

Feedback Report Public Consultation: The Future Provision of Urgent and Emergency Care Services - Ards and North Down Area

**Trust Board
28 June 2023**



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust

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Background

- There are significant challenges with the demand for urgent and emergency care services across the region of Northern Ireland and the Trust continues to face extreme pressures
- Change is required to address safety and sustainability of these services now and in the future
- Our key priority is to provide a safe, sustainable and appropriate urgent and emergency care service.

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Regional Pressures and Strategic Direction

In March 2022 the Department of Health launched a Public Consultation on the Review of Urgent and Emergency Care in Northern Ireland.

In October 2022 the consultation concluded with broad support for the following proposals:

1. Creating an integrated urgent and emergency care service
2. Capacity, Co-ordination and Performance
3. Intermediate Care, a Regionalised Approach



Why change is needed

There are challenges providing a safe and sustainable urgent and emergency care model:

- Existing scope of the nurse-led, standalone service is limited
- Challenging recruitment
- Limited scope of practice
- Clinical environment is poor



The Trust's Vision

Provide a consultant-led 'Urgent Care Centre'
at the Ulster Hospital, co-located with the
Level 1 Emergency Department



Considering the options

- Identified long list of potential options
- Considered options against range of key factors, including:
 - Improving Patient Safety and Clinical Quality
 - Accessibility i.e. opening hours
 - Deliverability, Sustainability and Effective use of Resources
 - Speed and Ease of Implementation
 - Compatibility with Strategic Direction
- Only one option considered viable and deliverable



Overview of proposed option

Implement a co-located and more comprehensive Urgent and Emergency Care service at the Ulster Hospital

This would be implemented in a phased way:

Stage 1

- The current nurse-led minor injuries service in Ards (and the temporality closed Minor Injuries Service in Bangor) would re-locate to the Ulster Hospital.
- A **new, more comprehensive minor injuries** service provided by medical and nursing teams would operate 8am – 6pm / 7 days per week.
- The Emergency Department would continue to operate 24/7.



Overview of proposed option

Stage 2

- Consultant-led **Urgent Care Centre** at the Ulster Hospital
- Alongside the new Emergency Department
- Operating 8am – 6 pm, 7 days a week
- The Emergency Department would continue to operate 24/7.



What would this option deliver?

- More comprehensive service
- Longer opening hours
- Access to medical expertise and full range of investigations on one site
- Sustainable model
- Consistent with strategic direction.



Public Consultation Process

- 8 February 2023 - 3 May 2023
- Widely promoted across the community
- Comprehensive engagement during consultation
- Meetings with various stakeholders – including ongoing meetings with staff and Trade Unions, Elected Representatives, Ards and North Down Borough Council and the South Eastern Local Commissioning Group
- Engagement with Department of Health, Public Health Agency, the Patient Client Council
- Three public engagement events held
- A range of formats to respond to the consultation.



The Future Provision of Urgent & Emergency Care in Ards & North Down Consultation Breakdown

8 February -
3 May 2023
Consultation Period



460

Regional
Organisations and
Representative Groups
were informed



642

Local Group and
Organisations were
informed



3

Public
Engagement Events –
121 attendees



388

Responses
Received



1

Public Petition
19,033 signatories



Summary of Feedback

As part of the consultation questionnaire, consultees were asked if they agreed:

- With the reasons for change outlined in the consultation document.
 - 62 said yes
 - 287 said no
 - 4 said neither yes or no
- the proposal would enable the future provision of safe and sustainable urgent and emergency care services.
 - 54 said yes
 - 293 said no
 - 6 said neither yes or no.

Feedback has been categorised into 8 themes



Consultation responses - key themes

Given the different forms of responses, we have categorised the feedback we have received into the following themes:

Increased travel time
and impact on patient
safety

Staffing

Ulster Hospital
Emergency Department
Capacity

Impact on Primary Care
Services

Impact on people with
disabilities, living in
rural areas and on low
incomes

Car Parking/Access

Consultation process

Funding



Increased travel time and impact on patient safety

- Journey times associated with travelling to the Ulster Hospital would pose a patient safety risk
- Increased distances to the Ulster Hospital for those who do not have access to a car, expense of travelling and availability of public transport
- More detail requested on mitigating measures or policies to address these issues.

Trust Response:

- The Trust believes that this new model will help reduce delays to treatment, particularly for those with higher risk conditions
- People who require minor injuries treatment, generally have lower clinical risk, therefore slightly longer journey times will not heighten the risk to these patients
- Increased travel time is unfortunately unavoidable if the Trust is to address the safety and sustainability of urgent and emergency care services
- Equality Impact and Rural Needs assessments carried out. The Trust would continue to monitor for any adverse impact as a result of any change or withdrawal of services.



Staffing

- Further information sought on how the proposed new Urgent Care Centre would be sufficiently staffed
- Impact on staff pressures across our hospitals and in Primary Care / Community teams
- Availability of staff parking at the Ulster Hospital site.

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Trust Response:

- The intention would be to staff from the existing workforce, including a range of multi-disciplinary teams
- As proposals would increase clinical space and capacity, this would have a positive impact in relation to reducing clinical risk and ED over-crowding
- Proposals would also allow for a more enhanced working environment
- The Trust is committed to considering staff parking as part of any management of change process.



Ulster Hospital ED Capacity

- Some respondents noted the proposal would enable easy re-direction of cases which are not emergencies away from the Emergency Department
- Concern raised regarding impact on patients and delivery of services at the Ulster Hospital
- Queries on proposed management of additional patients to the Ulster Hospital site and how overcrowding and risk of infection exposure would be mitigated
- Potential burden to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS).



