

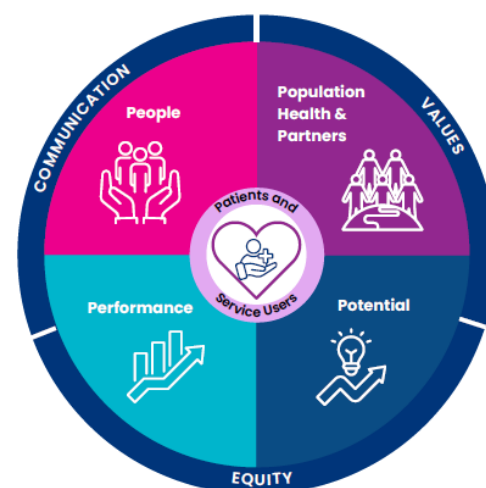
# Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

## Winter Surge Preparedness plan

### 2026/2027

Detailed response from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

18<sup>th</sup> September 2026



## Introduction

Winter is one of the busiest and most challenging periods for health and social care services. Demand increases due to seasonal illnesses such as respiratory infections, flu and norovirus, alongside a rise in urgent care needs resulting from slips, trips and falls. These pressures are experienced across hospitals, community services and social care, placing additional demands on capacity, patient flow and the workforce.

These challenges are further compounded by the significant financial pressures facing the health and social care system. No additional funding has been made available to support winter pressures in 2026/27 and, as a result, the Trust must deliver this plan within existing resources. This makes it more important than ever that we work collaboratively across services and with our partners to maximise capacity, improve patient flow and deliver the best possible care for patients and service users.

Every year, we develop a Winter Plan that sets out how we will manage additional pressures and challenges. At the heart of this plan are our patients and service users. We remain committed to delivering safe, person-centred, high-quality and compassionate care, while ensuring services are resilient and responsive throughout the winter period.

We also recognise that our staff are our greatest asset and are fundamental to the delivery of safe and effective care. We would like to thank colleagues across all services for their continued professionalism, resilience and commitment, particularly during periods of sustained operational pressure.

SPPG and PHA wrote to the Trust on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2026 with guidance on developing this year's winter plan along with a timeframe for submission of draft and final plan, subject to SPPG and PHA feedback. The public facing plan will be published on the 18<sup>th</sup> September consecutively with other Trusts' publication of their plans.

This plan incorporates the points in the guidance, reflects stakeholder feedback and builds on learning from previous winters and our experience of managing increased seasonal demand. We have engaged with our primary care colleagues, patients, service users, carers, staff and trade unions to help shape the plan and ensure it is comprehensive, practical and accessible.

Our Winter Plan 2026/27 outlines how we will prepare for and respond to these challenges while continuing to deliver the priorities set out in our Corporate Plan:

**Patients and Service Users, People, Population and Partners, Performance, and Potential.**

## **Overarching priorities over Winter 2026/27**

### **A) Working Together Across Services**

We will work together across Health and Social Care services to provide joined-up care, ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place at the right time.

### **B) Keeping People Healthy and Well**

We will support people to stay healthy, well and independent, helping to prevent avoidable illness and reduce pressure on services during the winter period.

### **C) Being Ready for Winter Pressures**

We will ensure services are prepared to respond safely and effectively during periods of increased demand, while maintaining access to emergency care, urgent cancer services and other time-critical treatments

### **D) Improving Access to Emergency Care**

We will improve access to urgent and emergency care and support people to use the service that best meets their needs

### **E) Supporting Our Staff**

We will support the health, wellbeing and resilience of our staff so that they can continue to provide safe and effective care throughout the winter period.

### **F) Making Better Use of Technology and Information**

We will use technology and real-time information to support better decision-making, improve service performance and enhance patient care.

### **G) Providing Care Around the Clock**

We will ensure services are available and responsive 24/7, (where appropriate) so that people can access care when they need it.

### **H) Measuring Delivery**

We will monitor the impact of our actions to understand what is working, learn from experience and make improvements. This will also help us identify early where changes or additional action may be needed.

## A) Working Together Across Services

Deliver coordinated care across health and social care services to ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

| Expectation                                    | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Delivering Care Through Joined-Up Partnerships | <p>We will continue to strengthen partnership working across the health and social care system to ensure services are coordinated, responsive and centred on the needs of patients, service users and carers.</p> <p>By working closely with SPPG, PHA, Primary Care, NIAS, RCC, community pharmacy, local councils, community and voluntary sector organisations, care providers and neighbouring Trusts, we will support a whole-system approach to winter planning and service delivery.</p> <p>Through shared planning, effective communication and collaborative decision-making, partners will work together to identify emerging pressures early, make best use of available resources and provide timely support to people in the most appropriate setting.</p> <p>This integrated approach will help improve access to services, reduce fragmentation of care and ensure a more seamless experience for patients as they move between health, social care and community-based services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No of admissions avoided through community alternatives.</li> <li>• Virtual Ward occupancy and Hospital at Home activity.</li> <li>• Average length of stay.</li> <li>• No of delayed discharges.</li> <li>• Percentage discharged before midday.</li> <li>• Community activity and frailty service activity.</li> <li>• Attendance at multi-agency planning meetings.</li> <li>• Delivery of agreed escalation actions.</li> </ul> |

