

Chief Executive Update

Trust Board

Thursday 29 May 2025

1.0 Trust Key Metrics

What People Say											
<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 144 Compliments Received (Q4 2024/25) </div>	<div style="background-color: #fd7e14; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 135 Compliments Received (Q3 2024/25) </div>										
<i>A decrease of 14 since previous quarter</i>		<i>An increase of 13 since previous quarter</i>									
What We Spend (At Month 12)											
<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> Spend £1074m </div>	<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> Savings £22.089m </div>		<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> Breakeven (Small surplus of £106k) </div>								
Our People (At 31 st March 2025)											
<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 13,122 People </div> <p><i>Excludes Bank Staff, Staff on Career Break & Seconded out of Trust</i></p>	Permanent Staff Turnover February April 2024 – March 2025 7.63%	Number of Vacancies Activity being recruited to at 31st December 2024 1,065	<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 6.60% Sickness Level </div> <p>At 31st March 2025</p>								
31st January 2025 Position 13,090			31st January 2025 Position 6.62%								
Our Internal Controls (At 31 st March 2025)											
<div style="background-color: #17a2b8; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 90% recommendations fully implemented in 2024/25 </div>	<div style="background-color: #fd7e14; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 58 recommendations outstanding at year end 2024/25 </div>	<div style="background-color: #dc3545; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> Of which 20 are significant carried into 2025/26 </div>	<div style="background-color: #fd7e14; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> Total recommendations 2025/26 109 of which 38 are significant </div>								
<i>Our Activity Performance (April 2024 – March 2025) 109 will increase as the final 24/25 reports are closed out and then the recommendations added to the database for 25/26</i>											
Our Activity Performance (April 2024 – March 2025)											
		Service Delivery Plans 2024/25 SMT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Cumulative Position (April 2024 to March 2025 or most up to date position available)									
<small>11 service delivery plan areas containing 60 individual service metrics/outcomes</small>											
<div style="background-color: #17a2b8; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 55% of Measures On Track or Partially on Track </div>	<div style="background-color: #007bff; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 38% (23) Over Achieving Against Regionally Agreed Targets </div>	<div style="background-color: #28a745; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 7% (4) Achieving Regionally Agreed Targets </div>	<div style="background-color: #ffc107; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 10% (6) are Partially Achieving Regionally Agreed Target </div>	<div style="background-color: #dc3545; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> 45% (27) Not Achieving Regionally Agreed Targets </div>							
<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">Key:</td> <td style="font-size: x-small;"> <div style="background-color: #dc3545; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> less than minus 5% </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="font-size: x-small;"> <div style="background-color: #ffc107; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> between minus 5% and minus 0.1% </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="font-size: x-small;"> <div style="background-color: #28a745; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> between 0% and 5% </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="font-size: x-small;"> <div style="background-color: #17a2b8; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> greater than 5% </td> </tr> </table>				Key:	<div style="background-color: #dc3545; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> less than minus 5%		<div style="background-color: #ffc107; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> between minus 5% and minus 0.1%		<div style="background-color: #28a745; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> between 0% and 5%		<div style="background-color: #17a2b8; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></div> greater than 5%
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2.0 encompass Go-Live

2.1 The Southern and Western Trust's encompass Go-Live officially commenced on 8 May 2025.

All HSC Trusts across Northern Ireland are now integrated into one digital system, signifying a major step forward in streamlining patient care.

2.2 With encompass now fully operational across Northern Ireland, patients and service users from across the region can now benefit from My Care, the dedicated patient portal. My Care provides secure online access to personal health information and it has already over 120,000 users.

2.3 Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said: "This has been a concerted effort across the whole of the Health and Social Care system since it was first announced in 2020, and I want to sincerely thank each of those who have played a key role in getting us here. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity and has allowed Northern Ireland to modernise our systems and fundamentally improve how we deliver care."

