



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	<i>Trust Board, 24th September 2026</i>	
Title of paper	<i>IMWH Update</i>	
Accountable Director	Name	<i>Colm McCafferty</i>
	Position	<i>Director of CYPWS</i>
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This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:	Accountability	
This paper is presented for:	Information <i>(Notes on completion at end of document)</i>	
Links to Trust Strategic Priorities 	☐	Collaborative Working
	☐	Learning Organisation
	☒	Safety, Quality & Experience
	☐	Community First
	☐	Whole-Life Approach

1. Reason for Presentation of Paper / Report

To provide the Trust Board with an update on the current position across Integrated Maternity and Women's Health (IMWH) Services, including workforce capacity, associated risks, governance arrangements, mitigation actions and continuity planning.

The paper provides assurance regarding actions taken to maintain safe maternity services in the context of ongoing medical workforce challenges, particularly within Obstetrics and Gynaecology services at Daisy Hill Hospital. It also outlines the outcome of continuity planning and the arrangements identified to maintain the safe delivery of care should consultant workforce pressures prevent the continued operation of inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital

2. Detailed summary of paper contents:

The paper provides an update on the operational, workforce and governance position across Integrated Maternity and Women's Health Services.

Key areas covered include:

- Continued stability within the midwifery workforce supported by successful recruitment activity.
- Significant challenges within the consultant obstetric workforce, particularly at Daisy Hill Hospital.
- The impact of retirements, resignations and ongoing recruitment difficulties on workforce sustainability.
- Extensive recruitment activity undertaken locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Mitigation measures implemented to maintain safe maternity services.
- Governance, leadership and quality improvement arrangements.
- Service impacts arising from workforce pressures.
- Business continuity planning and regional engagement to secure additional support.
- Assessment of alternative workforce and service delivery models.
- The identification of temporary consolidation of inpatient maternity and birth services at Craigavon Area Hospital as the safest and most sustainable continuity arrangement should implementation of the approved business continuity plan become necessary.

The paper provides assurance that patient safety remains the overriding priority and that all reasonable measures have been explored to maintain safe and sustainable maternity services.

3. Areas of improvement/achievement:

- Continued stability of the Midwifery workforce despite recent increases in vacancies arising from retirements, reduced hours and staff movement.
- Comprehensive review of workforce and service delivery options completed as part of continuity planning
- Development and approval of a robust business continuity plan to maintain safe maternity services if required

4. Areas of concern/risk/challenge:

- Ongoing fragility within the consultant obstetric workforce, particularly at Daisy Hill Hospital.
- Planned consultant retirements and resignations during October and November 2026 will further reduce workforce resilience and increase reliance on temporary medical staffing arrangements.
- Continued challenges in recruiting suitably qualified Consultant Obstetricians and Gynaecologists despite extensive local, regional, national and international recruitment activity.
- Highly competitive medical labour market, with all HSC Trusts competing for a limited pool of available consultant staff, creating an ongoing risk to workforce sustainability.
- Reduced flexibility within consultant rotas to accommodate unplanned absences, annual leave and periods of increased service demand.
- Continued reliance on agency and locum staffing to maintain safe medical rota coverage, particularly within obstetric services.
- Potential impact on the sustainability of inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital should additional consultant capacity not be secured.
- Requirement for enhanced operational oversight, daily staffing reviews and escalation arrangements to maintain safe service delivery.
- Potential requirement to implement approved business continuity arrangements, including the temporary consolidation of inpatient maternity and birth services at Craigavon Area Hospital, should workforce pressures prevent the safe and sustainable operation of services at Daisy Hill Hospital.
- Ongoing need to strengthen consistency of governance, learning and assurance arrangements across maternity services.

Note: Despite the challenges outlined above, maternity services continue to operate safely. Risks are actively managed through robust governance arrangements, clinical leadership, workforce oversight, recruitment activity and established escalation processes, with the safety of women and babies remaining the Trust's overriding priority.

5. Impact on Statutory Duties: Provide details on the impact of the following and how.

<i>Financial Impact</i>	<i>Safety and Quality Impact</i>
Yes, there are Financial Impacts	Yes, there are Quality, Safety or Experience Impacts

6. Risk Assessment (Risk level and state if a risk assessment be completed)

This paper reflects a high but actively managed workforce, operational and clinical risk position.

Key risks include:

- Sustainability of consultant obstetric staffing, particularly at Daisy Hill Hospital.
- Continued difficulties recruiting substantive Consultant Obstetricians.
- Reliance on temporary staffing arrangements to maintain service delivery.
- Reduced resilience arising from planned consultant departures.
- Potential impact on service sustainability if additional consultant capacity cannot be secured.

- Requirement to implement approved continuity arrangements to maintain safe care for women and babies.

These risks are subject to ongoing review through established governance structures and are supported by daily operational oversight, formal escalation processes and business continuity arrangements.

7. Other Business Intelligence/data (If appropriate)

8. Impact: Provide details on the impact of the following and how. If this is N/A you should explain why this is an appropriate response.

Corporate Risk Register	The ongoing fragility within the Obstetric medical workforce and associated service sustainability risks continue to align existing with corporate workforce, quality and patient safety risks.
Board Assurance Framework	This paper provides assurance regarding actions taken to mitigate workforce and governance risks, while also highlighting areas requiring ongoing oversight and escalation.
Equality and Human Rights	The paper relates to the Trust's responsibility to provide safe, equitable and sustainable maternity and gynaecology services while ensuring maternal and infant safety remains central to service planning and delivery.

Trust Board Role Fulfilment

Strategy	<i>Papers in this category should address forward-looking priorities, long-term objectives, or service transformation. These are typically focused on shaping the future of the organisation and will often involve decisions on direction, investment, or innovation.</i>
Culture	<i>These papers aim to influence or reflect the values, behaviours, and staff or patient experiences within HSC. They may relate to leadership development, equality, diversity and inclusion, staff engagement, or initiatives intended to reinforce our organisational ethos.</i>
Accountability	<i>Papers falling into this area relate to governance, assurance, performance monitoring, compliance, and risk. They provide evidence that responsibilities are being fulfilled, standards are being met, and corrective actions are being taken where necessary.</i>

Reasons for Paper Presentation

Approval	<i>Used when an item requires a formal agreement or endorsement by the meeting / committee members. Examples are approving minutes, budgets, proposals or policies.</i>
Assurance	<i>Used when an item can be measured against a certain criteria / standard. Examples are a project is on course with delivery or financial targets are being met.</i>
Information	<i>Used when an item is presented for the purpose of updating or informing the attendees without requiring a decision or action, such as reports, updates, or announcements.</i>

<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Used when an item is listed primarily for open discussion, brainstorming or gathering input from the members without requiring an immediate decision.</i>
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