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| Integrated Working and Neighbourhood Care | <p>Building on the principles of integrated care and partnership working, we will strengthen collaboration across health, social care, community and voluntary sector organisations to provide coordinated, proactive and person-centred care closer to home. This approach will help improve outcomes, reduce health inequalities, prevent avoidable deterioration and support people to remain independent within their own communities wherever possible.</p> <p>We will continue the phased implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs), initially focusing on frail older people and those at greatest risk of deterioration, crisis or hospital admission.</p> <p>Through neighbourhood-based multidisciplinary models of care, community nursing, social work, allied health professionals, pharmacists, GPs, mental health services and voluntary and community sector partners will work together to provide coordinated, person-centred support.</p> <p>We will strengthen links between hospital and community services to promote earlier intervention, improve transitions between care settings and reduce reliance on hospital-based care where appropriate.</p> <p>By coordinating services around the needs of individuals, we will provide a more seamless experience of care and support people to remain independent and well within their own communities for as long as possible.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and maintain Belfast INT governance arrangements.</li> <li>• Achieve representation from all core partner organisations within Belfast INT.</li> <li>• Agree areas of focus for the Belfast INT.</li> <li>• Number of delayed discharges.</li> <li>• Average length of stay.</li> <li>• Percentage of patients discharged with services in place.</li> <li>• No. of patients supported through community alternatives to admission.</li> </ul> |
| Proactive Population Health Management    | <p>We will use local intelligence, population health information and risk stratification tools to identify individuals and communities most at risk of poor outcomes, unplanned hospital admission or health deterioration. Working closely with primary care, community teams and social care</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence delivery of targeted interventions for inclusion health populations.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|                                                | <p>services, we will proactively review vulnerable individuals and develop anticipatory care plans to address needs before they escalate into crisis. Particular focus will be given to people living with frailty, long-term conditions and other factors that may increase their risk during the winter period. The Trust will take an inclusion health approach to help ensure that those who face the greatest health inequalities can access the care and support they need</p> <p>Coordinated multidisciplinary responses involving social work, allied health professionals, community nursing, pharmacists and voluntary and community sector partners will be developed to address health and social care needs at the earliest opportunity and provide timely, joined-up support.</p> <p>By targeting resources towards those most likely to benefit from early intervention and preventative care, we aim to improve outcomes, maintain independence and reduce avoidable demand on hospital and urgent care services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No of Emergency admissions among identified frail and at-risk populations.</li> <li>• No. of public health initiatives and uptake of preventative care interventions.</li> <li>• Patient and carer experience feedback.</li> </ul>                       |
| Admission Avoidance and Community Alternatives | <p>We will continue to expand the use of Hospital at Home, Virtual Wards and Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT) services to provide safe and effective treatment in patients' own homes when clinically appropriate, reducing the need for hospital admission and supporting care closer to home.</p> <p>Working with primary care, community services, NIAS and care homes, we will strengthen direct referral pathways into alternative assessment and treatment services, enabling patients to access timely care without attending hospital where appropriate. We will maximise the use of specialist community pathways, including frailty, respiratory and other ambulatory care services, to support early intervention and reduce avoidable Emergency Department attendance and admission.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Ward occupancy.</li> <li>• Hospital at Home activity.</li> <li>• Same Day Emergency Care attendances.</li> <li>• Non-Admissions amongst ED attendances.</li> <li>• Palliative Care Hub activity.</li> <li>• Diagnostic waiting times.</li> </ul> |

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|                   | <p>Opportunities will also be explored within emergency and assessment settings to identify patients who can safely complete their treatment or ongoing monitoring through community-based alternatives, ensuring that hospital resources are focused on those with the greatest clinical need while maintaining high-quality, person-centred care.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambulance handover times.</li> <li>• No. of ambulance handover breaches.</li> <li>• Carer support referrals.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |
| Care Home Support | <p>We will continue to enhance support for care homes through the Care Home Support Team model, providing education, clinical guidance, training and ongoing professional support to build the capability and confidence of care home staff to manage residents safely within their usual place of care.</p> <p>Working closely with GPs, community teams and pharmacy services, we will promote the wider use of RESTORE2, structured communication tools, anticipatory care plans, treatment escalation plans and palliative care registers to support the early identification and management of deterioration, improve decision-making and ensure care is aligned with residents' wishes and clinical needs.</p> <p>We will encourage proactive reviews of residents who are living with frailty, multiple long-term conditions or complex care needs, including access to multidisciplinary assessment, medication review and specialist advice where appropriate. Care homes will be supported to maintain robust winter preparedness and business continuity arrangements, including outbreak management, escalation processes and workforce contingency planning.</p> <p>We will strengthen direct access pathways into Hospital at Home services, virtual care models and specialist clinical advice, enabling timely assessment and intervention without the need for hospital attendance where appropriate.</p> <p>Dedicated Advanced Nurse Practitioners will continue to work alongside residential care homes, providing proactive assessment, clinical</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant ANP activity</li> <li>• Healthcare-associated infection rates / outbreaks.</li> <li>• Care home support team activity.</li> <li>• ED attendance rates from care home settings.</li> <li>• Service user, carer and care staff feedback.</li> </ul> |

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|                              | <p>management, education and early intervention to help prevent deterioration, reduce avoidable ambulance conveyance and hospital admission, and support residents to remain safely within their usual place of care whenever possible.</p> <p>Through closer partnership working across primary care, community services, social care and care homes, we will improve coordination of care, support timely access to treatment and enhance the quality of life and outcomes for care home residents.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Improving Flow and Discharge | <p>We will continue to embed a Home First and Discharge to Assess approach across all hospital sites, recognising that people often recover better and maintain greater independence when ongoing assessment and support are provided in their usual place of residence wherever it is safe to do so.</p> <p>Discharge planning will begin at the point of admission, with expected discharge dates established early and regularly reviewed throughout the patient's stay. Patients, families and carers will be involved in planning from the outset to ensure that arrangements are in place at the earliest opportunity and that discharge is not delayed by avoidable barriers. We will strengthen multidisciplinary working to support effective discharge planning, ensuring clinical, nursing, therapy, pharmacy and social care teams work together to identify and address discharge needs promptly.</p> <p>To support timely discharge and improve patient flow, we will maximise the use of discharge lounges, Early Review Teams and Trusted Assessor arrangements, helping patients move safely through hospital pathways and reducing unnecessary delays.</p> <p>Daily site coordination processes, operational meetings, safety huddles and multidisciplinary reviews will be used to maintain oversight of patient flow, identify emerging constraints and enable rapid action to address barriers to discharge. Particular focus will be placed on patients who are</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average length of stay.</li> <li>• Delayed discharge nos.</li> <li>• Discharge before midday rate.</li> <li>• Readmission against benchmarking rates.</li> <li>• Escalation response times.</li> <li>• ED waiting times for admission once decision made.</li> <li>• Occupancy of discharge lounges.</li> <li>• Activity of REACTT.</li> <li>• Trusted Assessor activity.</li> <li>• Use of step-down pathways.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>medically fit for discharge, ensuring that decisions and actions are progressed without delay.</p> <p>We will work closely with community services, care homes, home care providers, housing partners and voluntary and community sector organisations to maximise discharge capacity and maintain patient flow throughout weekends, bank holidays and periods of increased demand.</p> <p>Where patients require ongoing health or social care support following discharge, we will promote timely access to community-based services and step-down pathways to avoid unnecessary delays in leaving hospital. We will also continue to support people with palliative and end-of-life care needs through effective use of the Palliative Care Hub, advance care planning and established end-of-life pathways, helping individuals receive care in the most appropriate setting and in line with their wishes wherever possible.</p> <p>Through these measures, we aim to reduce avoidable delays, improve patient experience, increase hospital capacity and ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.</p> |  |
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## B) Keeping People Healthy and Well

