

19 September 2025

Ms Jillian Gillespie

By Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Gillespie

### **Written Questions for Trust Board**

Thank you for your email correspondence dated 20 August 2025 providing a total of five written questions for Trust Board consideration. I can advise these were reported to Trust Board for noting at its meeting held on 27 August 2025 and recorded in the minute for the meeting.

I can confirm the issues raised have been fully considered and I am now in a position to respond to your questions (set out in bold font below) as follows:

#### **What Board oversight of Raising Concerns was provided in relation to my written questions to the Trust Board which were summarily dismissed?**

I have enclosed a copy of the written questions referred to and the response previously issued. Given these related to matters of general policy and did not reference specific concerns, there were no basis upon which the questions could have been considered relevant to the Trust's Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Policy. For completeness, I have enclosed the policy for reference.

If the written questions had been received with a request to do so, they would have followed the relevant pathway and not have been presented as Trust Board written questions given this process is limited to matters of general policy only.

#### **What Board oversight of Raising Concerns was provided in relation to my letter to the Non-Executive Directors and supporting documentation which were summarily dismissed?**

I understand you are referring to specific correspondence issued by you to a number of Trust Board Non-Executive Directors. Given the correspondence was not provided for distribution to and consideration by all Board Members, this is not upon which Trust Board can make comment on.

**How was the Board exercising oversight during the interim period? What was the process and what were the channels for raising concerns?**

You have referred to an 'interim period' and I am responding on the basis that this refers to the period of time from the date when the Non-Executive Director previously designated with respect of the oversight of the culture of raising concerns retired from Trust Board and the appointment of their replacement as designate.

The Trust's Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Policy sets out, at Page 14 thereof, that it is the role of the Board (including the designated Non-Executive Director) to have responsibility of the culture of raising concerns within the Trust in accordance with the HSC Board Member Handbook. In the interim period referred to, the Board continued to have responsibility as it does today.

For anyone raising a concern in the public interest, the policy sets out the process to follow at Appendix D thereof. In addition, the channels by which such a concern can be raised is set out under Section 6.1 titled 'Who should I raise a concern with?' at Page 8 and 9 thereof.

As part of our ongoing commitment to patient safety, Trust Board established a new Board Committee with a remit focused on People & Culture. The People & Culture Committee comprises both Executive and Non-Executive Board Members and meets quarterly to consider reports quarterly on many issues including Raising Concerns. As such, Members of the Committee review key aspects of the culture of raising concerns to provide assurance to Trust Board on existing systems and processes. They can also escalate any issue to Trust Board via an escalation protocol in place.

It is important to note identifiable personal information cannot be disclosed to Committee or Board Members as part of the Raising Concerns process. Indeed, where possible, the Trust is committed to maintaining confidentiality for everyone involved in a concern.

**On what date was Mr McMahon appointed/designated Raising Concerns Champion and did he sign the letter dated 23/06/2025 in his capacity as non Executive Director or Raising Concerns Champion?**

Mr McMahon was appointed to Trust Board as a Non-Executive Director on 1 January 2025. Having completed Board induction training, Mr McMahon was appointed as the Non-Executive Director designate for Raising Concerns on 17 June 2025. The role is not operational in nature and involves seeking assurance as part of the Board's responsibility for oversight of the culture of raising concerns within the Trust. I would emphasise that it is Trust Board collectively which holds overall responsibility for oversight of the culture of raising concerns.

You have referred to correspondence dated 23 June 2025 which I understand was in response to the correspondence referred to above which you issued to a number of Non-Executive Directors. Given this was not for consideration by all Board Members, this is not a matter upon which Trust Board can make comment on.

**Where may the Trust’s “Raising a Concerns in the Public Interest Policy” may be viewed?**

I refer to the enclosed policy. Any member of the public can request a hard copy by writing to Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald, BT16 1RH.

The policy can also be accessed via the Trust’s website at: [Raising a Concern in the Public Interest \(Whistleblowing\) Policy - South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust.](#)

**What is the “clear process of staff and members of the public to raise concern through a number of channels” referred to in the FOI response?**

A Freedom of Information (FOI) response has been referenced as part of this written question. As Trust Board written questions are limited to matters of general policy, Trust Board is not in a position to respond to any specific issues in relation to said matter.

For anyone raising a concern in the public interest, the aforementioned Raising Concerns policy sets out the process to follow at Appendix D thereof. In addition, the channels by which such a concern can be raised is set out under Section 6.1 titled ‘Who should I raise a concern with?’ at Page 8 and 9 thereof.

A copy of this response will be circulated to Board Members for information and reported for noting at the Trust Board meeting to be held on 24 September 2025.

Yours sincerely

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**JONATHAN PATTON**  
Chairman