital services.

This milestone further strengthens BSO's assurance framework and demonstrates our dedication to continuous improvement and alignment with best practice. Formal accreditation remains a key component of our quality strategy, ensuring our services meet the evolving needs of the Health and Social Care system.

Office for Research Ethics Committees (OREC)

As part of the UK Clinical Research Delivery programme, along with the rest of the UK Ethics Service, OREC focused on accelerating the discovery of life-saving drugs and improving patient care, with an emphasis on a faster, more efficient research review process. In 2024-25, 112 new research proposals were reviewed by HSC RECs, and 145 modifications to existing research were reviewed. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for last year showed:

- 100% of new studies were reviewed within 60 days (the time frame set for review by a full REC)
- 97% of new applications for lower risk studies were reviewed by our Proportionate Review Service (PRS) within 21 days;
- 99% of modifications were reviewed within the 35-day time frame.

These KPIs are compiled as part of the BSO Corporate Scorecard and presented to the BSO Board and ELT. KPIs are also reviewed by the HRA on a monthly basis at the UK Research Ethics Development Group, ensuring that service delivery is monitored and improved on an ongoing basis.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate

Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI)

Risk Management Tool and Reporting

During 2024-25, a new BSO Risk Management tool, OneAdvanced was successfully piloted across the organisation to strengthen how risks are identified, monitored, and acted upon across the organisation. The introduction of the tool has:

- Centralised all Corporate and Service Area Risk Registers on one secure platform
- Automated the reporting of Corporate Risks, Service Risks, Corporate Issues, and Service Issues
- Provided real-time audit trails for decision-making, actions and the rationale behind them.

This enhanced visibility and traceability ensures that risks are not only recorded but actively managed, with clear accountability and timely escalation.

To complement the tool, new risk reports were developed in line with the HM Orange Book Good Practice Guide for Risk Reporting. This was done by the SEI team in collaboration with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Governance and Audit Committee (GAC), and the BSO Board. Through this development in line with recognised standards, these reports provide a comprehensive and robust view of organisational risk, enabling more informed decisions and supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

KPI Development

As part of the Realignment project, the SEI team supported the redevelopment of KPIs across BSO to strengthen how we measure our performance across Service Areas. This initial piece of work forms part of a wider iterative and continuous improvement surrounding SLAs, accurate and meaningful reporting of KPIs which ensures sustainable services.

During 2024-25, the SEI team led a workshop for leaders from across BSO to reflect on their existing KPIs, and identify areas for improvement, to ensure that they are meaningful, efficient and effective in driving continuous improvement, transparency and accountability.

Following the success of the workshop, Drop-in sessions were set up for service areas to join and SEI team was available to help craft improved KPIs that better reflect the services being delivered in order to strength our performance monitoring and drive continuous improvement across the services.

Improved Reporting

During 2024-25, the SEI team worked closely with ELT and Board to reflect on our current reporting and identify improvements to drive better visibility and decision-making. This included the redevelopment of the Performance Against Business Plan reporting, that summarises the progress made against the Annual Business Plan on a quarterly basis.

Chief Executive's Office

Throughout 2024-25, development efforts within the Chief Executive's Office have focused on improving internal workflows, embedding more streamlined and efficient processes, and ensuring the office continues to provide high-quality executive support and coordination. The office has also worked to strengthen links between the Executive Leadership Team and Directorates, ensuring actions are clearly communicated and monitored alongside the SEI team.

Furthermore, the team has worked to strength its reporting through the use of the OneAdvanced Meetings to facilitate ELT and Board meetings, sharing reporting in real-time to drive decision-making.

Corporate Communications and Engagement

Performance Monitoring

The BSO Communications and Engagement team strategically engage and track its reach with external audiences, keeping them informed of BSO Directorates and Services. The team is provided with Digital Analytics reports that provide them with insights on the performance of the BSO website and our presence across social media platforms, enabling us to plan and design improved engagement.

These insights have driven improved engagement, seeing a 378% increase in Google searches for the BSO website, and increased followers across X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. The team have also set up an Instagram account to help reach new demographics.

Complaints

During 2024-2025, BSO received 65 complaints from service users. The 65 complaints were analysed, and as a result of this, a number of lessons learnt were identified, enabling us to strengthen our processes across Directorates and Service Areas.

From these complaints, themes and patterns were also identified, to enable prioritisation of actions needed, and to understand whether previous lessons learnt have been embedded effectively.

