



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust

Public Consultation on the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn

Consultation Document

February 2022

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Alternative formats

This document can be provided in other formats including braille, large print, computer disk, audio tape or in another language for anyone not fluent in English.

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FOREWORD



The South Eastern Trust has had to make an immediate and temporary change to our Emergency Services in Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn. We are faced with significant challenges within our emergency medical service in relation to the availability of sufficient medical staff and the ability to maintain the high quality standards of care which we would like for our patients. Patient safety remains our number one priority, and therefore we have had no alternative to making this decision.

Whilst continuing our focus on providing high quality care for patients, the Trust needs to consider the best way to be able to provide safe, sustainable and clinically appropriate Urgent and Emergency Care services. We believe that the changes made can, and will continue to meet the needs of our community safely, and we are hopeful that they will actually provide a better experience for patients attending the Lagan Valley Hospital Emergency Department.

Over the past number of years there have been a number of regional service reviews outlining a clear need for urgent reform of our Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland. Moving forward, the Department of Health will shortly be publishing a Regional Review of Urgent and Emergency Care and this will set out the strategic direction across the region. I would wish to assure you that services provided from the Lagan Valley Hospital will take account of the content of this review.

The Trust remains committed to Lagan Valley Hospital and I am extremely proud of the excellent care being delivered by our staff who work there, and I recognise how important the hospital is to the people of Lisburn and the surrounding areas. For many years it has provided a comprehensive range of inpatient, day-case and outpatient services. In addition to these core services, the Lagan Valley site will be further enhanced by a new Primary and Community Care Centre which will bring together a full range of GP, community care and hospital services. In addition, the Hospital is the first dedicated Regional Day Procedure

Centre, and is providing vital planned day surgery for patients from right across Northern Ireland.

The Trust would like to consult with you on how we propose to deliver our Urgent and Emergency Care services at Lagan Valley. Our vision is to continue to provide our local community with safe, high quality healthcare which is appropriate and sustainable.

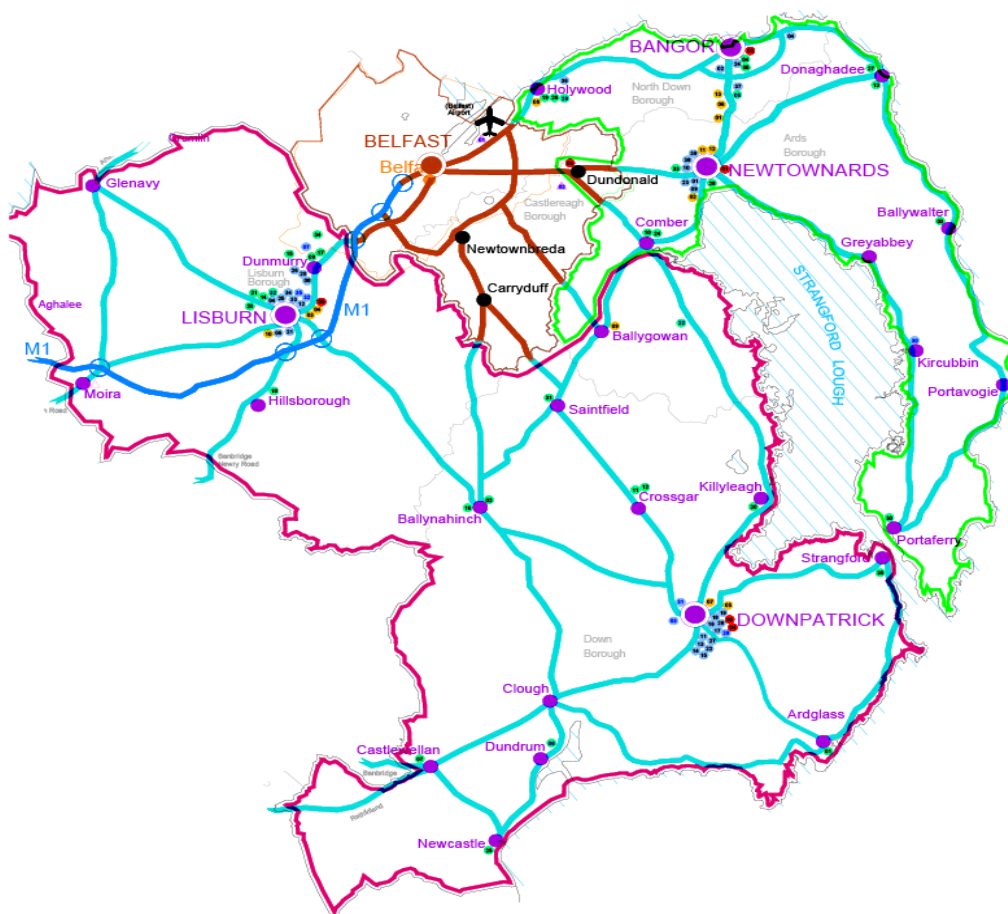
We are keen to hear your views in relation to this service during the public consultation period.