3.0 Pre-operative assessment

3.1 Plans are progressing to relocate the Trustwide pre-operative assessment service to a designated facility (Ashleigh House) on the St Luke's Hospital site in the summer months. Accommodation on busy acute hospital sites is a major challenge and available space must be optimised to the benefit of patients and staff. It is a priority where possible to relocate services, that are not dependent on a hospital setting.

3.2 The Trust has a dedicated pre-operative team of 25 staff, committed to providing the best possible service for patients from across Armagh, Dungannon, Craigavon, Banbridge, Newry and Mourne. The service will remain the same in this new location.

3.3 The team will benefit professionally from co-location, through improved communications, efficiency, safety and being able to offer more holistic care to patients. Engagement continues with staff and patients will be updated accordingly through their appointment information.

4.0 Woodlawn House

4.1 Woodlawn House Short Break Nursing Service is currently operating at reduced capacity due to significant workforce challenges - specifically vacancy and sickness absence levels. Unfortunately, as a result, a number of short breaks have been cancelled and for others the number of nights has had to be reduced.

4.2 This reduction in service, whilst regrettable, has been necessary to ensure the safety of service users and staff. Every effort is being made to; recruit to vacant positions, seek support from other services and explore local alternatives for families, where appropriate.

4.3 The Trust is supporting staff to return to work from sickness absence and engaging Bank and Agency staff to fill shifts whenever it is possible to do so and working hard to re-establish service provision in the weeks ahead. Trust staff have been in contact with those affected to update them on the situation and to apologise for the distress caused to them and their families.

5.0 Obstetrics and Gynaecology

5.1 The Southern Trust provides maternity and gynaecology services across the community and from two hospital sites - Daisy Hill Hospital and Craigavon Area Hospital.

5.2 Like many other specialties throughout health and social care in Northern Ireland and the UK, Southern Trust's maternity and gynaecology services have been facing growing workforce challenges, with difficulties recruiting and retaining specialist staff impacting midwifery and medical consultant teams. As a consequence of ongoing workforce challenges particularly at Daisy Hill, significant efforts have been made to manage and stabilise maternity services across both sites. This requires constant attention and focus, despite which, the situation remains fragile.

5.3 Due to the ongoing and future workforce uncertainty, the Trust has established a project structure, supported by three independent experts, to review maternity and gynaecology services. The aim is to develop a longer term safe, sustainable, best practice model that meets the future needs of our whole population. A lay reference group has also been established to work alongside the project, to share service user views and feedback.

6.0 Waiting list initiatives

6.1 The Health Minister recently announced a package of initiatives to tackle hospital care backlogs, including a Waiting List Reimbursement Scheme.

6.2 An initial £10m will be invested in this Scheme regionally, allowing people to claim back costs when they receive treatments outside Northern Ireland, subject to qualifying criteria. Beginning in June 2025, it will apply to procedures obtained in the Republic of Ireland and will subsequently be extended to the rest of the European Union. These planned investments reflect the Executive's ringfencing of up to £215m in this year's Health budget for waiting list activities – in line with the finalised Programme for Government.

6.3 The Minister said: "These initiatives are in large part being funded by monies diverted from my core budget for day-to-day services. That will have unavoidable consequences for wider health and social care provision. In the coming weeks, my Department will publish detailed plans and assessments on the financial pressures this year and the measures that will be needed in both the short and medium terms."

7.0 Emergency Department waiting times

7.1 The Department of Health recently published the latest Emergency Department quarterly waiting times.

7.2 While showing a slight overall reduction in waiting times since last year, most patients were still not being treated within targets. In March 2025, the average time for discharged patients in Type 1 EDs was 4 hours, 48 minutes – a three-minute improvement since March 2024. For patients admitted to hospital, the average waiting time was 13 hours and 23 minutes - an improvement of two hours and seven minutes since March 2024.

7.3 The British Medical Association (BMA) warned of “intolerable pressure” on staff and harm to patients being caused by emergency department waiting times. Dr Alan Stout, BMA NI Council Chair, said there was no doubt that patients were coming to harm in an ‘over-burdened’ service. Dr Stout said “a concerted effort” from the Department of Health was needed to support doctors, to improve hospital flow and properly prepare for winter pressures.