Some of these improvements include:

- Additional staff training provided to improve our communication with service users.
- Additional staff training provided to improve how processes and systems are used to deliver the services.
- Staff reminders of the expectations surrounding their conduct.
- Review and update to processes and procedures to streamline workflows and enhance the user experience.

Payroll (Shared Services)

External Accreditation

Payroll completed a full assessment of performance with the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) and was awarded full accreditation in July 2024. As the only voluntary accreditation on the market developed in partnership with HMRC, the scheme is designed to identify risks to a business arising from skills gaps or inadequate processes. Achieving this accreditation is hugely significant, and involved examining over 100 different components of the payroll operation. This is a much sought-after accreditation, and demonstrates BSO's commitment to delivering quality and robust payroll services that customer organisations can have confidence in.

Pensions

HSC Pension Service engages with the DoH to review standards and service delivery in accordance with our SLA, provide quarterly reports to the Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Board and Annual Reports to both BSO Executive Leadership Team and the Pension Board. HSC PS maintains both a complaints and compliments register which is shared with staff to help address any issues which may arise and to promote best practice.

Accounts Receivable (Shared Services)



External Accreditation

Accounts Receivable Shared Services received reaccreditation under the Centre of Excellence in Credit Management Award, the highest level of Quality Accreditation offered by the largest Credit Management Institute in the world. Coupled with this reaccreditation, Accounts Receivable teams received Chartered Institute of Credit Management training to ensure consistent knowledge and standards across staff, improving efficiency, decision making and communication. Together, this provides customer organisations with assurance that these services are robust, fit for purpose and accredited.

Accounts Payable (Shared Services)

External Accreditation

Accounts Payable Shared Service completed the “Q” programme and was awarded accreditation as a Centre of Excellence by the Accounts Payable Association (APA). As part of the assessment, the Q Programme examined six core areas of Accounts Payable operations: function, processes, people, technology, sustainability, and disaster recovery. This holistic approach ensures that every facet of the AP function is scrutinised and optimised, and gives customer organisations assurance that these services are fit for purpose and aligned with good practice.

During the year, Accounts Payable also commenced the “ACT Programme” to build on its Centre of Excellence Accreditation.



Theme 4. Raising the Standard

Theme 4. Raising the Standard

*The Quality 2020 aim: **We will establish a framework of clear evidence-based standards and best practice guidance. We will establish dynamic partnerships between service users, commissioners and providers to develop, monitor and review.***

Delivering high-quality care requires clear, evidence-based standards and strong partnerships with those who use and deliver services. The voice of the service user is central to this work. Their lived experience informs policy, shapes procedures, and ensures that care is person-centred and responsive. Through active involvement in working groups, audits, service frameworks, and national guidance consultations, stakeholders help to raise standards and drive continuous improvement.

This section highlights how BSO has embedded quality through collaboration, standardisation, and a shared commitment to excellence.

Operations Directorate

Clinical Education Centre (CEC)

Evidence-based Standards in Education

CEC's commitment to delivering high-quality education is grounded in robust governance and a clear framework of evidence-based standards. Programmes are designed, developed and reviewed in-house, through established Specialist Interest Governance Groups (SIGGs). These groups provided expert and specialist knowledge on a professional field of clinical practice establishing the most appropriate teaching method and target audiences for each programme, as well as ensuring that the content is reflective of the most up-to-date evidence-based treatment approach.

Collaborative Approach to Education

The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) reviewed a sample of CEC programmes on behalf of the DoH, in accordance with established quality monitoring processes. CEC also collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders, including HSC AHP Advanced Practitioners, national and international experts, and external training organisations to develop education tailored to the evolving skill requirements of the AHP workforce.

Throughout the year, CEC clinical staff and senior managers actively contributed to regional working groups and strategic workstreams, including the review of nursing pathways and participation in DoH-led committees and expert reference groups. Insights and learning from these collaborations are directly reflected in programme development, ensuring that CEC education remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with regional priorities and service user needs.

Leadership Centre

In October 2024, service users and carers actively contributed as speakers (and assessors) at several HSC Leadership centre programmes e.g. Leading Social Work, Engage etc. In 2026, service users will be supported to host an insight visit for the Leading Social Work programme as part of innovative step to promote inclusion and widen definitions of leadership. These initiatives drive service user centred improvements to delivery across HSC organisations.

