

# Cardiac Surgery Action plan Update as of 18 June 2025

## Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The final report of the external review team into cardiac surgery was received by the Trust on 12 May. The review team presented their findings and recommendations to Trust Board on 15 May 2025 and all recommendations were accepted. An action plan has been developed by the Trust's Cardiac Surgery Oversight Group. This group is responsible for developing and refining the action plan and monitoring progress against the various actions on a weekly basis.

Terms of Reference for the oversight group were approved at Trust Board on 5 June 2025.

The oversight group is responsible and accountable for the implementation of all the recommendations, working closely and collaboratively with all governing bodies to ensure the continued safe delivery of cardiac surgery. The action plan includes all of the recommendations of the recent external review as well as RCS recommendations which have been assessed as not fully implemented.

A draft action plan was shared with Trust Board members on 5 June and, following changes to reflect feedback from the Board, this was then shared with PHA and SPPG colleagues for their consideration. The attached action plan reflects feedback from SPPG/PHA colleagues following a meeting with them on 25 June.

The oversight group will provide a formal monthly update to Trust Board. It is also the intention of the Trust to provide a formal monthly report to DoH/PHA colleagues through the newly established Accountability Assurance meetings which are held on a fortnightly basis, the first meeting was on 20 June.

## Action Plan Framework

In terms of delivering the action plan, two workstreams have been developed which focus on patient safety and culture respectively. Workstream 1 covers actions relating to patient safety and governance and will focus on arrangements pertaining to governance structures, participation, engagement and good practice to create a culture of learning and safety. Workstream 2 will focus upon culture, communication and support for staff to embed a cohesive, safe and harmonious working environment for all. Workstream 2 held their first meeting on 11 June 2025.

The cardiac surgery service team will work collaboratively with the Patient and Client Council. A FAQ document and patient information template have already been developed.

The chair of Belfast Staff Side and regional branch secretary of RCN are members of the oversight group. There is Trade union representation on each of the workstreams.

## **Staff Engagement and Support**

Staff engagement continues across all cardiac surgery groups. To date, 38 staff have used the confidential QR code which was set up as a support function to staff following the Town Hall meetings held on 21/22 May.

A listening exercise for staff in the cardiac surgery ward was completed on 4 and 5 June, following initial feedback at the Town Hall events in May. Information has been collated, and actions identified for feedback to staff on 20 June. Further listening exercises are being planned as a means to measure improvement. This work will be taken forward under workstream 2.

All staff are encouraged and supported to raise concerns at daily safety huddles and at team meetings. This has been embedded across all departments within cardiac surgery, and there are safety brief templates in place. There are ongoing senior leadership visits to CSICU, theatres and the cardiac surgery ward, to support and to listen to staff.

An all-user communication (Annex 1) was sent out on Thursday 12 June and again on 19 June to encourage staff across the Trust to speak out around any concerns and to signpost them to whistleblowing advocates.

Immediate actions are in place to ensure resident doctors are supported. A listening exercise process has been facilitated and replacement clinical supervisors identified within the team. BHSC resident doctors received a short guide on 'raising concerns with the February Trainee Newsletter, which was updated and disseminated in April. There is ongoing close communication and collaboration with NIMDTA and GMC colleagues to ensure trainee welfare has been and continues to be prioritised.

Mediation NI are currently engaged to support improvement of working relationships within the cardiac surgery team. It is felt that this is beginning to get traction.

The first civility and bystander training event took place with cardiac surgery staff on 12 June. Feedback has been requested from attendees and the next session is planned for 25 June 2025.

68 nurses from cardiac surgery, cardiac theatres, CSICU and other surgical specialities attended an NMC Workshop on 'Raising Concerns and Accountability' on 3 June. Feedback on this event was positive and further dates have been planned.

The two patient safety quality leads for ACCTSS and Surgery are reviewing governance and M&M meetings and a venue has been identified to resume face to face meetings. Work has commenced to recruit two clinical leads in cardiac surgery with posts advertised in June 2025.

The service has already established connection with both the Mater and Blackrock Hospitals in Dublin, and are establishing connections with Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Trust and St Georges University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

## **Safety and Quality**

No service delivery issues have been identified since receipt of the external report. All surgeons are in work and operating and the directorate teams continues to ensure that commissioned activity levels are delivered.



## Supporting you to raise concerns

In Belfast Trust we treat each other with respect and civility. Disrespectful, rude or bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.

Many of you will feel able to raise concerns within your team and with your line manager. Some of you may not feel safe to do so, in this instance you can escalate your concerns to a more senior manager in your service or area of work. If you do not feel able to do this or you feel that previous concerns have not been heard, you can formally raise concerns by contacting HR or by Whistleblowing.

You can raise a concern in the public interest under the Trust's [Raising Concerns in the Public Interest \(Whistleblowing Policy\)](#), by speaking to a [Whistleblowing Advocate](#) or by contacting the Trust's Senior Manager for Whistleblowing, Caroline Walton.

Should you wish for your name to be kept confidential, you should request this. Your name would only then be released should the Trust be under a legal obligation to do so. **However you choose to do it, the most important thing is to make sure you raise the concern.**

For your own peace of mind, you should also keep a record of your concern and the steps that you have taken to deal with it.

We appreciate it can at times be difficult to raise a concern, particularly about a colleague who may be very well known to you. However, the safety of patients and service users is paramount and so you must raise the concern. In the long run, what seems like a difficult course of action will be in the best interests of your colleague as well as patients and service users.

[Access a poster to display in your staff areas promoting raising concerns here.](#)