



To All HSC Staff

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Your Ref:

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Dear colleague,

As you will no doubt be aware, this is my final day in office as Health Minister. During my time in this post, I have issued many heartfelt tributes to health and social care staff.

The same thoughts are uppermost in my mind today.

You have been through so much in recent years, as COVID-19 changed the world and ravaged our health service. Likewise, in the years before the pandemic, you felt the brunt of austerity measures as financial pressures built up.

And yet you have persevered. Your commitment to serving the public has not diminished. As a society, we would be lost without you.

So let me say once again as your Minister: thank you for all that you do.

I passionately believe that better days are ahead for health and social care in Northern Ireland. I say that despite the severe and relentless pressures at present and the concerns about what the winter months may bring.

Despite everything thrown at us, we now have building blocks in place for a better future. It will be achieved by delivering the strategies we have put in place for waiting times, cancer care and mental health; by growing and supporting our workforce; by enhancing primary care; and by reforming social care. While health service transformation was delayed by the pandemic, it is happening - as evidenced by the development of daycase and overnight surgery centres.

There is, of course, much more to be done and you will have a critical role to play in maximising what can be delivered from existing resources. While I have been clear that efficiency must be a major priority in the health service, this alone will not resolve all its funding needs. I have advocated throughout my time as Minister for sustained investment to underpin the recovery and transformation of services. Unfortunately, there are currently significant political and budgetary obstacles in the way of progress. I deeply regret that these obstacles have so far held up a pay deal for HSC staff this year.

One of the central lessons of the pandemic was that we need a resilient and properly resourced health and social care system that can cope with public health emergencies. Everyone in Government, both locally and nationally, must not be allowed to forget that lesson. I fear that some may want to try.

I retain my optimism for the future because of the great staff throughout health and social care. I am honoured to have been your Minister. Please be assured that whatever the future holds for me, I will always be in your corner.

Yours sincerely



Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health