Make My Voice Heard Report

The HSC Leadership Centre were commissioned to lead on a regional Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) project with People Seeking International Protection (PSIP), to identify the experiences of women accessing health and social care services in Northern Ireland for themselves and for children. During the engagement process, 19 sessions were conducted with 167 women sharing their views. Trust validation sessions were conducted with 28 Trust representatives to contextualise the findings.

The final report identified 8 key themes and made six recommendations which were accepted by the Department of Health. The report, *Make My Voice Heard*, was launched in Stormont Long Gallery with the Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt, and the Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland, Prof Siobhan O'Neill, providing the opening remarks. The report has been nominated for a Picker Experience Network (PEN) Award in the category of Partnership Working to Improve the Experience.

At the launch of the report, Health Minister Mike Nesbitt commented that this report will “provide a significant evidence base as we move forward to commission support services and tackle health inequalities for those who have chosen to make Northern Ireland their home.”



Procurement and Logistics (PaLs)

Working Group Memberships

PaLs has worked with national bodies to develop best practice food procurement which has led to the development of a regional food group that includes all HSC Trusts, driving best practice across our customer organisations.

During 2024-25, PaLs also established the Regional Community Equipment & Continence Working Group to formalise working closely with customer organisations to ensure a reliable and robust equipment and continence supply and delivery service to service users across the region.

Furthermore, PaLs have developed Working Groups to support the pre-requisites in relation to EQUIP, Procurement Act 2023 and NIPPPS, driving quality across service provision to our customer organisations.

Nursing Agency Framework

PaLs won the Collaborative Procurement Initiative Award at the National Go Awards 2024 for the successful collaboration with many stakeholders in HSC and DOH to deliver the Nursing Agency Framework. This framework led to a £32m benefit in year 1.



Family Practitioner Services (FPS)

Working Group Memberships

FPS are active members of several working groups, such as the SPPG-chaired Regional Interpreting Advisory Group; DoH-chaired HSC Refugee Resettlement Group; PHA-chaired Ethnic Minority & Migrants Regional Advisory Group; SPPG/Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Southern Area Outcomes Group and the Drug Tariff Management Group and Drug Tariff Liaison Group. These groups work collaboratively and across organisations to raise the standard of care delivered to service users.

Make My Voice Heard Report

The BSO Interpreting Service provided a number of Arabic, Farsi, Ukrainian and Somali Interpreters to support HSC Leadership Centre engagement with Women seeking international protection in NI. The PPI project commissioned by the DoH culminated in the publication of the “Make My Voice Heard” report which included a number of recommendations for the wider HSCNI, including the BSO Interpreting Service, to improve access to services for women and children seeking international protection.

Counter Fraud and Probity Service (CFPS)

Working Group Membership

CFS has continued engagement with the 4 Countries Counter Fraud Group to seek to establish a common approach to the practice of Counter Fraud for the Health Sector within the UK, driving quality cross-regionally.

People and Place Directorate

Corporate Services

During 2024–25, Corporate Services undertook a strategic refresh of BSO's Asset Management Strategy, with a strong emphasis on aligning the estate with modern working practices and organisational priorities. This revised approach focuses on ensuring that BSO's physical assets are used effectively and efficiently to support high-quality service delivery.

A key priority within the updated strategy is the continued support for flexible and hybrid working arrangements, tailored to evolving business needs. BSO is also committed to maximising workstation capacity across all sites and optimising the use of buildings currently occupied. This ensures that estate resources are not only fit for purpose but also deliver value for money.

Significant progress has been made through refurbishment projects at BSO Headquarters and Boucher Crescent. These upgrades are designed to modernise the office environment and create workspaces that are functional, welcoming, and aligned with staff needs. Completed works have already demonstrated strong returns on investment and contribute directly to the strategic goals of the Asset Management Strategy.

In line with this strategy, BSO successfully vacated premises at College Street and Great Victoria Street during the year. Staff previously based at these locations were relocated to Franklin Street, Boucher Crescent, and James House—ensuring continuity of service while enhancing estate efficiency.

BSO teams also continue to operate from Trust sites across the region. As Trusts implement Interbody Agreements for space occupancy, Corporate Services is actively reviewing accommodation needs in consultation with senior leadership teams. This collaborative approach strengthens relationships and ensures that services delivered to the wider HSC system remain safe, high-quality, and responsive.