Roisin Coulter
Chief Executive

ABOUT THE TRUST

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust provides a wide range of acute hospital, community care, social services and services in people's own homes across the Trust area. The Trust has an annual budget of approximately £850m and employs approximately 11,000 staff.

The Trust serves the communities of Ards and North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh and Newry, Mourne and Down Council areas, serving a resident population of 354,651 which accounts for 19% of Northern Ireland's population. The map below shows the geographical area covered.



The Trust has one Acute Hospital, at the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald. This is supported by Local Enhanced Hospitals at Downe and Lagan Valley. The Trust also has Community Hospitals at Bangor and Ards. Community bases are located in many local towns and villages

from Moira in the west to Portaferry in the east and from Bangor in the north to Newcastle in the south.

The Trust works in partnership with our community to deliver services to older people, children and families, to those with a learning or physical disability, or mental health condition.

Patients, clients and families are at the heart of everything we do and we have created a culture where everyone is valued, and our priority is to ensure the provision of safe, high quality and compassionate care for those we serve.

INTRODUCTION

Lagan Valley Hospital (LVH) is a Local Enhanced Hospital providing a comprehensive range of inpatient, day-case and outpatient services. In addition to these core services, the Lagan Valley site will be further enhanced by a new Primary and Community Care Centre which will bring together a full range of GP, community care and hospital services. In addition the Hospital is the first dedicated Regional Day Procedure Centre, and is providing vital planned day surgery for patients from right across Northern Ireland.

The Emergency Department (ED) is currently categorised as a Type 2 Department, which means that it offers a consultant-led service, but does not provide both emergency medicine and emergency surgical services, and operates with time limited opening hours. 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.

Prior to October 2021, LVH ED had been delivering a consultant-led emergency medicine service, supported by middle grade doctors during the opening hours of the department. The Trust did not have sufficient permanent medical staff to deliver the service safely and consequently there was a significant reliance on agency locum medical cover, particularly at middle grade level. Despite numerous attempts to stabilise the medical workforce through both recruitment and encouraging medical staff to work across the entire hospital network within the Trust, the situation had become critical and unsustainable. Regionally, patients attending emergency departments have presented with increasingly complex needs and in need of more specialised care. This has also been the case in LVH and has become a growing safety risk as higher numbers of patients require transfer by Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) to other hospitals to receive appropriate care.

The unavailability of safe levels of medical staffing to support the opening hours of LVH ED is considered a patient safety risk, as it is critical that patients attending an emergency department have access to the care they need, at the time they need it, in the right place in order to achieve the best possible outcome.

The Trust's priority has always been, and continues to be, patient safety. In response to the challenges described above and in the interests of patient safety, the Trust took an immediate decision to temporarily reduce the opening hours of LVH ED by two hours a day. From Monday 18 October 2021, the LVH ED has been open from 8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday. The fundamental reason for this temporary change was the lack of available suitably qualified middle grade doctors.

This consultation document describes why the Trust had to implement this temporary change in the interests of patient safety. We are now consulting on this temporary change to identify if there are any further mitigations or alternative proposals to support safe and sustainable delivery of services. Therefore in line with the Department of Health's policy guidance circular dated 18 September 2019, and the Trust's Consultation Scheme (2015), the Trust will consult from 23 February 2022 to 22 April 2022 (inclusive), a period of eight weeks.

WHY WE HAD TO TEMPORARILY REDUCE THE OPENING HOURS AT LAGAN VALLEY HOSPITAL

An Emergency Department is a place where patients receive time-critical intensive treatment and care for a serious injury, accident, life-threatening condition or illness. Generally you do not need an appointment to attend an Emergency Department due to the time-critical nature of the treatment and care required.

