

**Chief Executive Update**

**Trust Board**

**Thursday 25 September 2025**

## Trust Key Metrics

What People Say			
<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>195 Compliments Received (Q1 2025/26)</b> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>221 Complaints Received (Q3 2024/25)</b> </div>	
<i>An increase of 51 since previous quarter</i>		<i>An increase of 86 since previous quarter</i>	
What We Spend (At Month 05)			
<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Cumulative Spend £456m</b> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Savings Achieved £10.1m</b> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Projected year-end deficit of £16.4m</b> </div>
Our People (At 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025)			
<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>13,132</b> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Excludes Bank Staff, Staff on Career Break &amp; Seconded out of Trust</i></p>	<p><b>Permanent Staff Turnover July April 2024 – June 2025</b> 7.74%</p>	<p><b>Number of Vacancies Activity being recruited to at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b> 1,047</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>6.09% Sickness Level</b> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>At 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b></p>
<p><b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 Position 13,122</b></p>			<p><b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 Position 6.60%</b></p>

## **1.0 IT issues**

**1.1** Significant IT issues caused widespread disruption to Southern Trust services recently with the majority of planned surgery and out-patient hospital appointments being cancelled on 2 days in September.

**1.2** We sincerely apologise to every patient and service user who has been affected by the disruption.

**1.3** The IT issues which caused disruption to our services on 17 September were resolved on that day and all systems restored by the next day. Trust Staff contacted all patients whose appointments were cancelled and they worked hard to reschedule these as soon as possible.

**1.4** Investigations are being carried out to examine the cause of the IT outage.

## **2.0 Cervical cancer SAI report**

**2.1** Serious Adverse Incident reports were commissioned following the completion of an Invasive Cancer Audit for the 12 women in the Southern Trust over the 2018 to 2024 period.

**2.2** In August, The Trust shared the draft written report with all the women for their comments.

**2.3** A summary of the findings and learnings arising from SAI Learning Reviews undertaken by the Southern Trust is due to be published in the coming weeks.

## **3.0 Reset**

**3.1** The Southern Trust hosted a Reset event in the Seagoe parish centre in Craigavon on 22 September for senior staff and other stakeholders including local council representatives.

**3.2** Mike Farrar, Interim Permanent Secretary for Department of Health, attended the event and spoke about all aspects of Reset and the need for greater collaborative working with Trusts genuinely working together as one system.

**3.3** The Trust Interim Chief Executive and Chair also spoke about the implications of Reset and what it means at a trust level.

## **4.0 Number plate recognition**

**4.1** From 1 September, like other hospitals across the region, automated number plate recognition was introduced to protect set down and pick up points at Craigavon and Daisy Hill hospitals.

**4.2** This new technology will use cameras to monitor and manage vehicles entering key areas, including designated hospital carparks, drop of zones and Blue Light routes. Visitors will notice changes with new equipment and parking attendants on site.

## **5.0 Rathkeeland House Surgery**

**5.1** The Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed that the Southern Trust has taken over the management of Rathkeeland House Surgery, Crossmaglen with effect from 1 September 2025.

**5.2** All 4,235 patients of Rathkeeland House Surgery will be automatically registered with the new practice.

**5.3** This means that the Trust now has responsibility for a total of three GP Practices, namely: Mullaghbawn Practice from July 2023, Kilkeel Practice from November 2023 as well as Rathkeeland Practice in Crossmaglen. This model allows the Trust to oversee the administration and delivery of General Medical Services (GMS) within these practices (approximately 18,000 patients).

## **6.0 Forest Lodge Residential Care Service**

**6.1** Praxis Care recently announced that it intends to close Forest Lodge Residential Care Service in Portadown which provides accommodation for vulnerable adults with learning disabilities and complex needs and can house up to 9 residents.

**6.2** The Southern Trust was notified by Praxis Care of its intention to terminate the current contract between the SHSCT and Praxis in October 2025.