Digital Directorate

Digital Working Groups

BSO Digital actively leads and contributes to regional working groups, audits, and the development of strategic frameworks. One example is the implementation of the Atamis contract management system, which has significantly improved contract visibility, compliance, and governance across the organization, setting a new standard for transparency and control.

Collaborative Approach to Innovation

Innovation is central to our approach, with initiatives such as Robotic Process Automation, Power BI dashboards, and the Digital Skills Initiative driving efficiency and insight. Lessons learned from major incidents and programme go-lives are systematically reviewed and shared, embedding quality improvement into governance processes. A standout example is the Paediatric Ophthalmology Visit Tracker, developed in collaboration with the Belfast Trust and Epic, which has improved patient safety and operational efficiency, and is now being adopted internationally.

Personal and Public Involvement

The My Care patient app, regional data warehouse, and GPIP platform enable joined-up care and improved access to information for patients and professionals. Feedback from users informs ongoing service development and integration.

The Encompass programme actively promotes Personal and Public Involvement (PPI), ensuring that service users are engaged throughout the lifecycle of projects—from design and development to implementation and evaluation.

Structured feedback mechanisms, including customer surveys, forums, and user stories, provide valuable data that informs continuous improvement. For example, feedback from users of the My Care app has directly influenced enhancements to functionality and accessibility, empowering patients to manage their health and advocate for themselves. This real-time engagement ensures that digital solutions remain responsive to evolving needs.



Service user involvement also extends to strategic governance. Their voices are represented in working groups, audits, and consultations on national guidance, helping to raise standards and ensure services are aligned with service user needs. By embedding the voice of the customer into our frameworks, BSO reinforces its commitment to transparency, accountability, and excellence.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate



Strategy, Engagement and Improvement (SEI)

Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework

In 2024–25, the SEI team introduced a new Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework (IGAF), setting out the structures, roles, and responsibilities that underpin effective governance across all service areas. This framework provides a standardised approach to decision-making and accountability, ensuring that all staff understand their role in managing risk.

Risk Management Strategy 2025-29

To complement the framework, the SEI team developed the Risk Management Strategy 2025–29, aligned with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Good Practice in Risk Management Guidance and the HSC Regional Model for Risk Management. This strategy establishes a cohesive and comprehensive approach to risk, underpinned by the governance principles set out in the Integrated Framework.

Together, the framework and strategy equip staff at all levels to identify, assess, and manage risks in a consistent and robust manner, ensuring that risks are proactively addressed, and that decisions are informed by a shared understanding of standards and expectations.

Performance Management Framework

During 2024–25, the SEI began to develop the Performance Management Framework. The purpose of the Performance Management Framework is to ensure the effective delivery of BSO's strategic objectives by providing a structured process for setting, monitoring and reviewing performance against BSO strategic objectives, in order to inform strategic decision-making and provide assurance to the BSO Board and ELT. The secondary purpose is to drive continuous improvement and transparency by ensuring accountability at all levels and empowering and supporting individual staff in their roles across the BSO. The framework is expected to be finalised during 2025–26.

Complaints

In advance of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman releasing an updated Health and Social Care Model Complaints Handling Procedure in July 2025, the complaints team have been working to review their existing processes, and establish a plan to effectively respond to any new requirements. Once announced, changes to the BSO complaints process are expected to take place in January 2026.

Corporate Communications and Engagement Team

BSO Corporate Branding Website

The BSO Communications and Engagement continue to enhance and promote the BSO Branding website, which provides BSO colleagues with guidance and direction on Communications best practice. This provides a framework through which service area teams can deliver consistent and high quality communications.

During 2024-25, the Communications and Engagement team received and delivered over 436 projects support requests to colleagues across BSO via the BSO Corporate Branding Website. This work is submitted by a BSO Comms submission form and enables the team to have some structure and evidence of work delivered.

Finance Directorate

During the year 2024-25, the Finance Directorate contributes to the creation, development and implementation of regional policies and procedures to assist HSC Employers in ensuring that they are equipped to meet their pensions and payroll regulatory and legislative requirements.

Pensions

HSC Pension Service engage regularly with service users and a range of stakeholders. In 2024-25 HSC Pension Services delivered 75 regional pension workshops and engagement sessions reaching out to over 5,000 members of the scheme. Feedback from clients/service users and other stakeholders is treated with high importance and is used by senior management and staff to improve services where applicable.