Trust Response:

- The Trust believes that this would be a safe and sustainable service and that the dedicated clinical space and staffing model in these proposals would reduce crowding and infection risk
- Minimal impact anticipated. Approximately 5 patients per hour
- This service would offer increased hours of opening across 7 days per week, from 8 am to 6 pm
- The Trust does not anticipate any additional burden on NI Ambulance Service.



Impact on Primary Care Services

- Concern raised over accessing GP services and potential impact on Primary Care capacity
- Comment that a properly funded and adequately staffed Minor Injuries Unit in Newtownards would reduce impact on pressurised GP services
- Further information requested on proposal of “wellbeing centres” in Bangor and Newtownards.



Trust Response:

- Minor injuries and complex minor injuries are not treated by GPs
- The Trust would continue to work with primary care colleagues, GP Federations and the public to ensure clear communication was provided in relation to accessing minor injuries services
- There are plans to develop new Primary and Community Care Centres in the Ards and North Down area.



Impact on people living with disabilities, living in rural areas and on low incomes

- Impact on equality and human rights of service users living in rural areas, including elderly and vulnerable residents who may have to use complicated public transport routes to get to the Ulster Hospital
- Impact on people with disabilities who will have to travel further as well as the availability of suitable, safe transport
- Impact on people on low incomes – cost of transport and car parking.



Trust Response:

- The Trust has completed an Equality and Rural Needs Impact Assessments in relation to the proposed options
- Increased travel time is unfortunately unavoidable if the Trust is to address the safety and sustainability of urgent and emergency care services
- The Trust is committed to monitoring for any adverse impact.
- From May 2024, under the Hospital Car Parking Charges Act (2022), car parking charges will not be imposed for people attending or visiting a hospital site in Northern Ireland in a relevant capacity.



Car Parking/Access

- Insufficient car parking facilities at the Ulster Hospital
- Plans for additional car parking spaces at the Ulster Hospital.



Trust Response:

- The Trust continues to review masterplans for the development of the Ulster Hospital site, including Travel Plans
- An additional 140 spaces will be available at the new Emergency Department at the Acute Services Block in Summer 2023.



Consultation Process

- Query on consultation with staff
- Criticism of documentation and process
- Greater reference to 'Bengoa' and 'No More Silos'
- Reference to Urgent and Emergency Care Review statement that Urgent Care Centres do not replace existing Minor Injuries Units
- Distinction between urgent and emergency care
- More information requested on both Downe and Lagan Valley Urgent Care Centres and key learning
- Clarity requested on benefits of proposal.

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Trust Response:

- Ongoing meetings have taken place with staff and Trade Unions
- The purpose of this consultation has been to establish a dialogue, based on a genuine exchange of views
- The nature of information and required statutory documentation can be complex
- Range of ways for the public to engage
- The Trust believes the proposal is the only viable, deliverable way to provide the clinical capacity, as per strategic direction such as Bengoa and 'No More Silos'.



Trust Response:

- Proposals outlined are to address challenges across urgent and emergency care. A communications plan would be developed
- Both Downe and Lagan Valley Urgent Care Centres have received extremely positive feedback from patients and staff
- The benefits of this proposal are clearly set out in the consultation feedback report.



Funding

- Clarification sought on the level of investment required to take forward proposals
- Some respondents queried the ability to build a new Urgent Care Centre before closing Ards Minor Injuries Unit
- Comments received that proposals are about saving money and not improving patient outcomes.



Trust Response:

- Development of this model would be delivered in two stages
- Stage 1 of the proposal would be cost neutral
- Stage 2 - the Trust would plan to open a new Urgent Care Centre at the Ulster Hospital in 2025, at an approximate cost of £4m funded through the Trust's allocated capital budgets
- There would be no financial savings
- The Trust believes it can not wait until a new Urgent Care Centre would open and therefore must progress with plans to address the significant challenges outlined as soon as possible.



Equality and Rural Impact Assessments

- The EQIA determined a potential minor impact
- Principal concerns were travel distance and time, especially for older service users or those who may have a disability and those living in rural areas (particular references to Ards Peninsula)
- Furthermore, for those with young children, for those who may not be able to afford additional public transport or a taxi
- It was noted that many service users do not have access to a private vehicle and that public transport was either unavailable / unsuitable
- It was suggested that the healthcare needs of those living in rural areas of the Trust are best met by investing in community healthcare
- Continuation of close working relationship with Translink.



Trust Response:

- Equality Impact and Rural Needs Impact Assessments were carried out as per the Trust's statutory duties
- The Trust is committed to ongoing monitoring for any adverse impact
- Increased travel is unfortunately unavoidable if the Trust is to address the safety and sustainability of urgent and emergency care services
- It is the Trust's vision that in addition to the Urgent Care Centre would be supported by existing urgent care services across primary and secondary care
- The Trust actively participates in a multi-agency travel forum.



Benefits of Proposal

- A new, more comprehensive service
- Better outcomes for patients
- A safe and sustainable service
- Increased access – 7 days per week / longer opening hours
- Access to advanced diagnostics and multi-disciplinary team
- All conditions able to be seen and treated on one hospital site
- Enhanced working environment for staff.



Recommendation to Trust Board

Following consideration of the feedback received, Trust Board approval is sought to submit a recommendation for the proposed option, as outlined in the consultation document, to the Department of Health for consideration and approval.

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Next Steps

- If Trust Board approval is received, a recommendation would be submitted to the Department of Health for consideration
- Further engagement with staff and Trade Unions
- All those who participated in the consultation will be notified of the final consultation feedback report which includes a detailed response from the Trust.

The Trust wishes to extend its thanks and appreciation to all those individuals, elected representatives, groups and organisations who participated in the consultation.