From 18 October 2021, the Trust temporarily reduced the opening hours at LVH ED, in response to extreme workforce challenges. The Trust was no longer able to maintain the existing hours of operation across Urgent and Emergency Care services in Lagan Valley Hospital due to insufficient medical staffing.

One of the most significant challenges facing the Trust in relation to LVH ED is a shortage of suitably trained doctors equipped to act as senior decision makers to treat and care for patients who choose to attend the department. This workforce challenge is not unique to South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, or Northern Ireland – it is a challenge echoed across Urgent and Emergency Care service providers throughout the UK.

The Trust exhausted various options in an attempt to secure additional suitably trained medical staff to cover shifts, all of which were unsuccessful.

Reliance on agency locum medical staff

When the Trust is unable to recruit doctors, or unable to provide the safe level of cover needed through our existing workforce, we can submit a request for locum doctors via an agency. The Trust is dependent on agency locum doctors to support us to provide safe levels of care across all of our hospital sites. Our use of agency locum doctors is not only rising in LVH but across all our services. This is due to various reasons including the increased number of patients attending hospital; the impact of COVID-19; the need to split COVID-positive /COVID-negative patients; and patients being older with more complex health needs and in need of increasing levels of medical care.

LVH ED has been dependent on agency locum doctors to fill gaps in rotas for over 10 years. Over the last four years alone, the Trust has had a 63% increase in the number of locum shifts required at middle grade level. Not only have the frequency in rota gaps increased, the Trust has not been able to secure locum doctors to cover these shifts and has been relying on more senior, consultant doctors to cover these shifts instead which has an adverse impact on the services we are able to provide the following day.

When LVH ED is open from 8am – 8pm, there is a requirement to have doctors on site until 11pm. The agency locum doctors the service relied on covered the majority of the shifts that were difficult to get cover for, particularly those which were until 11pm. Over 90% of shifts in LVH ED were filled by agency locum doctors during July 2021. They frequently worked over 60 hours a week filling gaps in rotas, with 80% of their shifts finishing at 11pm each day LVH ED was open.

Recently, there has been an unexpected and critical change in our middle grade doctor workforce with a number of the agency locum doctors we relied on to sustain the service, taking the decision to move on for various reasons. To provide a safe level of cover, the Trust needs 10 full-time middle grade doctors on the rota for LVH ED to cover the opening hours of 8am – 8pm. Prior to the temporary reduction, the Trust could only reliably provide 15% of this cover, which led to the Trust being in a position where safe and adequate medical cover could no longer be secured for LVH ED. The Trust continued to request locum doctors through all possible locum agencies in the UK and Ireland; however this has been unsuccessful at providing suitably trained doctors and significant gaps on our rotas remain.

Recruitment

The Trust is continually trying to recruit new doctors to support LVH ED. The Trust operates across all our hospital sites as a network and encourages all of the doctors we employ at senior and middle-grade level to work across each of our hospital sites. Operating this network model strengthens the Trust's medical workforce over time, as it ensures that each doctor has experience and knowledge of each hospital site and the services provided to patients. It also has the potential to provide, over the longer-term, a safe and sustainable level of medical cover that is resilient to short-term changes. However, this model relies on middle-

grade doctors having the necessary skill-level to make decisions and having appropriate supervision from a more senior doctor which is a continual challenge for the Trust.

Following a recent recruitment exercise in autumn 2021, a number of middle grade doctors have been offered jobs with the Trust. However, none of these doctors are suitable to work unsupervised in LVH without significant training to increase their skills and provide a safe increase on the level of cover already in place. The Trust is setting up rotational posts to prepare the current workforce so that they will have the knowledge, skills and behaviours to act as a middle grade doctor in future years. However it will take time to grow the workforce to the level required to meet demand for services.

Impact of workforce challenges on patient safety and experience

The Trust strives to ensure all of our patients receive the right care at the right time, which is not always possible to deliver when facing such challenges with our medical workforce.

Insufficient staffing levels result in longer waits, overcrowding, compromises to safe practice, a reduction in the quality of care and a less positive experience for patients and staff.