Reduce avoidable demand by keeping people healthy and resilient throughout winter.

| Expectation                | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Prevention and Vaccination | We will support regional public health initiatives that promote healthy ageing, disease prevention and personal wellbeing, helping people to stay healthy and independent throughout the winter period. Working closely with the Public Health Agency, Primary Care, community services and local partners, we will support the delivery of public health campaigns that | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake of flu vaccination in eligible populations.</li> <li>• No. of targeted vaccination outreach clinics delivered.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>encourage positive health behaviours, reduce the risk of illness and help people make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. A key priority will be maximising uptake of seasonal vaccination programmes, including flu, COVID-19, RSV and routine childhood immunisations.</p> <p>We will work across maternity services, school nursing, community clinics, care homes and targeted outreach programmes to improve access to vaccination and increase uptake among eligible populations, with particular emphasis on those at greatest risk of severe illness. Targeted approaches will be used where necessary to support communities and individuals who may experience barriers to accessing vaccination programmes.</p> <p>We will encourage all health and social care staff to use every appropriate patient contact as an opportunity to promote vaccination, healthy lifestyles and preventative health measures. This will include providing advice and information on infection prevention, respiratory health, self-care, management of long-term conditions and actions individuals can take to remain well during periods of increased winter pressure. By embedding prevention within routine care, we aim to support earlier intervention and reduce avoidable illness and demand on services.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with public health colleagues, Primary Care and community providers to prepare for and respond to outbreaks of infectious disease. This will include supporting timely surveillance, public health response arrangements, infection prevention and control measures, and the provision of antivirals and other treatments where clinically indicated.</p> <p>Through these actions, we will help protect vulnerable populations, reduce the impact of seasonal infections and maintain service resilience across the health and social care system throughout winter.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. of people reached through health promotion activities.</li> <li>• Hospital-acquired respiratory infection rates.</li> <li>• Compliance with infection prevention and control standards.</li> </ul> |
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| <p>Self-Care and Population Health</p> | <p>We will promote self-care, prevention and personal responsibility for health and wellbeing to help people stay well, manage existing conditions effectively and reduce avoidable demand on health and social care services during the winter period.</p> <p>Through the promotion of Sensible Care principles, we will support informed conversations between individuals, carers and healthcare professionals, encouraging shared decision-making and ensuring investigations, treatments and interventions are evidence-based, person-centred and aligned with individual needs and preferences.</p> <p>Clear and accessible information will be provided to help people understand how to manage common winter illnesses, maintain their health and access the most appropriate service when support is needed. Public communications and patient information will encourage people to make informed choices about where to seek care, supporting use of community pharmacy, primary care, urgent care and self-care options where appropriate, while helping to reduce unnecessary attendance at Emergency Departments.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the use of approved digital tools and resources that empower people to take a more active role in managing their health and wellbeing. This includes raising awareness of services such as My Care, the Children's Symptom Checker and other approved HSCNI digital health applications that provide trusted information, symptom support, access to health records and guidance on accessing services. These tools can help people make informed decisions, improve self-management of long-term conditions and access support more conveniently.</p> <p>Recognising the vital role played by unpaid carers and family carers, we will strengthen support through improved information, advice, signposting and access to local services and community resources. We will work with carers' organisations, community and voluntary sector partners and</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to support, information and signposting.</li> <li>• No. of unnecessary investigations, tests or interventions where alternative evidence-based approaches are more appropriate.</li> <li>• Patient experience reporting relating to communication, involvement and person-centred care.</li> <li>• No. of carers reached through information, engagement and awareness initiatives.</li> <li>• No. of carer assessments undertaken.</li> </ul> |
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|                                         | <p>statutory services to ensure carers are aware of the support available to them, helping them maintain their own health and wellbeing while continuing in their caring role. We will continue to implement our Carers' Strategy.</p> <p>By supporting carers and promoting self-care across the population, we aim to improve resilience, maintain independence and prevent avoidable deterioration during periods of increased winter pressure.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Inclusion Health and Early Intervention | <p>We will continue to deliver targeted support for vulnerable individuals and communities through an Inclusion Health approach, recognising that some people experience poorer health outcomes, barriers to accessing services and increased risk of health inequalities. This includes people experiencing homelessness, those seeking international protection, individuals with complex social circumstances, and others who may have difficulty accessing health and social care services through traditional pathways.</p> <p>Working in partnership with statutory agencies, housing services, community organisations and voluntary sector partners, we will seek to identify and address the wider factors that impact health and wellbeing, ensuring support is available to those who may be most vulnerable during periods of increased winter pressure.</p> <p>We will maintain health assessments and screening programmes through NINES for people seeking international protection, supporting timely access to healthcare, identification of unmet health needs and appropriate onward referral to services. We will also continue to work with partners to improve access to health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness, recognising the significant health inequalities and additional risks this population can face during winter months. This approach will help ensure individuals receive the care and support they need as early as possible and reduce the risk of health needs escalating over time.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely completion of NINES health assessments and onward referrals.</li> <li>• Activity of Inclusion Health Team.</li> <li>• Repeat ED attendances among identified high-risk individuals.</li> </ul> |

