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PRESS RELEASE

NI Health Trusts sign up to Mental Health and Disability Charters

An event held today at Belfast City Hospital has marked the fact that all six Health Trusts across Northern Ireland have now signed up to two Equality Commission initiatives - the Mental Health Charter and the disability access initiative Every Customer Counts.

The Trusts, in signing up to the initiatives, have made a voluntary commitment to work to improve the working lives of any of their employees who are experiencing mental ill-health and to consider what steps they can take to help people with a disability access their services more easily.

Speaking at today's event, Dr Evelyn Collins CBE said: "It is most encouraging that all six Trusts have committed themselves to the principles and objectives of both these charters which can make a real difference to the lives of people facing difficulties. We welcome their commitment and hope it will encourage other organisations across the public sector to follow suit.

"Every Customer Counts prompts organisations to think about how they offer their services – and to do so from the perspective of someone with a disability. It can help them to identify changes that are needed – some may involve commitments of time and resources while others can be quite simple adjustments or changes which can be implemented quickly. Ultimately, the key issue is that the changes should enable people with a disability to access their services more easily and benefit more from them."

"By signing up to the Mental Health Charter the Trusts are showing their commitment to helping employees who may be going through a difficult time. Mental ill health can take many forms and its impact can be devastating – particularly if a person feels that their problems are not treated seriously or sensitively. It is good that large public employers are subscribing to this initiative. It takes strong leadership in any organisation to create an open workplace culture in which these issues can be openly discussed and where prompt and effective support is available for staff who need it", Dr Collins concluded.

Barney McNeaney, Director of Mental Health and Disability Services, Southern HSC Trust said: "By signing up to the Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts

HSC Trusts are making a public statement today to further the commitments in both Charters. We will use today's launch and signing as a further impetus and a catalyst to continue with the excellent examples of work currently underway across our organisations and to seize opportunities to do more.

As HSC Trusts we are actively seeking to promote healthy workplaces for all our employees through our Health and Wellbeing Strategies and to foster a culture where all staff feel valued, supported and listened to. It is our duty to ensure that all of our services and facilities are accessible, responsive and inclusive for all people who have a disability so that they can fully avail of them, he concluded."

Notes to Editor

Further information is available for both charters from the Commission's website.

- [Mental Health Charter](#)
- [Every Customer Counts](#)