8.0 Doctors In Distress

8.1 A charity set up to help doctors and healthcare professionals (Doctors In Distress) with their mental health in Great Britain has extended its services to Northern Ireland.

8.2 Figures, published by the BMA NI show that 62% of doctors in Northern Ireland report "higher than normal levels fatigue or exhaustion". Mr Sidhu, from the charity, said “Doctors in Northern Ireland generally report a lot more negative experiences than the average in England, Scotland and Wales. That included a much higher level of dissatisfaction in their work.”

8.3 Dr Alan Stout from the BMA said the figures show that the problem is "more acute in Northern Ireland". Mr Stout welcomed the charity's services to Northern Ireland, but said "we need to go further", and "a dedicated health service for doctors in Northern Ireland" is required.

9.0 National Insurance Contribution and Minimum Wage increases

9.1 The amount which employers pay in National Insurance rose recently from 13.8% to 15% of employees’ wages.

9.2 Community Pharmacists, General Practitioners, Dentists and Optometrists called on the Health Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive for immediate financial support. The four bodies have stated the impact of these additional overheads will be an inevitable reduction in opening hours, cuts to staffing levels and reduced access to patient care.

9.3 The Health Minister has confirmed that funding to mitigate National Insurance bills and funding will be made available to help support non-statutory providers of health and social care in meeting their additional National Insurance bills. This

package involves a projected £40million and includes social care providers and hospices as well as family health service providers (GPs, dentists, community pharmacies and opticians).

10.0 Consultation on Neurology services

10.1 The Health Minister has launched a public consultation on the final report of the Regional Review of Neurology services, which he also published recently. The Minister said the report's recommendations provided a roadmap to deliver an ambitious, long-term plan to drive improvements in services.

10.2 The Minister said the report's analysis of current services was sobering and the scale of improvement needed was substantial and that, while there will be an ongoing focus on using current neurology resources more effectively, the full implementation of the report's recommendations will require significant additional funding.

10.3 The Department is hosting a number of public engagement events to support the consultation at several locations across Northern Ireland over the coming months. The consultation will close at 5pm on 6 August 2025.

11.0 New Framework for multi-disciplinary agency staff provision

11.1 A new Framework has been established for the supply of agency workers to the health service across a number of professional areas.

11.2 A phased implementation will now take place across the system with effect from 2 June 2025 as part of an extensive programme of work by Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system (HSC), undertaken in partnership with trade unions, to control and reduce the use of agency workers and build a substantive workforce that is proud to work for the HSC.

11.3 This Framework establishes a pool of approved suppliers who will provide agency workers when required at pre-agreed payment rates. The roles covered by the Framework are allied health professionals, social care support, administration & clerical staff, professional and technical roles, for example, biomedical scientists, laboratory & pharmacy technicians, support services like porters and catering staff, and specialists such as IT, finance, and project management.

11.4 When agency staff are needed in these areas, Trusts will only be permitted to source them from the list of suppliers who have successfully tendered to be included in the Framework. All have been assessed on three key factors: quality, price, and social value.

12.0 New regional breast cancer assessment

12.1 The new regional system for red flag breast cancer assessments is now live and is designed to address long standing disparities in waiting times and ensure that all patients referred with suspected breast cancer are seen based on clinical need rather than postcode.

12.2 SEHSCT is managing the regional waiting list through a centralised administrative team. While most patients will still attend their local hospital, they may be offered an earlier appointment at one of five acute hospital sites including Craigavon Area Hospital.

13.0 Financial position

13.1 There are significant financial pressures across HSC in 25-26 with shortfall of c£500m.

13.2 A regional financial summit was held early this month(May) with a number of in-year and medium measures being taken forward to help reduce the deficit in year however HSCNI will require additional funding in year in order to break-even.