

Interim Chief Executive Update on Emerging Issues – for Trust Board (Public)
on 30 April 2025 – finalised on 28 April 2025

1. Emerging Risks/Updates on Risks

1.1 Regional Emergency Social Work Service

NIPSA has agreed to revise the Health and Safety directive which they issued in October 2024 and this revision will take place upon agreement of daytime Approved Social Worker standard operating procedure.

1.2 Children's Social Work Services

Children's social work services continues to be in escalation of its business continuity arrangements. This is due to an increase in vacancy, maternity and sickness levels which has resulted in the need to allocate child protection and care order court cases in May and June.

There is currently no capacity within current frontline teams and asks for support have been made of other non-frontline children's social work teams to assist. Furthermore, staff appeals have been issued to support staff with non-professional tasks to create some easement in caseloads and there has been a level of uptake; however, there is a critical need for additional social work capacity to undertake statutory duties.

2. Key Achievements

2.1 United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) visit to Belfast Laboratory Services.

UKAS is the national accreditation body recognised by the British government to assess the competence of organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services.

On 9 April 2025, an engagement day was held between staff from BHSCCT laboratories and UKAS. This involved a tour of labs along with presentations from

both teams. The UKAS team shared their new ways of working and expansion of their team. Following the engagement day, it has been agreed to set up quarterly joint meetings. This was a positive networking event, with better understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities.

2.2 Autism NI Impact Award Champion March 2025

The wellbeing of all of our staff in labs is at the core of what we do. Over the past few years the team has been working with Autism NI to incorporate a number of changes to help support all of our staff that identify as neurodiverse. As a result of all this work we have now been awarded the Impact award by Autism NI. The award was achieved by demonstrating there is a range of accessible and inclusive approaches for autistic employees within the labs. This is the first time a laboratory in NI has received this award.

2.3 Metastatic CUP (Cancer of Unknown Primary) Service has been shortlisted for the Advancements in Oncology Award at the Northern Ireland Healthcare Awards 2025 with the event being held on 01 May 2025.

Metastatic CUP is a common and well-recognised cancer syndrome, representing 3–5% of all malignancies and is the fourth most common cause of cancer-related death, with on average 186 patients per year diagnosed in NI with a CUP. Until last year, there was no dedicated CUP service for this group of patients in NI, with many undergoing overly complex diagnostic pathways with unnecessary investigations, prolonged hospital stays and a number of MDT discussions at different MDMs prior to a treatment plan being agreed. In October 2024, the CUP Regional MDM commenced & meets on a weekly basis, offering review, advice and support regarding both MUO and CUP cases. This ensures timely diagnosis, improved survival and better outcomes for patients. This not only significantly benefits patients and their families but also the numerous clinical teams and services via which they present. It has standardised care for CUP patients across Northern Ireland & is ensuring equity in service provision alongside site specific cancer diagnoses.

2.4 Elective Care Recognition Award March 2025

The Minister of Health's March 2025 elective care recognition award was awarded to the Belfast Trust Pain Service for its contribution to reducing opioid dependency post knee replacement surgery. The quality improvement project resulted in a 66% reduction in patients still using opioids after three months. Benefits include reduced risk of opioid-related harms including risk falling or immune suppression and the subsequent impact on community pharmacy.

3. Other Updates

Fostering Fortnight (sponsored by BHSCT regional fostering and adoption services and fostering network) will be launched on 12 May, with Minister Nesbitt launching this. This is a two week campaign to promote the recruitment and retention of foster carers in Northern Ireland