Across the region, Emergency Departments are facing overcrowding and long waits for patients who attend. From July to September 2021 there were 164,892 attendances to Emergency Departments across Northern Ireland, with 20,565 patients waiting for 12 hours or more. This is an increase of 45% compared to April to June 2021. Increasingly, patients attending LVH ED have been presenting with more complex conditions, and are in need of more specialised care, which is not currently available at LVH. These situations often result in a further delay in treatment for patients who choose to attend LVH ED as the Trust has to arrange a transfer to another more suitable hospital via Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). It has been increasingly challenging for the Trust recently, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure a timely transfer for our patients to a more appropriate care facility given the staffing shortages we have faced across all of our services. These delays put our patients at increased risk of harm and do not deliver the high standard of care we expect for them.

When there isn't adequate cover, members of our medical team remain after their finishing time and work additional hours out of compassion and goodwill for our patients, and to ensure

we are still able to provide a safe service. This has a knock-on effect, disrupting other services we can offer, as these team members require an appropriate period of rest the following day. This added pressure on existing workloads of individuals can also be detrimental to their own health and wellbeing.

All of these challenges faced by the Trust can ultimately impact on the positive experience we would wish for each of our patients, but also for our staff who are working tirelessly to provide the best care they can.

HOW WE PROPOSE TO REDUCE RISK TO PATIENTS

Temporary reduction in opening hours

The Trust's aim is to continue to provide a service in LVH ED from 8am – 8pm. However, this is not possible at present with the current staff we have available, despite continued attempts to secure additional cover through ongoing recruitment exercises and agency locum doctor requests. To provide a service that remains open until 8pm requires cover from two appropriately trained medical staff until at least 11pm. This is to enable the follow-up of patients waiting for blood results or waiting for transfer to another hospital site, for example.

Reducing the opening hours from 8am – 6pm reduces the cover required by two hours from 11pm, to 9pm. This increases the likelihood of the Trust being able to cover these shifts. If the Trust was unable to fill the two shifts until 9pm it is expected, that on an ad hoc occasion, the more senior consultant staff on the rota from 8am – 4pm will be able to provide additional support up to the new closing time of 6pm to ensure all patients are seen and are safely cared for.

The medical shifts ending at 11pm are the most difficult to recruit to and secure suitable agency locum doctors for. Therefore, the Trust's dependency on agency locum doctors will significantly decrease as a result of temporarily reducing the opening hours.

Introducing a 'Phone First' model within an Urgent Care Centre

In response to the workforce challenges and to further reduce the Trust's dependency on the inconsistent level of cover provided by agency locum doctors in LVH ED, the Trust adopted

the 'Phone First' system from October 2021. This system is being implemented across the region and is already operating successfully in two of the Trust's other hospitals - Downe and Ards Minor Injury Unit. Over 89% of patients who have used the 'Phone First' service in Downe and Ards would recommend it to family and friends. Medical staff who work in these units are reporting that being able to redirect those who require care to a place where they can receive their definitive care has been very beneficial in reducing patient waiting times, and increasing patient safety.

The 'Phone First' model is consistent with the strategic direction for Urgent and Emergency Care as set out in the Department of Health's No More Silos (NMS) proposal published in July 2020 and is expected to be outlined in the Urgent and Emergency Care Review, which is due for imminent publication by the Department of Health.

Importantly, this service has ensured patients that are assessed by a senior doctor over the phone, receive the right care, first time. Following a review of the attendances to the ED at LVH over the period January – July 2021, the Trust anticipates that 90% of those who call will be seen in LVH or given appropriate clinical advice over the telephone. For the remaining 10% (approximately 1330 patients) where it is not appropriate to attend LVH ED, they will be directed to their local Pharmacy, GP, GP Out of Hours service, or to a more appropriate alternative hospital ED. This service will ensure the safety of our patients by reducing the number of patients who transfer to an alternative hospital for care, thereby reducing delays in patient care.

The Trust is also proposing to temporarily rename the department as an Urgent Care Centre (UCC). The Trust is making this proposal to better reflect the services delivered at present, and we want to be open and transparent with our patients about the service we are currently providing. We believe that this change facilitates patients in receiving their treatment in a suitable and safe environment based on their clinical need.