HSC PS also engaged, through individual consultations, with over 700 scheme members ensuring that our service delivery is meeting customer expectations and is client focused.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit team have worked to ensure organisational wide readiness for the new global internal audit standards which became effective from April 2025. These include:

1. **Purpose of Internal Auditing:** Defines the role and objectives of internal auditing within organizations.
2. **Ethics and Professionalism:** Outlines the ethical principles and professional conduct expected of internal auditors.
3. **Governing the Internal Audit Function:** Focuses on the governance structures that support the internal audit function.
4. **Managing the Internal Audit Function:** Provides guidance on the management and operational aspects of internal auditing.
5. **Performing Internal Audit Services:** Details the processes and methodologies for conducting internal audits effectively.

This robust framework supports Internal Audit to deliver a quality service to our customer organisations, driving effective recommendations that support delivery of services that comply with best practice.



Theme 5.

Integrating the

Care

Theme 5. Integrating the Care

*The Quality 2020 aim: **We will develop integrated pathways of care for individuals. We will make better use of multi-disciplinary team working and shared opportunities for learning and development in the HSC and with external providers.***

To deliver truly person-centred care, services must be well-integrated and supported by strong multidisciplinary collaboration. Collaboration across boundaries brings fresh perspectives, strengthens performance, and helps us continuously improve the care we provide.

By engaging with expert providers, both within and beyond HSC, we ensure that staff are equipped to deliver safe and effective care. This approach supports cost-effective service delivery while keeping outcomes for service users at the forefront.

This section highlights how BSO supports the wider health care sector to deliver safe, and sustainable pathways of care for individuals, by driving multi-disciplinary team working.

Operations Directorate

Clinical Education Centre (CEC)

Multi-professional Education Programmes

In 2024-25, 41% of HSC Clinical Education Centre (CEC) programmes were designed for a multi-professional audience, enabling staff from across the HSC and the wider health and social care sector to learn together. This approach fosters shared understanding, strengthens collaborative practice, and supports the development of integrated care pathways.

By bringing together professionals from diverse backgrounds—such as nursing, allied health, social care, and general practice—CEC programmes promote cross-sector learning and help break down silos between disciplines and organisations. This enhances the quality and consistency of care delivered to individuals, aligning with the Quality 2020 vision of person-centred, integrated services.

This has been enabled by non-recurrent funding from the DoH, which has funded applicants from care homes, domiciliary care, GP practices and federations to avail of CEC education for free at the point of application. As a result, there was a notable increase in programme completions from the care home sector, across both teacher-led and eLearning formats.

Among eLearning offerings, the most accessed courses included falls prevention and swallowing/dysphagia, reflecting sector-specific priorities and the value of tailored educational content. These programmes not only build individual capability but also contribute to a more cohesive and responsive care system.

Interprofessional Simulation Programme

During 2024-25, CEC worked closely with NIMDTA to develop an interprofessional simulation programme for Doctors and Nurses. This first pilot programme was delivered early April 2025 and the programme aimed to enhance person-centred care by optimising collaboration, communication and mutual understanding between Doctors and Nurses through interprofessional simulation-based education.

Multi-professional & Multi-agency Learning Events

During the year HSC CEC continued to successfully deliver and host webinars, in conjunction with other stakeholders. These are an excellent way of learning from regional and national experts as well as engaging with a multi-professional / multi-agency audience. Examples include:

- Menopause Webinar Series and a regional in person Learning Event: Delivered in partnership with the Department of Health, this series brought together professionals from HSC organisations, the community and voluntary sector, and Queen's University Belfast. The events promoted a multi-professional dialogue around menopause care, enhancing awareness and understanding across disciplines.
- Midwifery Webinars: Designed and delivered in conjunction with the Royal College of Midwives following the publication of the 'Enabling Safe Quality Midwifery Services & Care in Northern Ireland' report (DoH, 2024) with the aim of providing knowledge, awareness and skills to identify, address and reduce inequalities within maternity services. Speakers represented a broad spectrum of organisations including HSC Trusts, PHA, RCM, Ulster University, and the voluntary sector, exemplifying multi-agency collaboration in action.

These events demonstrate how shared learning platforms can support the development of integrated care pathways, by encouraging professionals from diverse backgrounds to engage in collective problem-solving, knowledge exchange, and continuous improvement.

