



Southern Health and Social Care Trust Highlights – March 2026

Building frailty skills to support older patients

As the number of people over 65 continues to rise across our area, staff are receiving new training to better support older patients living with frailty.

Frailty is not simply a normal part of ageing. It is a medical condition that makes minor illnesses more serious, slows recovery, and increases the risk of hospital admission or loss of independence.

To help address this, the Trust has been delivering a Frailty Training Programme for staff working in key clinical areas. The half-day, multiprofessional course boosts staff confidence, clinical knowledge and decision-making, helping them recognise frailty earlier and provide care that focuses on what matters most to each person.

Whole Life Approach

"It's the small things that make a massive difference"

We marked World Social Work Day on 17 March, with a special podcast reflecting on the real difference social work makes in people's lives and communities.

Service User representative Hayley Smith shared her experience following major surgery in 2024 and described how the dedication and compassion of her social work team provided stability, encouragement and renewed confidence during a difficult period.

The podcast also explores this year's global theme, "Co-Building Hope and Harmony – A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society." The concept of Harambee, a Swahili term meaning "pulling together," highlights the importance of collective action, partnership and community in building a more hopeful and connected society.

Collaborative Working

Celebrating National Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists

We were proud to celebrate National Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist Day on 16 March, shining a spotlight on the skilled nurses who make a real difference for people affected by cancer.

The Trust has 50 Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists working across 11 specialist areas, including haematology, palliative care and acute oncology. These specialists not only provide expert clinical care but also offer vital emotional support, guidance and reassurance to patients and their families throughout their cancer journey.

Safety, Quality and Experience

Improving support in the last days of life

Representatives from the Department of Health and the NI Assembly Health Committee visited Craigavon Area Hospital earlier this month to see how we are improving end of life care.

Ward 2 North has launched a pilot programme to help staff ensure each patient's comfort, personal needs and family support are clearly recorded and understood by the whole care team.

This work supports a key recommendation from the recent Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee's Access to Palliative Care Services inquiry report, which called for a regional approach to documenting care in the last days of life.

[Read more](#)

Whole Life Approach

Promoting safer mealtimes

We used the opportunity of Nutrition and Hydration Week (16-22 March), to highlight the importance of safe and enjoyable mealtimes for people with swallowing difficulties.

Our Care Home and Dysphagia support teams hosted an event for catering staff and care home managers, focussing on improving the mealtime experience for people who have eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, also known as dysphagia.

Staff working in care homes and supported living services play an important role in preparing meals, drinks and snacks for residents who need modified diets. The event gave staff the opportunity to share ideas, learn from clinical specialists and explore practical ways to make meals safe, nutritious and enjoyable.

Safety, Quality and Experience

Innovative new programme to support young doctors

The Southern Trust is introducing an innovative new programme to support the development of medical staff and improve service stability.

Shaped by young doctors, the new multi-year rotational programme, offers a development pathway for locally employed doctors who are not in a formal national training programme. It includes structured pathways, supervision, support and opportunities to develop competencies and a career within the organisation.

Health and Social Care Trusts directly employ doctors across a range of medical specialties, in fixed term, non-training posts.

[Read more](#)

Learning Organisation

Family Nurse Partnership inspires European colleagues

Our Family Nurse Partnership Programme has been recognised as a leading example in Europe.

Recently, the Trust welcomed a delegation of nurses and government officials from Latvia to observe and understand how the programme supports first-time mums aged 19 and under, from early pregnancy until their child's second birthday.

[Read more](#)

Whole Life Approach

Hospital at Home Dietitians Recognised in Leading UK Journal

Our Hospital at Home dietitians have shared their expertise in caring for acutely unwell older people, with a leading UK professional journal.

The February edition of the British Dietetics Association's 'Dietetics Today', gives a first-hand insight into a day in the life of dietitians from the Trust's Hospital at Home team.

[Read more](#)

Community First

New dedicated midwifery led team at Craigavon Hospital

We are delighted to have a new dedicated team to look after women who choose to birth their babies in the midwifery led unit.

The team are delighted to be able to offer more women the opportunity to birth their babies in a natural home-from-home environment.

Located on the second floor of the hospital, opposite the main maternity ward, the Midwifery Led Unit offers 24 hour one-to-one care 365 days a year.

Last year 117 babies were born in the unit which is designed to help mums relax, with their well-being and comfort at the forefront.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality and Experience

First Pharmacist completes Consultant credentialing for the Southern Trust

A Southern Trust pharmacist has successfully completed the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's credentialing process.

Peter McKee, currently works as the Lead Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy Pharmacist and is based in Craigavon Area Hospital. He is the first pharmacy professional in the Trust to credential and the third overall in Northern Ireland.

[Read more](#)

Learning Organisation

Midwifery Milestone with 2,000th birth at Daisy Hill Unit

Daisy Hill Hospital's midwifery led team celebrated their 2,000 birth with the arrival of baby Josh Annett.

Proud parents Joanna and Alan from Kilkeel were delighted with their midwifery led experience supported by midwives Liz Campbell and Shivaun McKinley. Their healthy baby boy arrived in the early hours of 21st January weighing 4220g.

The unit is staffed 24/7 with a team of midwives, dedicated to providing a high standard of care in a relaxed, home from home environment.

[Read more](#)

Safety, Quality and Experience