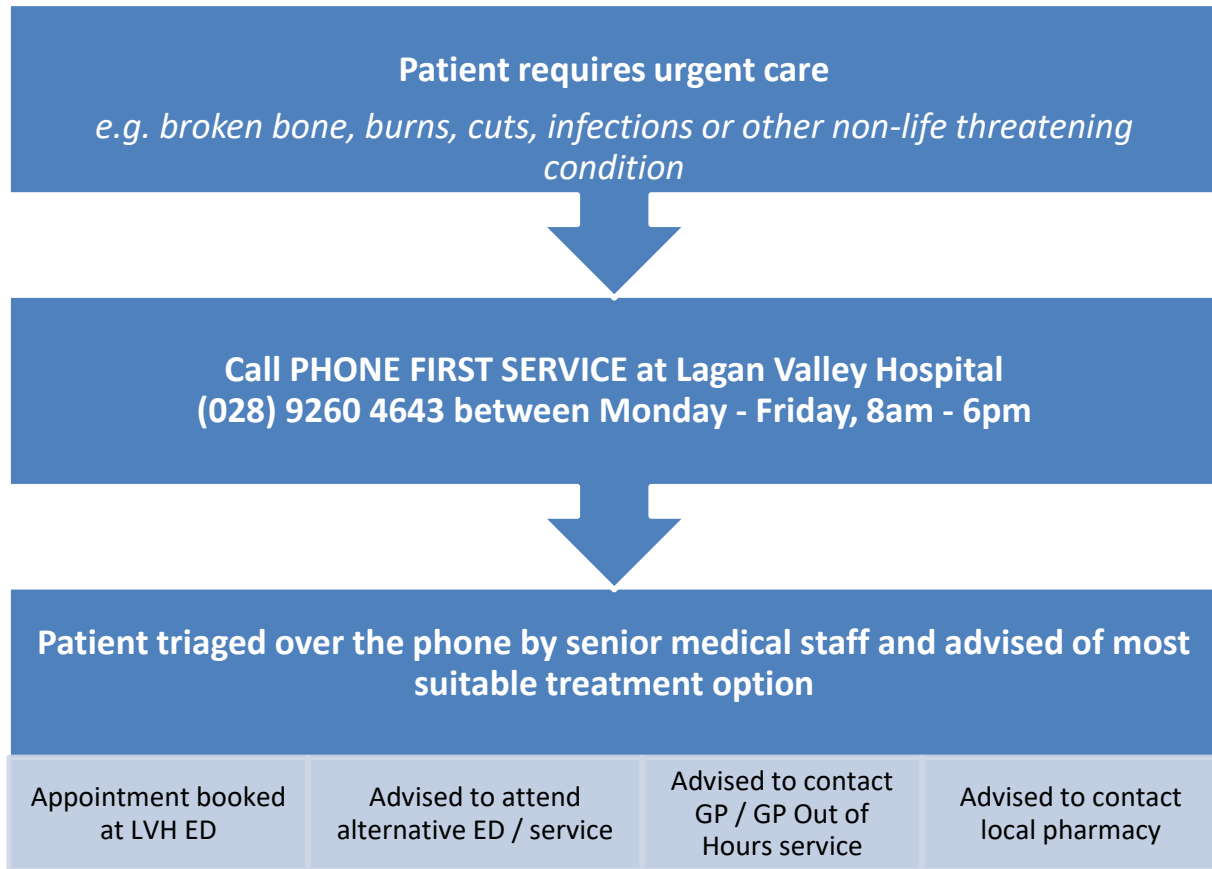
The Trust believes that by implementing these combined measures of reducing our opening hours and operating a 'Phone First' system within an Urgent Care Centre environment that we will be able to safely and sustainably provide the best care and support to the local community.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR THE IMPACT OF THE TEMPORARY CHANGES

The Trust is closely monitoring the ongoing impact of the changes to LVH ED. This includes monitoring the following:

- Department activity e.g. number of patients using 'Phone First'.
- Number of patients who need to be admitted to LVH.
- Number of patients transferred from LVH to other hospitals.
- Duration of patient's time spent in department.
- Ongoing recruitment.
- Patient experience – satisfaction questionnaires.

HOW YOU CAN ACCESS THE SERVICE



If you need access to LVH ED, the service is available 8am - 6pm, Monday to Friday by phoning **(028) 9260 4643**.

In cases of serious emergency, such as a life-threatening conditions including chest pain, symptoms of a stroke or a serious head injury patients should continue to phone 999 immediately.

Patients will be assessed over the phone and receive the right care, first time.

After telephone assessment you will be offered an appointment in Lagan Valley Hospital or referred to your local Pharmacy, GP or directed to an appropriate Emergency Department.

