



Southern Health and Social Care Trust Highlights – September 2025

New sunflower room for South Tyrone Hospital

A new sensory room has officially opened at South Tyrone Hospital to support patients with learning disabilities as they prepare for dental surgery.

The Sunflower Room has been created by transforming a former storeroom into a bright and calming space. Equipped with dim lights, fidget toys, less noise and fewer staff, it offers patients a safe environment to relax before going into theatre.

[Read more](#)

Word Perfect!

We were absolutely delighted to have six nominations shortlisted for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy NI Awards.

The regional celebration of excellence and best practice marks 80 years of the profession in Northern Ireland.

We have such a high calibre of compassionate SLT professionals right across our organisation, there were a total of 16 nominations who are all winners in our eyes.

Colleagues and teams shortlisted were:

Rising Star

Inca Deeney, Armagh and Dungannon SLT Children's Community Team.

Inspiration

Keira Gilmore, Armagh and Dungannon SLT Children's Community Team

Support Worker

Helen Thornton, Craigavon Area Hospital

Leadership

Wendy Taggart, Adult Community Team

Ciara Fearon

Ciara Fearon, Community Paediatric Team

Team

Adult Community Team

The fact that six of our nominations were shortlisted amongst such outstanding quality this year is a testament to the standard of care delivered by our Trust SLT team, demonstrating their commitment to improving the quality of peoples' lives and helping them to achieve their potential.

[Read more](#)

Learning Organisation

Celebrating five years of Care Opinion

We have marked five years of Care Opinion – a platform that enables patients, service users, carers and families to share their experiences of health and social care.

Since its introduction in August 2020, Care Opinion has gone from strength to strength in the Southern Trust, with almost 14,000 stories shared, over 17,000 staff responses and more than 1.65million public reads of Trust stories.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality & Experience

Pat's 50 years of service

When Pat McElhatton walked through the doors of South Tyrone Hospital on 1 September 1975 for his first day as a porter, he didn't imagine he'd still be doing the same job 50 years later.

Yet here he is today, still a familiar and friendly face in the corridors for staff, patients, and visitors alike. Although Pat, who is from Pomeroy, hadn't planned on a career in portering, he quickly realised it was the perfect fit.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality & Experience

200 years of St Luke's

In August we held a special event to celebrate the 200th anniversary of St Luke's Hospital, Armagh.

First opened in July 1825 as the Armagh District Lunatic Asylum, St Luke's was the first of a network of asylums established in Ireland to provide care for people living with mental illness. Over two centuries later, it remains a landmark in the story of mental health, reflecting both the challenges and the progress made in care, treatment and understanding.

The commemorative event, brought together staff, service users, community representatives and members of the public to reflect on this extraordinary history and the journey of mental health care.

[Read more](#)

Community First

Peace Plus

We have received formal confirmation of funding of approximately £450,000 over the next four years through the Peace Plus Project Health Frontiers - Technology Innovation Centre.

Ulster University will manage delivery of the overall project, which has a value of over €9,000,000. The Trust role will be to manage technical evaluation trials in the areas of heart failure, diagnostics and general medicine.

This fits well with funding recently secured by Rachelle Moore, one of our Research and Development Managers in relation to securing our own Research and Development facilities to identify commercial research opportunities.

Learning Organisation

Specialised post-surgery unit marks two-year milestone

Our PACU (Post Anaesthesia Care Unit), based at Craigavon Hospital, is celebrating its second anniversary of supporting patients following major surgery.

The unit provides enhanced care for patients who require close monitoring after surgery but do not need admission to intensive care. Since opening in August 2023, with capacity for up to three patients, the unit has supported over 800 people in their post-operative recovery.

PACU plays a vital role in ensuring the smooth delivery of surgical services, helping to reduce cancellations and easing pressure on critical care teams. Located within the hospital's Recovery Ward, the highly skilled multidisciplinary team provides the highest standards of care.

Celebrating 10 years of the day obstetric unit

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Day Obstetric Unit—a service dedicated to caring for women with complex pregnancies.