Leadership Centre

Almost all the programmes designed and delivered by the HSC Leadership Centre during 2024-25 invited applicants from multi-professional backgrounds. The three Senior Leadership Programmes, Insight, Proteus and Aspire draw participants from a variety of backgrounds and professions. In addition, the Progress programme is aimed at multi ethnicity participants from a variety of backgrounds, embedding EDI and has been well attended and evaluated.

Learn HSCNI

In March 2025, the Leadership Centre won Best Digital/Technology Initiative in HR/OD for their Learn HSCNI project at the CIPD Northern Ireland Awards held at Titanic, Belfast.



- > Enabling consistent training standards across all HSC organisations.
- > Providing a comprehensive training catalogue accessible to all staff, regardless of role or location.
- > Supporting mandatory training compliance through calendar reminders and user dashboards.
- > Facilitating continuous professional development (CPD) with tools to track and document learning.

By equipping staff with the knowledge and skills needed to work collaboratively, Learn HSCNI strengthens the capacity of the workforce to deliver safe, effective, and integrated care.

Procurement and Logistics (PaLs)

During 2024-25, PaLs continued to drive multi-disciplinary and multi-agency collaboration through:

- Ongoing management of supply disruption relating to NI Protocol and Windsor Framework and engagement with national groups.
- Continued use of the multi-disciplinary Agency Reduction Working Group to develop the tender specifications for both agency medical and agency non-medical.
- Preliminary engagement with the Pathology Network and NIPIMS to provide project support structures to strategic pathology tenders, such as ALMS.
- Regular engagement with Social Care Procurement and Contracts network to ensure continued high-quality service provision in line with PA23 and NIPPPS
- Continued work in conjunction with DoH and BSO ELT to manage surplus stock and investigate opportunities to sustainably recycle and repurpose

As evidenced above, during 2024–25, PaLS supported integrated care by fostering multi-disciplinary and multi-agency collaboration across procurement and supply chain functions that contribute to more coordinated, person-centred care across the HSC system.

Counter Fraud and Probity Service (CFPS)

During 2024-25 Counter Fraud Services continued to hold regional lessons learned groups whereby Fraud Liaison Officers from HSC Hospital Trusts could discuss issues arising from CFS casework. Alongside this look at emerging risks and trends and develop robust best practice plans to mitigate risks identified across the jurisdiction.

Patient exemptions section commenced preparations for the introduction of Universal Credit as a passported benefit to help with health costs. This involved reviewing current processes, considering how Universal Credit would affect the processes and liaising with third parties to ensure that potential issues were identified, considered and addressed at an early stage if possible.

Counter Fraud and Probity continue to explore best practice models to ensure customer care is at the fore of service delivery.

Family Practitioner Services (FPS)

During 2024-25, Family Practitioner Services (FPS) introduced several initiatives that supported more integrated, equitable, and person-centered care. The implementation of a new Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) for cervical screening improved the accuracy and efficiency of reporting, contributing to safer and more coordinated diagnostic pathways.

In partnership with the Public Health Agency, FPS also undertook a bowel screening research project targeting areas of deprivation, using tailored invitations to address health inequalities and improve screening uptake.

To strengthen data quality and patient safety, FPS developed a new Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tool to enhance pharmaceutical dispensing data, which is an essential resource for monitoring medication trends and supporting clinical decision-making.

Additionally, upgrades to the BSO Interpreting Online Booking System and Interpreter Mobile App improved accessibility and reduced administrative burden, ensuring timely and inclusive communication support for service users.

Each of these initiatives reflects FPS's commitment to continuous improvement, cross-sector collaboration, and the delivery of high-quality services that are responsive to the needs of individuals and communities.

People and Place Directorate

Corporate Services

BSO teams from multiple directorates continue to be based on Trust sites enabling multi-disciplinary working. As each Trust seeks to implement Interbody Agreements for space occupancy, Corporate Services is working in consultation with multiple Trusts to review the current accommodation provision and assess future needs.

Digital Directorate

Encompass

The Encompass programme has delivered a single Electronic Health Care Record for all citizens, replacing legacy systems and standardising clinical pathways across acute and community sectors. All Trusts in Northern Ireland are now live on the Epic system, marking the first time in history that a country is live on a single electronic care record spanning acute, ambulatory, mental health, social care, and community care.