EQUALITY DUTIES

The Trust is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights in all aspects of its work. In keeping with the commitments in our Equality Scheme we have carried out an equality screening of this proposal the outcome of which was to subject the implementation of the proposal to '*on-going screening*'. At this stage, no major adverse impacts have been identified and the outcome of this proposal will result in positive impacts on Section 75 groups. This screening will be kept under review. The Rural Needs Act 2016 requires the Trust to have due regard to rural needs when developing plans, and when designing and delivering public services. The Trust has also carried out a Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

A copy of the Equality Screening Template and Rural Needs Impact Assessment can be found on the Trust's website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>.

The Trust invites views on these assessments and will consider all feedback received during the consultation period.

CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Trust welcomes all feedback regarding the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency care services at Lagan Valley Hospital.

The consultation on the proposals will last for eight weeks from 23 February 2022 to 22 April 2022 (inclusive). During the consultation period, we are seeking the views of people who use our LVH Urgent and Emergency Care services, their families, carers, staff, community and voluntary organisations and the general public.

We want to consult as widely as possible on the proposals as follows:

- This consultation document and an easy read version of the document will be issued to all consultees listed on the Trust's consultation database detailing the consultation process.

- A copy of this consultation document and easy read version is available on the Trust's website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>. Alternative formats are also available from the Trust on request, please see page 2 of this document for more details.
- A consultation questionnaire is available in Appendix 1 for anyone who wishes to provide written feedback. An easy to complete version of the questionnaire is also available on the Trust Website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/> or by contacting the Strategic and Capital Development team (details below).
- The Trust will undertake a targeted consultation process with service users and carers, with the support of the Patient Client Council and their established networks. More details will be published on the Trust's website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>.
- An online 'listening event' will be held where you can learn more and let us know what you think of our proposals. The date will be advertised on the Trust's website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>.
- The Trust will consult directly with staff affected by the proposals and engage with union representatives.
- The Trust will organise individual consultations/meetings with consultees where necessary and upon request by contacting us using the details below.

If you wish to provide feedback, you can also share your comments with the Trust by using our contact details below:

Strategic & Capital Development Department
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Kelly House, Ulster Hospital
Dundonald
BT16 1RH
Tel: 028 9055 0434
Text phone: 028 9151 0137
Email: consultation@setrust.hscni.net

Please return your response by 22 April 2022.

The purpose of this consultation is to engage with you and hear your views on the temporary changes to Urgent and Emergency Care services at LVH. The Trust is committed to undertaking a further public consultation in the event that any permanent changes are proposed.

In compliance with legislative requirements, the Trust will take into account the feedback received from this consultation process. A summary of consultation feedback will be provided to all respondents and will also be published on the Trust website. Before you submit your response, please read the following section on Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the confidentiality and commercial sensitivity of responses to public consultation exercises.

Trust Response and Freedom of Information Act (2000)

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust will publish an anonymised summary of the responses received to our consultation process. However, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, particular responses may be disclosed on request, unless an exemption(s) under the legislation applies.

Under the FOIA anyone has the right to request access to information held by public authorities; the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is such a public body. Trust decisions in relation to the release of information that the Trust holds are governed by various pieces of legislation, and as such the Trust cannot automatically consider responses received as part of any consultation process as exempt. However, confidentiality and commercial sensitivity issues will be carefully considered before any disclosures are made.

We would like to thank the public, our partner organisations and elected and community representatives for their continued understanding and for the support offered to our dedicated and committed staff as they continue to work tirelessly in protecting and caring for our community.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this consultation is to obtain views from stakeholders. The Trust would be grateful if you could submit your feedback using the following questionnaire. The questionnaire is also available to complete online (<https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>), and in easy read and alternative formats (on request).