The unit has supported thousands of families through some of the most challenging moments of their pregnancy journey. Established with the vision of providing specialized care in a compassionate and supportive environment, the unit has become a cornerstone of maternal health in Craigavon Area Hospital.

The exceptional team of doctors, midwives, and maternity support staff offer expert monitoring, treatment and emotional support.

Congratulations to the team on providing ten years of the highest standards of care and compassion.

Safety, Quality & Experience

Jill wins student nurse of the year award

We were proud to announce Jill Vogan as the winner of the Nicola Tallon Student Nurse of the Year Award. This special award was launched in memory of our esteemed colleague Nicola who had worked in our Home Treatment Crisis Response team within the mental health division and passed away in June 2021.

Jill stood out for her outstanding work during her first-year placement at the Eden Centre in Portadown, where she was part of the Adult Learning Disability Team. Runner up Nicole McBirney impressed the judges with her work in the Ambulatory Care Unit in Craigavon Area Hospital. The judging panel praised the high calibre of applications, noting the exceptional quality, values and ethics demonstrated by all students who were nominated.

[Read more](#)

Learning Organisation

New ward layout for Daisy Hill Hospital

Anyone visiting Daisy Hill hospital lately may have noticed changes to the signage and names of a number of wards and departments.

The changes were part of our plan to stabilise inpatient general medical services at the hospital, in response to significant workforce challenges two years ago.

A range of new developments have been put in place to prevent hospital admission where appropriate, improve patient flow and make sure everyone gets more timely care.

Thanks to the tremendous effort of our staff, the stabilisation project has largely been a success in supporting the maintenance of general medical services at the hospital.

Like Trusts throughout the UK, we are impacted by rising demand and workforce pressures across many professions and we are facing ongoing issues in a number of other specialties like psychiatry, haematology and obstetrics and gynaecology, which we are working through.

Whilst overall, unscheduled care remains challenging across the health and social care system and continued oversight is required, our focus for general medicine at Daisy Hill is now moving to a rebuild agenda, expanding on the positive work and improvements that have been achieved.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality & Experience

New enhanced care unit at Daisy Hill

A new Enhanced Care Unit has opened at Daisy Hill Hospital.

Located on the third floor of the hospital, in the former High Dependency Unit, the Enhanced Care Unit team looks after the sickest patients who need inpatient medical care at the hospital.

A review of the High Dependency Unit was a key part of the remit of the Daisy Hill Hospital Expert Panel, which worked with the Southern Trust on the implementation of the stabilisation plans for acute inpatient medical services at the hospital.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality & Experience

World breast feeding week

Our Health Visiting and Sure Start teams were delighted to host a range of events to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week in August right across the Trust.

From coffee mornings, to lunches, walks and talks, the team were out and about in Armagh and Dungannon, Newry and Mourne and Craigavon and Banbridge, supporting mums and celebrating the benefits of breast feeding.

We also used the opportunity to highlight the work of our Infant Feeding Team, who support families from pregnancy right through to the early weeks and months after birth.

[Read more](#)

Whole Life Approach

Movement for life – what’s your move?

A new groundbreaking physical activity campaign Movement for Life was launched in July to inspire, support and motivate over 50s to embrace physical activity as vital part of daily life. We are committed to ensuring our adult population are well, feel well and stay well during their adult life.

Led by the Trust and funded by the Public Health Agency, the co-produced campaign is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland to reframe and breakdown the barriers to physical activity for this age group. We are really looking forward to taking this forward as a real partnership approach with our local councils.

[Read more](#)

Whole Life Approach

Shaping a sanctuary of remembrance

We were proud to support a memorial event in June to honour the history of the Dungannon Workhouse at South Tyrone Hospital.

Donaghmore Historical Society organised the commemoration to remember the men, women and children who had passed through the site and particularly those who are buried.

New shrubs and flowers were planted in honour of the occasion by staff and service users in our Day Opportunities programme and estates teams worked hard painting, trimming and updating the site.

This reflective space is an area for our staff, patients and visitors from the local community to come and take some time out and enjoy the surroundings.

[Read more](#)

Collaborative Working