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|                             | <p>Through multidisciplinary working involving health, social care, housing, community and voluntary sector partners, we will proactively identify individuals who may be at risk of deterioration, social isolation, poor mental wellbeing, homelessness, exclusion or other factors associated with health inequalities. Particular focus will be placed on those with complex health and social care needs, people experiencing frailty, those with long-term conditions and individuals who may require coordinated support from multiple services.</p> <p>We will develop proactive support plans for people identified as being at risk of repeat attendance at Emergency Departments or repeated hospital admissions. Through coordinated assessment, case management and early intervention, services will work together to address the underlying causes of recurring presentations, including unmet health and social care needs, housing instability, social isolation and barriers to accessing support.</p> <p>By targeting resources towards those most at risk, we aim to improve outcomes, reduce health inequalities and help people remain well, safe and connected to the services and support available within their local communities.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Prevention of Deterioration | <p>We will focus on preventing avoidable deterioration and supporting people to remain well, independent and safely at home for as long as possible during the winter period.</p> <p>Community-based services that play a key role in preventing hospital attendance and admission will be prioritised and protected, including respiratory services, frailty pathways, falls prevention programmes, rehabilitation and reablement services. These services provide early intervention, ongoing support and specialist assessment for individuals at increased risk of deterioration, helping to maintain independence and reduce demand on acute care services.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No of people supported through community-based prevention, rehabilitation and reablement services.</li> <li>• Falls-related hospital admissions.</li> <li>• Emergency admissions for people living with frailty and long-term conditions.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>We will continue to promote the use of evidence-based treatments, including biologic therapies where clinically appropriate, to improve the management of long-term conditions, reduce exacerbations and support better patient outcomes. By ensuring patients have timely access to the most appropriate treatments and interventions, we aim to prevent deterioration that may otherwise result in emergency attendance or hospital admission.</p> <p>To strengthen community-based support, the Short-Term Assessment Team (STAT) will be established as the front door for community social work, providing a single point of access for assessment, triage and early intervention. This will help ensure people receive the right support at the right time, improve coordination across services and enable more timely responses to emerging needs within the community.</p> <p>We will continue to support earlier intervention through proactive risk assessment, falls prevention initiatives, rehabilitation and reablement services, particularly for older people, those living with frailty and individuals with complex health and social care needs.</p> <p>Multidisciplinary teams will work together to identify risks at an early stage, implement preventative measures and provide targeted support to help individuals maintain their independence and avoid deterioration.</p> <p>Through these approaches, we aim to improve outcomes, reduce avoidable hospital admissions and ensure people receive the support they need as close to home as possible.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake of biologic therapies.</li> <li>• No of patients supported to remain at home during and following acute care and intervention.</li> <li>• Activity of STAT team</li> <li>• No. of people engaged with proactive care initiatives.</li> </ul> |
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### C) Being Ready for Winter Pressures

Maintain safe, effective services during periods of peak demand.