**6.3** The Trust continues to work closely and constructively with Praxis and is focusing on securing alternative accommodation to meet the needs of the current residents.

## **7.0 Regional Clinical Director for Elective Care**

**7.1** Professor Mark Taylor has been appointed as Northern Ireland's first Regional Clinical Director for Elective.

**7.2** He will have a central role in overseeing, leading and supporting the Department of Health's drive to reduce waiting lists. and will include leadership and advice on the transformation of services for patients and on ensuring collaboration and dissemination of best practice.

**7.3** In May, DOH published an Elective Care Implementation and Funding Plan with a range of initiatives to tackle hospital waiting lists with earmarked funding of up to £215m for 2025-26.

## **8.0 Emergency general surgery**

**8.1** The Western Health Trust has agreed to "pause and reconsider" its consultation on the future of emergency general surgery at the South West Acute Hospital (Swah).

**8.2** On 3 July the Western Trust's board agreed to consult on the permanent removal of the service from Swah. The Department of Health confirmed that The Health Minister wrote to the Western Trust in July asking it to pause the consultation.

## **9.0 Emergency Care**

**9.1** The latest DOH figures for April and June 2025, shows that 33,938 patients - almost one in five patients – waited at least 12 hours to be admitted, transferred or discharged from a major emergency department in Northern Ireland. This marks the worst first quarter on record since monitoring began in 2011.

**9.2** Only 33.3% of patients were treated, admitted or discharged within four hours - the worst three months on record for four-hour performance.

**9.3** Overall, 210,705 people attended emergency departments in the quarter - 2.1% more than the same period in 2024. While attendances at major emergency departments dipped slightly, minor injury units saw a surge of almost 48%.

## **10.0 Waiting times**

**10.1** DOH data shows that more than 340,000 people in Northern Ireland were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment across four Trust areas (Belfast Trust figures not included) on 30 June 2024. More than half of those patients have been waiting 1 year+.

**10.2** Data which is available for all 5 trusts show that almost 108,000 people were waiting for an inpatient or day case admission to hospitals in Northern Ireland on 30 June 2024. Fewer patients were waiting in the Northern, Southern and Western Trusts compared to the last quarter and to June 2023.

**10.3** The data also shows that there has been an increase in the number of patients waiting for a diagnostic test in the Northern, Southern and Western Trusts.

**10.4** DOH update in September announced that along with the 14% drop in outpatient appointment waiting times, surgical waits of more than four years are down by 21%. Waits have fallen by almost a quarter in named specialties like gallbladders and tonsils.

## **11.0 Red Flag breast cancer patients waiting times**

**11.1** A new system introduced in May designed to cut red flag breast cancer assessment waiting times has made them longer for some and cut the equivalent of around five cancer clinics each week.

**11.2** In response to an assembly question, The Health Minister said that modelling was carried out before the scheme began and it emerged that there would be a shortfall of the equivalent of 5.3 breast cancer clinics per week due to workforce pressures. This is expected to continue until early 2026 affecting over 5,000 patients.

**11.3** Under the previous system, people were given appointments based on availability in their local health trust, but now all patients are pooled together in one system which operates across the north. This has meant that some patients are waiting longer than before.

## **12.0 Waiting list reimbursement scheme**

**12.1** The waiting list reimbursement scheme is being expanded to allow people to claim back costs for treatments in EU countries.

**12.2** Phase One of the scheme was launched in June but was limited to "eligible treatments" in the Republic of Ireland. From 15 September, patients waiting longer than one year for hospital treatment will be able to "reclaim the cost of approved procedures".

**12.3** The scheme had also been limited to patients who had been on an NHS waiting list for two years or more but has now been reduced to one year.

## **13.0 Pay disputes**

**13.1** BMA's Northern Ireland consultants committee (NICC) have made the decision to re-enter a formal dispute with DOH and health service employers in response to this year's DDRB recommended pay uplift for doctors which they say is not enough to address years of pay erosion for consultants, and over continuing delays in implementing this pay uplift in Northern Ireland.

