



Title of Paper: Written Questions Received from Member of the Public

For Decision

Requires majority decision prior to implementation or action.

For Discussion

Requires consideration and debate.

For Noting

Contains information Members should be made aware.

1.0 Background

This paper is to advise Members that the Board Secretary received a number of written questions on 18 May 2026 submitted by a member of the public – Mrs Gillespie – in relation to the Trust's policy to support a Patient Safety Culture.

As part of the submission, reference was made to the Minister's Written Statement to the NI Assembly on 19 February 2026 titled 'Update on Departmental Policies in relation to Quality and Safety' generally and specifically to Page 5 thereof – a copy of the full Statement has been attached hereto.

In addition, reference was made to the wording of Agenda Item 7.4 as stated on the published draft agenda for today's meeting which read: Terms of Reference: Governance Assurance Committee (to be renamed the Patient Safety and Quality Committee'.

A copy of the full correspondence received is available to Members via their Board Papers app for review.

2.0 Key Issues

The written questions submitted on 18 May 2026 are reproduced verbatim below in bold with Question 4 consisting of two elements:

- 1. The Ministerial Statement clearly specified that a NEW Patient Safety and Quality Committee is to be established. Why is SEHSCT renaming its current Governance Assurance Committee rather than following the directions from the Health Minister and the DoH?**
- 2. The Ministerial Statement clearly specified that the NEW committees in all Trusts will operate within a regionally standardised approach. Why is SEHSCT delegating the Terms of Reference for what should be a NEW committee to the current Governance Assurance Committee, rather than establishing a new committee and adopting the regionally standardised approach as envisaged by the Health Minister and DoH?**
- 3. How can the public have any confidence in the renamed committee to improve patient safety and quality of care? The current SEHSCT proposals appear to be a continuation of the current processes with all of their flaws, rather than the fresh start envisaged throughout the Ministerial Statement.**

- 4. If SEHSCT considers that the Governance Assurance Committee has been totally superseded and is no longer fit for purpose, that committee should be dissolved and a clean break made between the old arrangements and the new regional policy to be implemented through the new committee, which should be dedicated SOLELY to patient safety and quality. Why has SEHSCT determined to follow a different pathway? Who within SEHSCT took the decision to defy the clearly expressed instructions from the Minister and the Department?**

Members are asked to note the following key provisions of the Trust's 'Procedure for Dealing with Written Questions to Trust Board':

'the use of written questions is intended to give the public an opportunity to directly write to the Chairman of the Board on matters of general policy. Questions in respect to individuals and the services they receive will normally be dealt with under the existing complaints procedures.'

'When a determination is made that a question raised can be dealt with under the Procedure for Dealing with Written Questions to Trust Board, the question will be directed to the appropriate director for a draft response compiled by the director or nominated lead director if one or more services are involved.'

'The response is to be with the Chairman within 15 working days.'

'The Chairman will issue the agreed response on behalf of the Board within 30 calendar days and a copy of the response will be made available to each Board Member at the next scheduled Board meeting.'

'A formal record of questions received and the general nature of the response will be tabled at each board meeting and noted in the minutes.'

Work has commenced on a draft response with the aim this is with the Chairman within 15 working days of receiving the correspondence (i.e by 9 June 2026) with a formal response being issued within 30 calendar days of receipt (i.e by 19 June 2026). In line with procedure, the general nature of the response provided will be tabled for noting by Trust Board.

3.0 Resources Implications (inc Organisational, Financial, Human Resources)

Relevant members of staff will be required to assist in the preparation of a formal response to the written questions as listed.

4.0 Impact on Safety, Quality and Experience (SQE)

The Trust welcomes the opportunity to examine the issues raised to ensure the proposed change to our integrated governance arrangements is aligned with the content of the Minister's Written Statement.

5.0 Key Risks and Proposals to Mitigate

None identified.