| Expectation | Response | Indicators |
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| Operational Readiness | <p>We will maintain a strong state of operational readiness throughout the winter period to ensure services can respond safely and effectively to fluctuations in demand. This will include ongoing oversight of staffed capacity, critical equipment, clinical supplies and infection prevention and control arrangements across all hospital and community settings. Regular monitoring and planning processes will be used to identify emerging risks, address capacity constraints and ensure services remain resilient during periods of increased pressure.</p> <p>Particular focus will be placed on ensuring that Emergency Departments, critical care services, acute inpatient areas, maternity services and other specialist services are prepared to respond to sustained increases in demand while maintaining patient safety and quality of care. Contingency arrangements will be regularly reviewed to ensure additional capacity can be mobilised where required and that resources are directed to areas experiencing the greatest operational pressure.</p> <p>All divisions will maintain and regularly review robust service continuity plans to ensure essential services can continue safely during periods of increased demand, workforce pressures, adverse weather events, outbreaks of infectious disease or other unforeseen disruptions. This will include arrangements to support service resilience, business continuity and effective escalation where challenges arise.</p> <p>Winter readiness will be monitored through established governance, executive oversight and operational assurance arrangements. Regular review of operational performance, risk assessments, capacity indicators and escalation actions will support early identification of emerging issues and timely intervention where required. Through strong leadership, planning and oversight, we will ensure services are prepared to respond effectively to winter pressures while maintaining safe, high-quality care for patients and service users.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe staffing levels across priority services throughout the winter period.</li> <li>• Up-to-date service continuity and business continuity plans in place and reviewed.</li> <li>• Timely implementation of agreed escalation and contingency actions when triggers are reached.</li> <li>• Length of service disruptions resulting from workforce, equipment, supply or infrastructure issues.</li> </ul> |
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| <p>Escalation and Capacity Management</p> | <p>We will operate a structured escalation framework supported by clearly defined triggers, real-time operational information and established governance arrangements to enable an early, coordinated response to emerging pressures. This will support timely decision-making, effective deployment of resources and proactive management of capacity challenges before they impact patient care.</p> <p>To maintain oversight of operational pressures across the Trust, we will continue 12/7 site coordination arrangements, with regular review of bed availability, patient flow, workforce capacity, ambulance activity and discharge performance. These arrangements will support a whole-system view of capacity and demand, enabling action to be taken quickly where pressures arise and ensuring patients continue to receive safe and timely care.</p> <p>During periods of increased demand, the frequency of operational meetings, capacity reviews and safety huddles will be increased to strengthen communication, improve situational awareness and support rapid escalation of risks and issues. This will enable services to respond dynamically to changing circumstances, coordinate actions across teams and sites, and maintain patient safety throughout periods of sustained pressure.</p> <p>Where required, Full Capacity Protocols will be implemented in line with agreed procedures and supported by appropriate senior clinical and operational oversight. These arrangements will ensure that decisions taken during periods of significant pressure remain focused on patient safety, clinical risk management and maintaining the delivery of essential services.</p> <p>We will also continue to work closely with regional partners through the HSCNI Regional Coordination Centre, supporting a coordinated approach to managing capacity and demand across the wider health and social care system. Regional situational awareness, mutual support arrangements</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily oversight of patient flow, bed capacity, workforce pressures and discharge performance.</li> <li>• Compliance with site coordination, operational review and escalation processes.</li> <li>• Timely activation of Full Capacity Protocols when required.</li> <li>• Timely implementation of escalation actions when agreed triggers are reached.</li> </ul> |
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|                                        | <p>and collective decision-making will help ensure resources are used effectively and that pressures are managed at both local and regional level.</p> <p>Through these actions, we will maintain resilience, support service continuity and ensure an effective response to winter pressures across the Trust.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Service Improvement and Transformation | <p>We will continue to deliver service improvements and transformation initiatives that support timely access to care, improve patient flow and ensure hospital capacity is used as effectively as possible during periods of increased demand. Where clinically feasible, we will seek to maintain separation between elective and unscheduled care pathways to minimise disruption to planned treatment and diagnostics while ensuring urgent and emergency care services can respond to winter pressures. This approach will help protect elective activity, reduce cancellations and support improved patient outcomes.</p> <p>We will further develop and expand hot clinics, rapid access services and ambulatory care pathways, enabling more patients to receive assessment, investigation and treatment without the need for overnight admission. These models support same-day care, provide alternatives to hospital admission where appropriate and help ensure patients receive the right care in the most appropriate setting.</p> <p>The Trust will continue implementation of the new Care of the Elderly model, strengthening access to specialist assessment and intervention for older people living with frailty and complex needs. This will include supporting direct referral pathways from GPs, GP Out of Hours services and NIAS, enabling patients to access specialist geriatric expertise earlier and reducing the need for Emergency Department attendance or avoidable hospital admission. The model will promote comprehensive geriatric assessment, coordinated multidisciplinary care and improved links between acute, community and primary care services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase same-day and ambulatory care activity.</li> <li>• Elective activity and cancellations.</li> <li>• Patient flow and length of stay.</li> <li>• Delivery of agreed service improvement and transformation milestones.</li> <li>• Access to specialist services and rapid assessment pathways.</li> <li>• NISTAR activity</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>We will continue to implement and monitor recommendations arising from external inspections, reviews, audits and GIRFT programmes to improve quality, safety, productivity and patient outcomes. Learning from these reviews will be embedded across services to support continuous improvement, reduce unwarranted variation and strengthen delivery of evidence-based care.</p> <p>We will also ensure specialist services remain responsive to changing demand by expanding NISTAR capability and paediatric transfer arrangements where required. This will support timely access to specialist care, improve patient pathways and strengthen regional resilience during periods of increased pressure. Through ongoing service improvement and transformation, we will enhance patient experience, maximise available capacity and support delivery of safe, effective and sustainable services throughout the winter period.</p> |  |
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#### D) Improving Access to Emergency Care

Ensure people can access urgent and emergency care quickly while helping them use alternatives to Emergency Departments where appropriate.

| Expectation                   | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Alternatives to ED Attendance | <p>We will continue to expand alternatives to Emergency Department attendance to ensure patients can access timely assessment, treatment and support through the most appropriate care pathway. Same Day Emergency Care and ambulatory care services will be further developed to provide rapid assessment, diagnostics and treatment for patients who do not require an overnight hospital stay, enabling more people to receive care and return home on the same day. These pathways will help reduce unnecessary admissions, improve patient experience and ensure hospital capacity is available for those with the greatest clinical need.</p> <p>We will work closely with Primary Care and regional partners to strengthen urgent care and GP Out of Hours services, supporting timely access to</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity through Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) and ambulatory care pathways.</li> <li>• Utilisation of urgent care, Minor injuries, GP Out of Hours.</li> <li>• Activity of community-based alternatives to ED attendance.</li> </ul> |

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|                       | <p>assessment and treatment for conditions that require urgent attention but do not require Emergency Department care. By improving access to community-based urgent care services and promoting direct referral pathways into specialist assessment and treatment services, we will help ensure patients receive the right care at the right time and in the right setting.</p> <p>Public communications and engagement campaigns will be used throughout the winter period to increase awareness of the range of services available and help people make informed decisions about where to seek care. Information will promote appropriate use of community pharmacy, self-care resources, Primary Care, GP Out of Hours services, urgent care services and other alternatives to Emergency Department attendance, supporting patients to access the most suitable service for their needs.</p> <p>To further support healthcare professionals and system partners, we will maintain and regularly update directories of alternative pathways and services available across the Trust and wider health and social care system. These resources will be accessible to GPs, NIAS, community teams and other partners, helping to ensure patients are directed promptly to the most appropriate clinical pathway and reducing avoidable attendance at Emergency Departments.</p> <p>Through these measures, we will improve access to urgent care, support patient flow and ensure emergency services remain available for those who need them most.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and promotion of alternative pathway directories for referrers and system partners.</li> <li>• No of direct referrals received to specialist assessment and treatment pathways.</li> </ul> |
| Front Door Assessment | <p>We will strengthen front door assessment processes to ensure patients are assessed promptly by the most appropriate clinician and directed to the right pathway as early as possible in their care journey. The use of REACTT, frailty teams and multidisciplinary assessment models will be maximised across emergency and assessment settings, bringing together medical, nursing, therapy and social care expertise to support early decision-making, reduce delays and improve patient outcomes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and discharge from front door services on the same day.</li> <li>• REACTT activity.</li> </ul>                                                                                              |

