

Chief Executive Update

Trust Board

Thursday 25 June 2026

1.0 Public Inquiry reports

1.1 Christine Smith CBE KC, Chair of the Urology Services Inquiry recently provided an update on the launch of the Report. The launch and publication of the report was confirmed for 24 June 2026 at Bradford Court, Belfast. Those directly affected were invited to attend the launch in person if they wish to do so. The launch was streamed on the Inquiry's website from 2 pm. Update to be provided at SHSCT Trust Board meeting.

1.2 The Chair of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Public Inquiry also confirmed that the final MAH report was to be published and launched at Corn Exchange, Belfast on Thursday 18 June 2026.

2.0 Protests and intimidation

2.1 The Chief Executives of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Trusts released a joint statement in response to the recent widespread unrest across Northern Ireland.

2.2 They stated they were deeply concerned at the violence and emphasised that it is completely unacceptable that our international staff, who provide an invaluable service, should be intimidated or feel too frightened to come to work.

2.3 The Chief Executives said the unrest had a profound impact on all of our services, which are already under enormous strain. They thanked all HSC staff for their continued dedication, in really difficult circumstances.

3.0 Industrial action

3.1 Hospital doctors in Northern Ireland have voted in favour of industrial action, in a dispute over pay. 92% of resident doctors voting yes and 79% of consultants voting for strike action. Two separate 24-hour walk outs are due to take place 25 & 29 June.

3.2 The British Medical Association (BMA) balloted its members over a four-week period after doctors' leaders rejected a recommended 3.5% pay uplift from an independent pay body.

3.3 Specialist, associate specialist and speciality grade (SAS) doctors in Northern Ireland confirmed on Friday 12 June that they will also go on strike in a dispute over pay. The BMA said 90% of SAS doctors voted in favour of strike action.

4.0 Agency nurse expenditure

4.1 A recent NI Audit Office report revealed that HSC health trusts spent £161.6m on private agency nursing in 2024-25 and more than tripled from 2018-19 (£52.1million).

4.2 Spending on agency nursing staff in 2024-25 was more than double what was spent in Wales (£79million) and nearly triple what was spent in Scotland (£57million).

4.3 Agency staff cost an average of £11 per hour more than internal HSC bank staff. If agency staff had cost the same as bank staff, the health system could have saved an estimated £186million over the last four years, the report stated.

4.4 The auditor general said NI needs an additional 2,195 nurses to ensure safe and effective nursing levels. The Department of Health (DOH) said that a planning group aimed at reducing unsustainable agency and locum spend across HSC had been established.

5.0 Workforce vacancies

5.1 DOH quarterly statistics show that the total number of vacancies under active recruitment at 31 March 2026 (6,236) is 6.6% higher than at 31 March 2025 (5,851) and 8.3% higher than at 31 March 2021 (5,756).

5.2 Belfast Trust had the highest number of vacancies actively being recruited (1,733). The annual percentage change in vacancies was greatest in the Northern HSC Trust with an increase of 20.9%, followed by Western (13.1%), Belfast (10.5%) and Southern (5.2%). The South Eastern Trust reported a decrease of 5.5%.

6.0 Waiting Times

6.1 DOH published the quarterly NI Outpatient, Inpatient and Day Case, and Diagnostic Waiting Times Statistics, relating to the position on 31 March 2026.

6.2 510,680 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment - 3.1% (16,382) fewer than December 2025. 85.1% of patients were waiting 9+ weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment on 31 March 2026, compared with 87.1% (459,020) in December 2025. 54.1% (276,312) of patients were waiting 52 + weeks compared with 55.3% (291,387) on 31 December 2025.

6.3 82,568 patients were waiting for inpatient or day case admission on 31 March 2026 - 5.3% (4,588) fewer than December 2025. 64% of patients were waiting 13 +weeks for admission, compared with 65.7% in December. 35.5% of patients were waiting 52 +weeks for admission, compared with 38.9% on 31 December 2025.

