

TRUST BOARD COVER SHEET

	<i>The cover sheet purpose is to provide the Trust Board/Committee with a clear summary of the paper being presented, how it impacts on the people we serve, key matters for attention and the ask of the Trust Board/Committee</i> <i>The Accountable Director must satisfy themselves that the cover sheet is accurate and fully reflects the paper. The expectation is that the Accountable Director has read and agreed the content of both the cover sheet and paper.</i>	
Meeting and Date of meeting	Trust Board Thursday 28th May 2026	
Title of paper	Chair update to Trust Board	
Accountable Director	Name	Eileen Mullan
	Position	Trust Board Chair
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This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:	Accountability	
This paper is presented for:	Information	
Links to Trust Strategic Priorities 	☒	Collaborative Working
	☒	Learning Organisation
	☒	Safety, Quality & Experience
	☒	Community First
	☒	Whole-Life Approach

1. Committee in Common

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland continues to face sustained pressures, including rising demand, workforce constraints, financial challenges, and persistent inequalities. These challenges are systemic and require a coordinated approach across organisational boundaries.

In response, the six Health and Social Care Trusts have established a more structured approach to collaborative working, aligned with the Health and Social Care Reset Plan (July 2025) and the Three-Year Strategic Plan: Stabilise, Reform, Deliver (December 2024). The Reset Plan emphasises strong leadership at local and regional levels and identifies the Committee in Common as a key mechanism for coordinated planning and oversight at a system level.

The Committee in Common is a formal collaborative governance arrangement established by the six Health and Social Care Trusts to address shared priorities that are more effectively delivered through collaboration across organisations. It operates as an advisory forum, bringing together senior leaders to support strategic alignment, system-level oversight, and collective problem-solving. It does not hold executive authority or commit resources; statutory accountability remains with individual Trust Boards.

The Committee identifies shared risks and interdependencies and supports alignment across programmes, with recommendations considered through established Trust governance processes. It is chaired by the Non-Executive Chair of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, with the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust as Chief Executive Lead for Provider Collaboration. It has no independent budget; work is supported through existing Trust resources and governance arrangements.

2. Ministerial Statements and Assembly Health Committee

Ministerial Statements and Question Time

- [Written Ministerial Statement – Sir Frank Atherton Report](#) 14th May 2026
- [Question Time: Minister of Health, Tuesday 5 May 2026](#)

Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee

- [Committee for Health – Thursday 07th May 2026](#)
- [Committee for Health - Thursday 30 April 2026](#)
- [Committee for Health, Thursday 23 April 2026](#)
- [Committee for Health - Thursday 16 April 2026](#)
- [Committee for Health - Thursday 26 March 2026](#)

3. HSC Chairs Meetings with the Minister of Health

The HSC Chairs met with the Minister of Health on 13 May to discuss the current fiscal and operational context facing the health and social care system. Our discussions focused on the continued absence of an Executive-agreed Northern Ireland budget, the draft planning guidance aligned to the Reset programme, and the critical importance of meaningful public engagement.

The Department of Health is forecasting a significant financial shortfall in the forthcoming financial year. In the absence of an agreed budget, it is imperative that there is system-wide clarity and shared understanding of the scale and severity of the financial challenge confronting both the Department and its arm's-length bodies. A coordinated, regional approach to public engagement is essential to ensure transparency and to support informed public discourse about the decisions that lie ahead.

As a Trust, our clear preference remains for a three-year budget settlement to enable strategic planning, stability, and transformation. This position has been strongly advocated by both the Minister of Health and the Permanent Secretary. In the interim, we continue to work collaboratively with partners across the system to progress planning based on the draft guidance.

In recognition of the immediate financial context, the Trust Board has approved the implementation of low-impact savings measures from 1 April, delivering approximately £27 million in savings. This reflects our ongoing commitment to financial stewardship while safeguarding service delivery as far as possible in an exceptionally constrained environment.

4. Northern Ireland Audit Office Reports

- [Code of Audit Practice 2026](#)
- [Partnership Working: Departments and Arm's Length Bodies](#)
- [Raising Concerns: A good Practice Guide](#)

NIAO Work in progress – Health Estates

NIAO are currently undertaking work in relation to the Health Estates. The Department of Health holds extensive property, encompassing around 1,500 free-hold buildings with an estimated value of over £3.7 billion, which it uses to deliver services and support its operations. As a key strategic asset, it is important that these buildings remain fit for purpose and safe for both the public and employees who use them.

Preliminary work indicates that, in an environment of constrained budgets, the health estate is ageing, and its condition is deteriorating.

This review will consider whether the Department is effectively managing its estate. The intended scope of the review will include:

- roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements, including strategies and plans, for management of the estate.
- surplus estate/vacant properties.
- the condition of the estate, backlog maintenance and the impact on the delivery of services.

C&AG announces Public Reporting Programme for 2026-27

Northern Ireland's Comptroller and Auditor General, Dorinnia Carville, has published details of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's 2026-27 Public Reporting Programme. Deciding what to audit is a key part of the C&AG's independence which ensures that the selection of topics is objective, relevant, balanced and transparent. Included within the programme of work is the '**Effectiveness of Hospital Discharges**'

The full list is available on this [website](#).

5. Designated Non-Executive Director Roles

Please note the updated position on designated roles for Non-Executive Directors

- Whistleblowing - Mr Jackie Johnston
- Being Human Ambassador – Mr Jackie Johnston
- Maternity Safety – Mr Chris Stewart
- Adoption Panel – Mrs Michele Corkey
- Medical Appraisal and Revalidation – Mr Rob Lynas
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion– Mrs Geraldine Browne

6. Trust Highlights

I encourage Board members—and anyone interested in the work of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust—to take a few moments to look through the Trust Highlights. It's available in the "Papers for Information" section of the meeting pack and provides a clear and engaging overview of key updates and achievements.

7. Papers for information

Papers included in the information section of the 29/01/25 meeting pack include:

- Southern Trust Highlights
- Chair and Non-Executive Directors Engagements
- Chief Executives Engagements
- Minutes of the Charitable Trust Committee 30/003/2026
- Minutes of the Patient Safety and Quality Committee
- Minutes of the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee 23/04/2026
- Minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Meeting 21st May 2026