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|                                           | <p>Senior clinical decision-makers will review patients as early as possible following presentation, enabling timely assessment, investigation and treatment, while supporting rapid identification of those who can be safely managed through ambulatory, community or specialist pathways. Earlier senior review will help reduce unnecessary admissions, improve patient flow and ensure patients receive care in the most appropriate setting.</p> <p>We will continue to strengthen access to specialist assessment, diagnostics and rapid clinical advice to support timely decision-making and avoid delays in treatment. This will include improving access to services that facilitate same-day assessment and management, enabling patients to receive the care they need without unnecessary inpatient admission wherever clinically appropriate.</p> <p>Direct access arrangements for paediatric and frailty services will be further developed and expanded, supporting referral from GPs, GP Out of Hours services, NIAS and other healthcare professionals into specialist assessment pathways. By improving access to expert assessment for older people living with frailty and children requiring timely specialist review, we will help avoid unnecessary Emergency Department attendance, support earlier intervention and ensure patients receive the right care from the right team at the earliest opportunity. Through these measures, we aim to improve patient experience, support safer and more efficient patient flow, and maximise the use of alternatives to hospital admission wherever possible</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity of frailty and multidisciplinary assessment pathways.</li> <li>• Waiting times for initial assessment in emergency and assessment settings.</li> </ul> |
| Ambulance Flow and Alternative Conveyance | <p>We will continue to work closely with NIAS and regional partners to improve ambulance flow and reduce delays in ambulance handovers, helping to ensure emergency ambulance crews can return to the community quickly and remain available to respond to patients requiring urgent care. Daily monitoring of ambulance handover performance, escalation indicators and operational pressures will support timely intervention where delays emerge, with agreed escalation actions implemented to maintain patient safety and service resilience.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambulance handover times.</li> <li>• No. of referrals from NIAS to community, frailty, palliative care and specialist services.</li> </ul>                      |

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|                                                                                   | <p>To reduce unnecessary conveyance to Emergency Departments, we will strengthen direct referral pathways that enable ambulance clinicians and other healthcare professionals to access alternative assessment, treatment and support services. These pathways will support patients to receive the right care in the most appropriate setting, reducing avoidable Emergency Department attendance while improving patient experience and outcomes.</p> <p>Particular focus will be placed on developing and strengthening pathways for palliative care patients, frail older people and care home residents, ensuring they can access timely specialist advice, community-based assessment and alternative models of care where clinically appropriate. Working with Hospital at Home, community services, primary care and specialist teams, we will support earlier intervention and more personalised care for patients who may be safely managed outside the acute hospital setting.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the use of Hospital at Home, community-based services and other established alternatives to admission, enabling more patients to receive assessment, monitoring and treatment in their own homes or usual place of residence. By improving access to alternatives to conveyance and admission, supporting timely decision-making and maintaining close operational coordination with NIAS, we aim to improve patient flow across the system, reduce pressure on Emergency Departments and ensure ambulance resources are available for those with the greatest clinical need.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity in hospital at home and care home support teams.</li> </ul> |
| <b>E) Supporting Our Staff</b>                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                             |
| Maintain a resilient workforce capable of delivering safe care throughout winter. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                             |
| <b>Expectation</b>                                                                | <b>Response</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indicators</b></li> </ul>                                         |

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| <p>Workforce Planning</p> | <p>We will maintain a strong focus on workforce planning to ensure sufficient staffing levels and the appropriate skill mix are available to support the safe delivery of services throughout the winter period.</p> <p>Workforce requirements will be monitored regularly across all care settings, taking account of anticipated demand, service pressures and operational priorities. Careful workforce planning will support the deployment of staff to the areas of greatest need while maintaining patient safety, quality of care and service continuity.</p> <p>Resilience plans will be developed and maintained to address predictable workforce pressures, including annual leave periods, public holidays, seasonal illness and other known challenges that may affect staffing availability. These plans will support proactive management of workforce capacity, helping services adapt to fluctuations in demand and maintain safe staffing arrangements during periods of increased pressure.</p> <p>Regular review of leave, sickness absence, vacancies and workforce capacity will be undertaken to identify emerging risks at an early stage and enable appropriate mitigating actions to be implemented. Workforce information will be used to inform operational decision-making, support service planning and ensure resources are directed to areas experiencing the greatest pressures.</p> <p>Senior clinical and operational leadership will maintain a visible presence during periods of escalation, providing oversight, support and timely decision-making to help services respond effectively to changing circumstances. Strong leadership and governance arrangements will support staff, promote effective communication and ensure a coordinated response to operational challenges. Through these measures, we will maintain a resilient workforce capable of delivering safe, effective and high-quality care throughout the winter period.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe staffing levels</li> <li>• Workforce vacancy and sickness rates.</li> <li>• Effective deployment of staffing resources to areas of greatest operational need.</li> <li>• Senior clinical and operational leadership oversight during periods of escalation.</li> <li>• Length of service disruption attributable to workforce capacity pressures.</li> </ul> |
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| Workforce Deployment | <p>We will use SafeCare and workforce information systems to support workforce planning, monitor staffing levels and identify emerging risks across services. Real-time workforce information will help ensure staff are deployed effectively according to patient demand, clinical acuity and service requirements, enabling resources to be directed to areas experiencing the greatest operational pressures. This data-driven approach will support proactive decision-making, maintain safe staffing levels and help ensure patients continue to receive high-quality care throughout the winter period.</p> <p>To strengthen workforce resilience, we will continue to promote Collaborative Bank and other workforce initiatives to help address temporary staffing gaps and provide additional workforce capacity where required. These arrangements will support more flexible workforce deployment, improve access to suitably skilled staff and reduce reliance on agency staffing where appropriate. Workforce solutions will be used to support service continuity during periods of increased demand, staff absence and seasonal pressures.</p> <p>Clear escalation arrangements will remain in place to identify, manage and respond to workforce pressures at an early stage. These processes will enable services to implement timely mitigating actions, including redeployment, flexible staffing arrangements and targeted support for high-pressure areas. Regular review of workforce capacity, combined with strong operational oversight and effective communication, will help maintain</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Collaborative Bank staffing.</li> <li>• Use of agency and locum staff.</li> <li>• Timely escalation and management of workforce pressures.</li> <li>• Redeployment of staff to meet service demand.</li> </ul> |
| Staff Wellbeing      | <p>We recognise that our staff are our most important resource and that supporting their health, wellbeing and safety is essential to maintaining high-quality services throughout the winter period. We will deliver a comprehensive seasonal flu vaccination programme for staff, alongside wider health promotion initiatives, to help protect the workforce, reduce the risk of illness and support service resilience during periods of increased demand.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff flu vaccination uptake.</li> <li>• Uptake of staff wellbeing and support services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   |

