



# NEWSLETTER

## For Elected Representatives



*Merry Christmas from Belfast Trust's Public Liaison Service. Thank you all for your continued support through another busy year. Bring on 2026!*



### Stay Well Shields

Each year, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust issue winter messaging to provide advice and guidance to the people of Belfast and beyond who use our services, with helpful information, steps and advice they can take to stay well over the winter season.

This year, our campaign messaging introduces our 'Stay Well Shields'; three coloured shield icons that denote our winter communications on social media and printed materials with the headings of 'Stay Well', 'Choose Well' and 'Be Well'.



Inspired by the Trusts' commitment to protecting its staff and service users - your constituents, the shield offers a strong message and clean icon that aims to help our winter messaging stand out on our online platforms and across our sites.

Each heading has been carefully selected to group together elements of our winter messaging with the focus for each heading being as follows:

- **Stay Well:** will give important public health advice this winter.
- **Choose Well:** will offer alternative ways to keep healthy and avoid the Emergency Department.
- **Be Well:** will offer support on mental health & wellbeing.



We are pleased to be rolling out our new winter campaign and providing helpful, timely information and advice for all those who use our services and our hard working and dedicated staff.

We encourage all elected representatives to share this message to their social media channels and with their constituents.



# Psychiatric Assessment and Treatment Hub (PATH)



The establishment of a Psychiatric Assessment and Treatment Hub (PATH) was a proactive measure to enhance patient experience and reduce pressures on our Emergency Departments (EDs).

PATH functions are an extension of ED, but solely for Mental Health patients awaiting an admission when there is no bed available within 4 hours.

The unit is staffed with Mental Health nursing staff and supported by Psychiatry medical staff.

It is dedicated to supporting patients from the Royal and Mater Hospital EDs, as well as Home Treatment Team patients who can no longer be managed safely in the community due to increased risks. The focus is on providing an improved patient journey whilst facilitating timely and efficient patient discharge or, where necessary, ensuring prompt transfer to an appropriate inpatient ward. This ensures continuity of care and significantly enhances the overall patient experience by minimising stress and uncertainty during the admission process.

The hub is conveniently located on Level 1 of the Mater Hospital, designed to ensure that patients experience minimal disruption during their transfer and care.



## Children's Symptom Checker

When children are ill, we understand it is a really worrying time for families.

That's why we launched the symptom checker: a verified advice service written by doctors and delivered to your constituents in an easy-to-understand traffic light system.

This traffic light system will guide your constituents through what to do in different situations:



**Urgent / emergency situations fall under red symptoms**

**Less urgent situations fall under amber symptoms**

**Non-urgent situations fall under green symptoms**

With this tool, your constituents can quickly and easily access symptom checkers for all common illnesses like coughs, colds, headaches and tummy troubles.



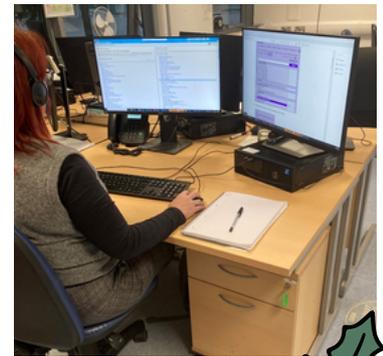
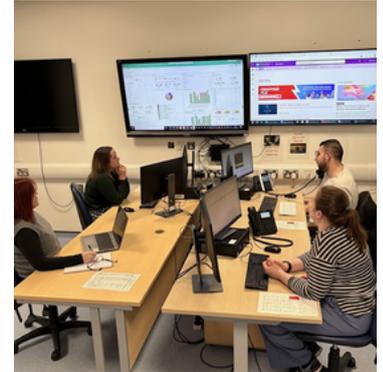
# Social Work Discharge Hub

The Community Social Work Discharge Hub operates across Belfast Trust hospitals as a single point of contact for referrals involving complex discharges. These cases often require social work intervention, rehabilitation, and social support such as domiciliary care or nursing home placements. Guided by a Home First ethos and the Discharge to Assess model, the service ensures long-term decisions are made post-discharge, prioritising safe, effective, and compassionate care.

The Hub team includes allied health professionals, nurses, social workers, assistants, and administrative staff. Coordinators bring expertise in community flow and discharge pathways to identify the most appropriate route for each patient.

Hospital Social Work Services support patients and families through the challenges of hospitalisation, offering emotional support, advocacy, and guidance on navigating health and social care systems. Social workers assess risk, implement protection plans, and play a key role in capacity assessments under the Mental Capacity Act. They also provide bereavement support, deliver safeguarding training, and connect patients to essential services post-discharge, ensuring continuity of care and promoting recovery.

There are community discharge pathways available seven days per week. This is supported by independent and voluntary sector domiciliary and care home providers.



## Minister visits newly-qualified social workers

Belfast Trust has worked intensively to widen the scope of our recruitment and are proud of the support developed for new entrants to the profession. This year the Trust has welcomed a number of new recruits from universities in Great Britain and welcomes the diversity that this has brought to the workforce.

A number of initiatives have been progressed to enhance staff well-being and ensure that staff are well supported in the transition from student to professional. We welcomed the recent visit from the Minister of Health and were delighted that newly qualified social workers had the opportunity to share with him the pride they have in what they do.

While the supply of social workers in Northern Ireland continues to be a challenge and vacancies remain, the Trust is fully committed to continued workforce planning with the Department of Health (DOH) and other key partners such as the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) to ensure a workforce with capacity to deliver high quality services across our communities.



# PHONE FIRST

Before going to Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Mater Infirmorum Hospital or Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children you should **PHONE FIRST**

## 028 9615 9444

Operating from 8am to 6pm  
Monday to Friday  
excluding bank holidays



**FOR EMERGENCIES - 999**

Including: stroke, heart attack, loss of consciousness, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding or major trauma  
**ALWAYS CALL 999 IMMEDIATELY**

This winter, before attending any of our Emergency Departments (EDs), you and your constituents should **PHONE FIRST** on **028 9615 9444**.

Phone First is a telephone service for any of your constituents who are unwell and considering travelling to an Emergency Department (ED) at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Mater Infirmorum Hospital or Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

When your constituent makes a call, they will be assessed on the phone by a healthcare professional and given advice and, if required, directed to the most appropriate urgent or community service to meet their treatment or care needs. This could include direction to attend an ED, an Urgent Care Centre, a Minor Injuries Unit or being redirected to a GP, Pharmacist or other service.



[Click here to check out the Trust in the news, discussing the importance of the Flu Jab this Winter](#)



Over **400,000** flu jabs have already been administered this year!



Health

Health workers encouraged to get flu jabs to protect patients & themselves



*Great to see some of our Health Committee have been on-site and supporting our flu campaign by getting vaccinated!*