The Encompass Go-Live was also the largest ever for EpicCare Link, a web-based portal that provides read-only access to Encompass. EpicCare Link grants access to clinical information documented in Encompass and limited functionality such as requesting imaging tests. It allows GPs and other health professionals to access patient information. Over 35,000 users were provisioned access, including GPs who provide primary care and refer patients to Trusts.

Encompass has delivered unified patient records across different care settings, enabling integrated pathways and continuity of care. Multidisciplinary teams collaborated on implementation, training, and support, sharing learning through regional workshops, mentoring, and cross-Trust engagement.

The Northern Ireland Specialist Transport and Retrieval (NISTAR) service officially went live with Encompass on 24 July 2025. Operating 24/7 and handling over 1,200 critical patient transfers annually, NISTAR plays a vital role in ensuring timely specialist care during inter-hospital transfers.

NIPACS+ and NIPIMS programmes

The NIPACS+ and NIPIMS programmes have further integrated imaging and pathology services regionally. With significant investment in Digital across HSCNI, this has driven integrated care, improving outcomes for patients.

OREC and Honest Broker Service

BSO Digital supports multidisciplinary team working through system integration, shared learning forums, and collaborative projects with Trusts, DHCNI, and other ALBs. The Honest Broker Service and ORECNI facilitate research and ethical review across organisational boundaries.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate

Corporate Communications and Engagement Team

The BSO Communications and Engagement team attend and strategically advise 'Bronze' Commands and various other regional strategic working groups on matters relating to the promotion of care for patients across Northern Ireland, and projects and strategic plans that enable and support HSC Colleagues so that they can enhance integrated pathways that benefit patients.

The BSO Communications and Engagement team continue to play a strategic role in managing and supporting BSO contingency support and planning through active engagement with DoH, SPPG, PHA, ALBs and each of the Health and Social care Trusts.

Finance Directorate

Across the Finance Directorate there is regular liaison with a number of public bodies such as the DoH, the Department of Finance, HM Treasury, the Government Actuaries Department (GAD), the Pension Regulator, HMRC, HSC and NHS bodies to enhance shared learning and development.

We use multidisciplinary working across multiple regional groups to share learning and best practice and to look for opportunities to continue improving. Our team working across regional expert groups continues to work well and will inform our approach in the future.

Together with being the administrator of Northern Ireland Infected Blood compensation payments to a value of £22m in-year, the Finance Directorate provided local expertise and support in the establishment of the new national compensation authority.

Pensions

HSC Pension Service engages with a variety of working groups across the HSC and through wider Public Sector Pension Agencies in order to contribute to shared learning practices and implement client-focused services. HSC Pension Service also engages with other NHS Pension Services Providers across the UK to share knowledge and best practices.



Conclusion and Looking Ahead

Looking Ahead



Operations Directorate

Family Practitioner Services

FPS will enhance its digital capabilities through a new data and systems strategy focused on automation and integration. It will support the development of a replacement Cervical Screening system and lead key transformation projects, including the Drug Tariff Intelligence Unit and the ePharmacy Programme.

Counter Fraud and Probity Service (CFPS)

CFS plans to engage with the Department of Health to secure resources needed to manage increasing demands and maintain compliance. The Probity Service will work with DXC to upgrade its Case Management System and ensure robust eligibility checks for health cost assistance claims.

Legal Services

Legal Services aims to implement a digitised case management system and a workforce strategy that introduces legal career pathways. It will strengthen partnerships with clients and external networks to support shared learning and deliver responsive legal support.

Procurement and Logistics Service (PaLS)

PaLS will continue to refine its service delivery through the development of performance metrics aligned with NIPPPS reporting requirements and the implementation of new procurement terms and conditions. Accommodation optimisation will be pursued in line with the BSO Estates Strategy, alongside testing of a new digital Business Continuity Plan offline ordering system to mitigate cyber risks. The Directorate will enhance customer dashboards and expand home delivery services for insulin pumps and consumables. Training will be a key focus, with the establishment of a central SharePoint-based training hub and the development of a training matrix to monitor compliance. PaLS will also continue publishing tenders under PA23, automate processes where possible, and improve procurement structures to drive efficiency and innovation.