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|                                                                                                                                                         | <p>We will continue to promote wellbeing, resilience and psychological support services available through bWell, ensuring staff have access to practical support, health and wellbeing resources, occupational health services and opportunities to seek assistance when needed. Managers will be encouraged to actively promote these services and foster supportive working environments that prioritise staff wellbeing, particularly during periods of sustained operational pressure.</p> <p>The Trust will continue to implement the People and Culture Strategy, promoting a positive workplace culture where staff feel valued, respected and supported to deliver their best. This will include initiatives that support staff engagement, inclusion, leadership development, learning opportunities and workforce wellbeing, helping to create an environment in which staff can thrive while providing high-quality care.</p> <p>We will maintain close and constructive engagement with Trade Union colleagues to support effective communication, partnership working and early resolution of workforce issues. Regular dialogue will help ensure staff views are considered in operational planning and service delivery decisions, particularly during periods of increased winter pressure.</p> <p>The safety of our workforce will remain a priority. We will continue measures to protect staff from violence, aggression and abuse, including implementation of prevention and reduction initiatives, staff training, reporting arrangements and appropriate support following incidents. Through a focus on wellbeing, safety, engagement and support, we will help maintain a resilient workforce that is equipped to provide safe, effective and compassionate care throughout the winter period.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sickness absence.</li> <li>• Engagement with trade union partners.</li> <li>• Incidents of violence and aggression towards staff.</li> <li>• Activity of Occupational Health, psychological support and wellbeing services.</li> <li>• Workforce wellbeing indicators.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>F) Making Better Use of Technology and Information</b></p> <p>Use technology and up-to-date information to improve services and patient care.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Expectation        | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Digital Innovation | <p>We will continue to use digital innovation to improve patient care, support operational decision-making and strengthen service resilience throughout the winter period. Digital solutions will be implemented and enhanced where appropriate to improve patient flow, support effective resource management and provide greater operational visibility across hospital, community and social care services. By improving access to timely information, increasing situational awareness and supporting real-time decision-making, digital tools will help services respond more effectively to changing demand and emerging pressures.</p> <p>We will maximise the use of CareLine Live across social care services to support more efficient management of care provision, improve communication and information sharing, and enhance oversight of service delivery. Greater use of digital information systems will support more responsive care coordination, improve visibility of capacity and demand, and help ensure resources are used effectively to meet the needs of patients and service users.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the uptake and use of My Care and other approved digital tools that enable individuals to access information, engage more actively in their care and make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. By supporting greater digital access and self-management, we aim to enhance the patient experience, improve communication and empower people to take a more active role in managing their care.</p> <p>We will also expand the use of remote monitoring, virtual care and technology-enabled care solutions to support patients in their own homes and reduce the need for hospital attendance where clinically appropriate. These approaches will help provide timely assessment, monitoring and intervention, particularly for people with long-term conditions, frailty and</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake and utilisation of My Care.</li> <li>• Use of remote monitoring, virtual care and technology-enabled care pathways.</li> <li>• Utilisation of Careline Live.</li> <li>• Use of real-time digital information and performance systems.</li> </ul> |

