South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Paper No: SET/107/26
Trust Board Meeting: 24 June 2026
Public Agenda Item 8.7

Title of Paper: **Temporary Change in Opening Hours of Lagan Valley Urgent Care Centre**			
	For Assurance		

1.0	**Background:**
	Lagan Valley Urgent Care Centre offers a consultant-led service, but does not provide both emergency medicine and emergency surgical services, and operates with time limited opening hours. The service is accessed on a phone-first basis. Prior to October 2021, LVH had been operating an emergency medicine service with opening hours of 8am – 8pm, Monday to Friday. Whilst it has access to consultant-led emergency care, there are limited specialties in LVH, which can result in long waits for transfers for those requiring onward specialist care. This includes those requiring admission for: surgery, intensive care, paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology and orthopaedic services. In inpatient areas, there are a broad range of acute general medical specialties available: including respiratory, cardiology, gastroenterology, and care of the elderly medicine. There is also a dedicated Psychiatry of Old Age service with direct admissions to these wards.
2.0	**Key Issues:**
	Medical Cover This decision has been taken following a significant deterioration in our medical workforce position. The service has experienced longstanding challenges in recruiting and retaining appropriately trained medical staff, which have been compounded by the departure of a key long-term locum clinician and ongoing gaps within the substantive workforce. Collectively, these factors have created an unsustainable rota position and a significant risk to maintaining safe clinical cover across our unscheduled care services. The decision has there been made to change to operational hours from: • Monday to Friday 0800-1800; to • Monday to Friday 0800-1600
3.0	**Link to Strategic Objectives:**
	Our People ☐ Population Health & Health Inequalities ☐ Delivering Care Closer to Home ☐ Hospital Care ☒ Safety, Quality and Experience of Care ☒

4.0	**Resource Implications (inc Organisational, Financial, Human Resources):**
	1. Organisational
	The Trust is aware of the potential for patients in the Lagan Valley area to have concerns in relation to this temporary change. The Trust remains committed to Lagan Valley Hospital and the services it provides to both local and regional patients.
	2. Financial
	There have not been financial considerations considered as part of this change, as it has made to sustain the service in the safe manner. There are however no additional costs as a result of this temporary change.
	3. Human Resources
	All staff impacted have had opportunity to discuss ongoing employment with relevant managers.
	4. Environmental Factors? Yes ☐ No ☒
5.0	**Impact on Safety, Quality and Experience (SQE):**
	1. Safety
	This change is required in order to maintain the service in Lagan Valley Urgent Care centre, and without this in the short term would create patient safety risks due to lack of doctors with the relevant clinical expertise.
	2. Quality
	The patients in LVH UCC receive an excellent service, and with reduced reliance on ad hoc locums, the Trust will increase the percentage of work undertaken by Trust employed staff. This will ensure quality of service are maintained, with approximately 80-90 patients per day being seen. Prior to the change, this number was approximately 95.
	3. Experience
	Through planned mitigations, the service is confident in its ability to manage the vast majority of demand in line with current activity. This will ensure patients who currently receive their care in LVH continue to receive it in the same way the have been in the vast majority of cases.
6.0	**Key Risks and Proposals to Mitigate:**
	1. Key Risks
	The current position reflects ongoing regional challenges in recruiting and retaining experienced medical and nursing staff, which are impacting services across Northern Ireland. The Trust has engaged with its recruitment partner to identify suitable candidates from across the UK, able and willing to work in Lagan Valley Hospital, however no suitable candidates have been identified to date. Opportunities for other staff to cover shifts have also been explored but have not yielded the necessary medical staffing required.

	We will continue to actively progress: • Recruitment to substantive posts • Temporary staffing solutions e.g. locums • Explore opportunities with other staff to cover shifts. This will allow the Trust to maintain its focus on improving workforce stability. The temporary change will ensure the Trust can rely on existing medical staff to support the Urgent Care Centre.
	2. Proposals to Mitigate
	Engagement plan and clear communications with all relevant stakeholders, including relevant strategic partners. Continue to employ Emergency Medical doctors to work across South Eastern Trust Urgent and Emergency Care services to reduce service vulnerability. The Trust continues to provide access to Primary Care and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service into Lagan Valley.
7.0	**Risk Register:**
	It is listed on BAF? Yes ☐ No ☒ Is it listed on CRR? Yes ☐ No ☒

Lead Director:	**Marc Neil, Director of Unscheduled Care, Medicine & Cancer**
Date:	**18 June 2026**

Reasons for Paper Presentation

Approval	*Used when an item requires a formal agreement or endorsement by the meeting / committee members. Examples are approving minutes, budgets, proposals or policies.*
Assurance	*Used when an item can be measured against a certain criteria / standard. Examples are a project is on course with delivery or financial targets are being met.*
Information	*Used when an item is presented for the purpose of updating or informing the attendees without requiring a decision or action, such as reports, updates, or announcements.*
Discussion	*Used when an item is listed primarily for open discussion, brainstorming or gathering input from the members without requiring an immediate decision.*