South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Chair
Jonathan Patton

Chief Executive
Roisin Coulter

19 June 2026

Ms Jillian Gillespie

By Email: [redacted]

Dear Ms Gillespie

Written Questions for Trust Board

Thank you for your email correspondence dated 18 May 2026 providing a total of four written questions in relation to Patient Safety governance arrangements.

As part of your submission, reference was made to the Written Statement to the NI Assembly from the Minister of Health on 19 February 2026 titled '*Update on Departmental Policies in relation to Quality and Safety'* which I will refer to as the Ministerial Statement hereinafter.

I can advise your written questions were reported to Trust Board for noting at its meeting held on 27 May 2026 and recorded in the minute prepared from 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:

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?

The Governance Assurance Committee held its final scheduled meeting on 29 April 2026. At the Trust Board meeting held on 27 May 2026, Members were asked to consider and approve a recommendation to establish a dedicated Patient Safety & Quality Committee (PSQC) by way of approving a Terms of Reference which expands upon and subsumes the remit of the Governance Assurance Committee with a revised and enhanced remit aligned to the Ministerial Statement. Following consideration, Members agreed the draft Terms of Reference as tabled.

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?

As per the Ministerial Statement, the Trust's PSQC will operate within a regionally standardised approach. Under Standing Orders, Trust Board holds reserved authority to establish new Board Committees and/or approve Committee Terms of Reference. As such, the new Committee's Terms of Reference were considered and approved by Trust Board at its meeting held on 27 May 2026.

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.

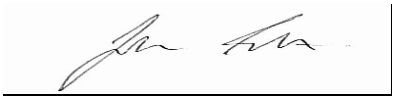
The PSQC is a new Committee with its own Terms of Reference which aims to enhance oversight and assurance on matters relating to patient safety and quality of care.

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?

As noted above, the Governance Assurance Committee held its final scheduled meeting on 29 April 2026. The Trust has followed the Ministerial Statement and has established a dedicated PSQC in line with instructions contained therein.

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 June 2026.

Yours sincerely



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JONATHAN PATTON
Chairman