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|                               | <p>complex care needs. By making greater use of digital technology and innovation, we will support care closer to home, improve operational efficiency and enhance the quality, accessibility and sustainability of services during periods of increased winter demand.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Using Data to Drive Decisions | <p>We will use timely, accurate and accessible information to support operational decision-making, improve service delivery and ensure an effective response to winter pressures. Real-time dashboards and reporting systems will be used to monitor key indicators including demand, patient flow, discharge performance, capacity, ambulance pressures and workforce availability. This will provide operational and clinical teams with a shared view of system pressures and support informed decision-making at ward, site and organisational level.</p> <p>Trend analysis and predictive information will be used to identify emerging pressures at the earliest opportunity, allowing proactive interventions to be implemented before issues escalate. Regular review of activity, performance and capacity data will support escalation processes, resource planning and deployment decisions, helping services respond effectively to changes in demand and maintain patient safety throughout the winter period.</p> <p>We will continue to use population health intelligence, neighbourhood profiling and risk stratification tools to support Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and targeted service planning. This information will help identify individuals and communities at greatest risk of deterioration, unplanned admission or poor outcomes, enabling resources to be directed towards prevention, early intervention and proactive care. Data-driven approaches will support a greater focus on population health management, reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Monitoring of vaccination uptake, service utilisation, attendance patterns and demand trends will also help inform operational planning and public</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real-time monitoring of demand, capacity, flow and workforce indicators.</li> <li>• Timely identification and escalation of emerging pressures.</li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                                                                        | health responses throughout the winter period. By combining operational intelligence, workforce information, population health data and performance metrics, we will strengthen our ability to anticipate challenges, target interventions effectively and continuously improve the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>G) Providing Care Around the Clock</b><br><br>Optimise service availability and responsiveness to meet patient needs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Expectation                                                                                                                                            | Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7-Day Service Delivery</li> </ul>                                                                               | <p>We will continue to strengthen seven-day working arrangements across hospital and community services to support safe, timely and effective care throughout the week. Where resources allow, services will be organised to provide consistent access to assessment, treatment, diagnostics, therapy, pharmacy, discharge planning and community support services beyond the traditional working week. This will help reduce delays, improve patient flow and ensure that people receive the care they need regardless of the day of attendance. Service managers will regularly review demand, capacity and workforce availability to maximise seven-day coverage and target resources to areas experiencing the greatest operational pressure.</p> <p>We will maintain critical 24/7 services across hospital and community settings to ensure urgent and emergency care remains available at all times. This includes emergency departments, acute medical services, unscheduled care pathways, critical care, maternity services, district nursing, care home support, mental health crisis services and other essential services that support vulnerable patients. Robust workforce planning, escalation arrangements and business continuity processes will be used to maintain safe staffing levels, manage periods of increased demand and ensure service resilience throughout the winter period.</p> <p>We will ensure continuity of assessment, treatment and discharge services during weekends, public holidays and other periods of</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average length of stay.</li> <li>Safe staffing levels across seven-day and 24/7 services.</li> <li>Waiting time to access to key assessment, treatment, discharge and community support services.</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                           | <p>predictable pressure. Discharge planning will continue seven days a week, supported by multidisciplinary teams, discharge coordination arrangements and close working with community, social care and independent sector providers. Access to diagnostics, pharmacy, patient transport, domiciliary care, reablement and community rehabilitation services will be maintained where possible to prevent unnecessary delays in discharge and support timely movement through the care system. Operational teams will monitor patient flow daily and take early action to address emerging bottlenecks.</p> <p>We will support timely decision-making through early senior clinical review and multidisciplinary input throughout the week. Senior clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists and social work teams will work together to assess patient needs, agree treatment plans and identify opportunities for discharge at the earliest appropriate point. Regular board rounds, multidisciplinary team meetings and patient flow reviews will help ensure that decisions are made promptly, reducing avoidable delays and supporting safe, person-centred care. Clinical escalation processes will be in place to ensure that deteriorating patients and those with complex needs receive rapid assessment and intervention whenever required.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essential 24/7 Services</li> </ul> | <p>The Trust will maintain round-the-clock District Nursing provision to support people with acute, complex and palliative care needs in their own homes and care home settings. Workforce plans will be closely monitored to ensure safe staffing levels, appropriate skill mix and responsive deployment of nursing teams across all localities. Demand and capacity will be reviewed regularly through operational management arrangements, with escalation processes in place to address workforce pressures and maintain continuity of care.</p> <p>District Nursing teams will work closely with GPs, community pharmacy, social care and specialist services to prevent avoidable hospital admissions, support early discharge and respond rapidly to individuals whose health deteriorates in the community.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out of hours District Nursing activity.</li> <li>Community Discharge Hub.</li> <li>Timely access to oncology and haematology support.</li> <li>Daily oversight of discharge performance,</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>The Trust will continue to operate Community Discharge Hubs as a key mechanism for supporting timely and safe discharge from hospital. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate discharge planning, arrange community services, facilitate access to domiciliary care and ensure prompt provision of equipment and support packages. Daily review processes, strong links with hospital wards and community services, and real-time oversight of discharge performance will enable barriers to discharge to be identified and addressed quickly. During periods of increased pressure, discharge coordination arrangements will be strengthened to maximise patient flow and reduce unnecessary delays.</p> <p>The Trust will maintain priority oncology and haematology services throughout winter and other pressure periods, ensuring patients continue to receive urgent diagnostics, treatment, review and supportive care. Service resilience will be supported through active workforce planning, prioritisation of clinical capacity, effective management of outpatient and treatment schedules, and close collaboration across acute and regional specialist services. Operational oversight arrangements will monitor demand and capacity to minimise disruption and ensure patients with cancer and complex blood disorders receive timely and safe care.</p> <p>The Trust will maintain access to specialist advice lines and urgent clinical support services to provide timely clinical guidance for patients, carers, care homes, primary care and community teams. These services will support rapid decision-making, facilitate access to specialist expertise and enable early intervention where clinical concerns arise. Clear referral pathways, defined escalation arrangements and effective communication across services will help ensure patients receive the right care in the most appropriate setting and reduce unnecessary attendance at hospital.</p> <p>The Trust will protect and prioritise discharge support services to ensure patients can leave hospital safely and without unnecessary delay. This will include maintaining access to reablement, community rehabilitation,</p> | <p>community capacity and patient flow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palliative Care Hub activity.</li> </ul> |
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|                                                                                                                                     | <p>domiciliary care, social work support, equipment services, transport arrangements and step-down pathways.</p> <p>Performance will be monitored daily, with operational teams working collaboratively to identify emerging pressures, resolve delays and maximise available community capacity. Close partnership working across health, social care and independent sector providers will support a whole-system approach to maintaining patient flow throughout winter.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>H) Measuring Delivery and Impact</b>                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>Monitor the impact of winter actions to understand what is working, identify risks early and support continuous improvement.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Expectation</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>Response</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Indicators</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>Monitoring Impact of Winter Initiatives</p>                                                                                      | <p>Agree operational outcomes and KPIs within the BHSCT Governance and Assurance Framework, with regular monitoring, reporting and review arrangements in place to identify emerging issues early, enable timely escalation and support corrective action where required.</p> <p>Learning from patient, service user and carer feedback will be used alongside performance information to inform service improvement and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of care.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of agreed winter outcomes and KPIs.</li> <li>• Operational outcomes and KPIs agreed, monitored and reported through the Trust Governance and Assurance Framework.</li> <li>• Timely escalation and mitigation of emerging risks.</li> <li>• Regular performance and assurance reporting.</li> </ul> |

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient, service user and carer feedback informs service improvement.</li> </ul> |
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