People and Place Directorate

The People and Place Directorate will continue preparations for the rollout and management of the Equip and Evolve programmes, supporting transformation across services. The Equality Unit will assist BSO and its client organisations in conducting their five-year reviews of individual equality schemes. The Recruitment Shared Services Centre will explore new business models that incorporate attraction strategies alongside service transformation through partnership working. Meanwhile, Corporate Services will oversee the closure of Great Victoria Street to reduce the carbon footprint and meet DoF Ministerial commitments, while also delivering an Information Governance training programme for senior staff across BSO.

Digital Directorate

Looking ahead, the Digital Directorate will focus on optimising major programmes such as Encompass to ensure customers can fully realise the benefits of digital transformation. Efforts will continue to standardise operations through the Establishing Digital Directorate Project, while expanding career pathways and early talent pipelines to strengthen workforce development. Innovation will be driven by piloting AI solutions under robust governance frameworks, supported by the Power Platform Centre of Excellence. Strategic partnerships with Trusts, DHCNI, and other stakeholders will remain central to aligning digital initiatives with regional priorities.

OREC

OREC will continue working alongside the Health Research Authority and Medical Health Research Agency to develop clear guidance on diversity in clinical trials to drive a shift in representation in, and access to, research. This will help to ensure that participants come from diverse backgrounds, so the findings of research reflect prevalence and clinical need across the population, and new treatments benefit all groups in society. OREC will also ensure that all HSC Research and Ethics Committee members are trained in equality and diversity issues in research.

Strategic Planning and Customer Engagement Directorate

Building on the significant progress already achieved through the IGAF, Risk Management Strategy and Customer Engagement Strategy, the next phase will focus on building on these foundations. Key priorities for the year ahead will include using technology to automate the Service Development Proposals process, further refining SLAs, strengthening our governance, and embedding the Performance Management Framework, all of which build on the momentum established this year.

Finance Directorate

The Finance Directorate will continue its engagement with the Equip programme to support the delivery of a future integrated IT system across HR, Payroll, Finance, Procurement, and Logistics. Subject matter experts will contribute to working groups to help standardise processes, with investment planned for testing in the post-design phase. There will be an ongoing focus on measuring key performance indicators within Payroll and enhancing customer engagement to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. The Directorate remains committed to balancing financial constraints with the delivery of high-quality services that meet the needs of health and social care.

Conclusion

The Annual Quality Report 2024–25 reflects the Business Services Organisation’s (BSO) unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred services across the Health and Social Care system. Through the lens of the five Quality 2020 themes, this report showcases how BSO has embedded excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement into every aspect of its operations.

Transforming the Culture has been central to our journey this year. From the strategic leadership of the BSO Board to the expansion of customer forums and working groups, we have fostered a culture of openness, partnership, and shared learning. Initiatives such as the Sustainability Working Group and the Encompass Super-User Programme exemplify how cross-functional collaboration drives better outcomes for service users.

To **strengthen the workforce**, BSO has invested in leadership development, technical training, and inclusive employment practices. With over 93% compliance in mandatory training and 841 staff participating in additional development programmes, our people are empowered to lead change and deliver high-quality services. The launch of the People Strategy and the expansion of placement pathways for individuals with disabilities further demonstrate our commitment to a skilled, supported, and diverse workforce.

Measuring the Improvement has been achieved through robust performance monitoring, external accreditations, and data-driven decision-making. From ISO certifications in Legal and ITS to Investors in People and Wellbeing Silver awards, BSO has demonstrated its ability to meet and exceed recognised standards. Feedback loops, dashboards, and service evaluations have informed tangible improvements across Directorates, ensuring that quality is not only measured but acted upon.

BSO has **raised the standard** by embedding evidence-based frameworks and service user involvement into its governance and delivery models. The “Make My Voice Heard” report and the expansion of SIGGs in the Clinical Education Centre highlight how lived experience and expert input shape our services. Working groups across FPS, PaLs, and Digital have driven regional consistency and innovation, ensuring that standards evolve in line with service user needs.

Finally, **Integrating the Care** has been realised through multidisciplinary collaboration and digital transformation. Programmes such as Encompass, Learn HSCNI, and the Paediatric Ophthalmology Visit Tracker have unified care pathways and enhanced patient safety. BSO’s role in supporting regional initiatives, from AI pilots to sustainability projects, demonstrates our capacity to lead integration across systems and sectors.

Looking ahead to 2025–26, BSO will continue to build on these foundations. Through strategic partnerships, innovation, and a relentless focus on quality, BSO remains committed to making the delivery of health and social care possible.

BSO Annual Quality Report 2024 - 2025



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