6.4 219,917 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test at 31 March 2026, 1.3% (2,975) fewer than at December (222,892). 58.8% of patients were waiting 9+ weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 63.2% (140,910) in December. 35.7% of patients were waiting 26+ weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 38.6% at December.

6.5 486,982 diagnostic tests were reported on at hospitals during the quarter ending March 2026. Of these, 28.0% (136,364) were urgent tests and the remaining 72.0% (350,618) were routine tests. Of the 136,364 urgent diagnostic tests, 78.4% (106,910) reported on within 2 days, compared with 77.4% at December quarter.

*Figures sourced from encompass are considered to be 'official statistics in development', which are a subset of Official Statistics in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. While caution must be exercised when using these figures and they are not directly comparable with legacy (pre-encompass) data, they are a meaningful representation of what they measure and are of sufficient quality for publication and use.***

7.0 Waiting list funding

7.1 Health Minister Nesbitt has confirmed £80million will be ringfenced for waiting list and elective care capacity building activity during 2026/27.

7.2 The funding will support continued action to reduce Northern Ireland's longest and most critical waiting times.

7.3 Details of how the funding will be allocated across health and social care services in 2026/27 to support waiting list reductions will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

8.0 Elective Care Framework 2025/26

8.1 Year-end results for the Elective Care Framework 2025/26 show substantial progress across key waiting list priorities. - 385,182 additional assessments, diagnostics and treatments were delivered during the year, benefiting patients across Northern Ireland.

8.2 Endoscopy waiting lists reduced by 68% since their peak in June 2022, representing almost 27,000 fewer patients waiting, with a further 38% reduction during 2025/26 alone. Long waits for MRI scans reduced by 18.5% during the year.

8.3 Projected waits of more than four years for inpatient and day case care reduced by 67%, benefiting more than 13,400 patients, while projected outpatient waits of more than four years reduced by 54%, equivalent to more than 54,600 patients. Long waits for primary hip and knee procedures reduced by 99%.

8.4 Targeted intervention through a £50 million non-recurrent allocation delivered a 99% reduction in named procedures, helping more than 5,300 patients receive treatment. Long waits for procedures including colonoscopy, paediatric squints, PEG tube insertion, laparoscopic cholecystectomy and tonsillectomy were effectively eliminated.

9.0 Acute Referral and Booking Centre

9.1 The Southern Trust's acute referral and booking centre team will relocate from the privately leased Magowan Buildings, Portadown to the Trust-owned Moylinn Resource Centre, Craigavon on 29 June.

9.2 Alongside the relocation, new operating hours have been introduced to improve efficiency and ensure more call handlers available during peak periods of demand. This revised approach is aligned with other regional booking centres.

9.3 Referral and Booking Centre staff are being supported through the management of change process as they transition to their new location and adjusted working hours.

10.0 Central Sterile Services Department

10.1 The Central Sterile Services Department team and service will temporarily relocate from Craigavon Area Hospital to Daisy Hill Hospital (17 August- Friday 28 August) to enable essential upgrade works.

10.2 The Central Sterile Services Department is responsible for the specialist cleaning and sterilisation of medical and surgical instruments.

10.3 The department's air handling unit, which is essential for maintaining a clean and controlled environment, is now more than 20 years old and requires urgent replacement.

10.4 The sterile services team, working closely with colleagues in estates and transport, have carefully planned this temporary move to minimise disruption and ensure the programme is delivered as smoothly as possible.

11.0 Transformation and National Lottery funding

11.1 Health Minister Nesbitt welcomed additional investment of over £100 million to establish an ePharmacy programme and a new project to provide stronger support and earlier intervention for children and families in need of help.

11.2 Both initiatives have received funding through the Public Service Transformation Bid as follows: £42 million for ePharmacy and £29.2 million for Together for Families.

11.3 The National Lottery Community Fund has also committed an additional £30 million to the Together for Families project - its first strategic investment of this kind in Northern Ireland.