**13.2** The RCN has lodged a formal pay dispute with DOH and HSC employers. The dispute focuses on the continuing absence of a 2025-2026 pay award for HSC nursing staff in Northern Ireland. RCN members in Northern Ireland have said that a 3.6% increase in pay for nursing staff employed in the HSC on Agenda for Change terms and conditions is not enough.

## **14.0 Medical treatment for children injured in Gaza**

**14.1** The Executive Office has agreed to a request from Health Minister Mike Nesbitt to bring children from Gaza for medical treatment.

**14.2** The first group of critically ill and injured Gazan children, said to be between 30 and 50 patients, will reportedly be arriving "in the coming weeks". A very small number, two or three children, are expected to be treated in Northern Ireland.

## **15.0 Primary care expansion plans**

**15.1** The Health Minister recently published an implementation plan for the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Programme.

**15.2** The Minister said: "We can see that the MDT programme is making a significant difference. In the areas it has already been rolled out to, it delivered an additional 335,000 patient consultations in 2024-25. We can double that appointments total over the next four years and then push it up to the million mark within eight years. That ambitious projection is included in the implementation plan."

## **16.0 Gender Identity Services**

**16.1** Health Minister Mike Nesbitt has announced that he has asked Baroness Hilary Cass, to conduct an assessment of the gender identity services provision in Northern Ireland.

**16.2** The assessment will also specifically consider the proposed move to a Regional Lifespan Gender Service in Northern Ireland.

## **17.0 Draft learning disability service model**

**17.1** DOH has launched a 14-week public consultation which outlines a three-year roadmap for transforming learning disability services in Northern Ireland.

**17.2** The We Matter - Learning Disability Service Model for Northern Ireland outlines an outcomes-based approach for adult learning disability services in the region. It defines what good support should look like and brings together the values, outcomes and approaches that should guide how care is designed, commissioned, and delivered.

**17.3** DOH will be hosting a series of regional engagement events during the consultation, including an event in Canal Court Hotel in Newry on 15 October.

**17.4** Consultation documents and response questionnaire are available on the Department's website. The closing date for responses is 5pm, 25 November 2025.

## **18.0 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework consultation**

**18.1** A series of public events took place recently as part of the consultation on the draft Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) Framework.

**18.2** The aim of the Framework is to provide a consistent system-wide approach to children's emotional health and wellbeing provision, including for those children who have neurodevelopmental or other related conditions or needs.

**18.3** To support the consultation process, a series of in-person and online seminars have been organised to provide more information about the draft Framework. The first in-person events took place on 27 August in Tower Hill, Armagh. Consultation deadline is 26 September 2025.

## **19.0 Health Inequalities Annual Report**

**19.1** The 2025 Health Inequalities Annual Report published recently provides the latest details of persistent disparities between the most and least deprived areas in Northern Ireland.

**19.2** Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said: "Tackling health inequalities remains a main focus for me as Health Minister, and I am determined more than ever to make a difference. Where someone is born, grows up, lives and works should not determine their health outcomes - yet we know that in our most disadvantaged communities, people are more likely to experience poorer health, shorter life expectancy, and greater barriers to accessing care."

## **20.0 Nursing & Midwifery Career Framework**

**20.1** Health Minister Mike Nesbitt has announced the development of a new career framework for nursing and midwifery to support workforce retention and personal development.

**20.2** The NI Career and Development Model for Nursing & Midwifery, which is due to be formally launched later this year, will support nurses, midwives, and support staff and will be informed by three core career pathways - clinical, operational and management, and education and research.

**20.3** The Minister also announced the commencement of a new regional Masters in Advanced Practice programme. Delivered by both Queen's University, Belfast, and Ulster University, it will enable the growth of the Advanced Practice workforce to meet strategic workforce and policy priorities, while increasing the opportunity for interprofessional learning.

**20.4** Work is also underway to establish a NI Advanced Practice Academy to support the education, training, and ongoing professional development of the Advanced Practice workforce.