The closing date for this consultation is 22 April 2022 and we need to receive your completed questionnaire on or before that date. Please return your questionnaire using the contact details below. Alternatively, you may also wish to give feedback to the Trust via letter, email or telephone:

Strategic & Capital Development Department
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Kelly House, Ulster Hospital
Dundonald
BT16 1RH

Tel: 028 9055 0434
Text phone: 028 9151 0137
Email: consultation@setrust.hscni.net

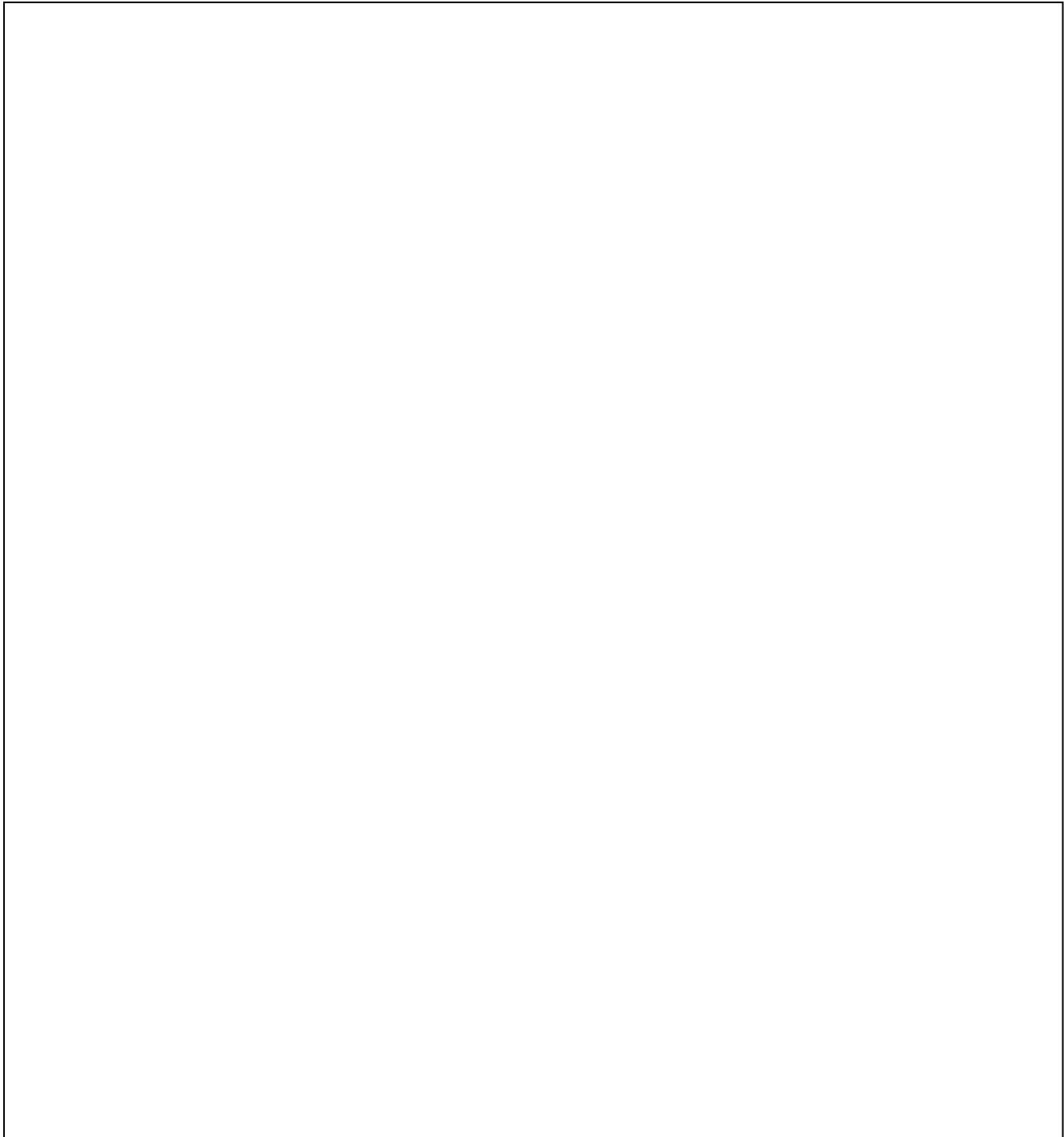
So that we can acknowledge receipt of your comments please fill in your name and address or that of your organisation. You may withhold this information if you wish but we will not then be able to acknowledge receipt of your comments.

Name:	
Position:	
Organisation (if appropriate):	
Address:	

I am responding: as an individual
(please tick) on behalf of an organisation

1. This document outlines the reasons why the Trust temporarily reduced the opening hours at LVH ED.

Question: Do you consider that temporarily reducing the opening hours of the department was a reasonable response to the patient safety concerns outlined in the document? (If no, please provide alternative proposals).

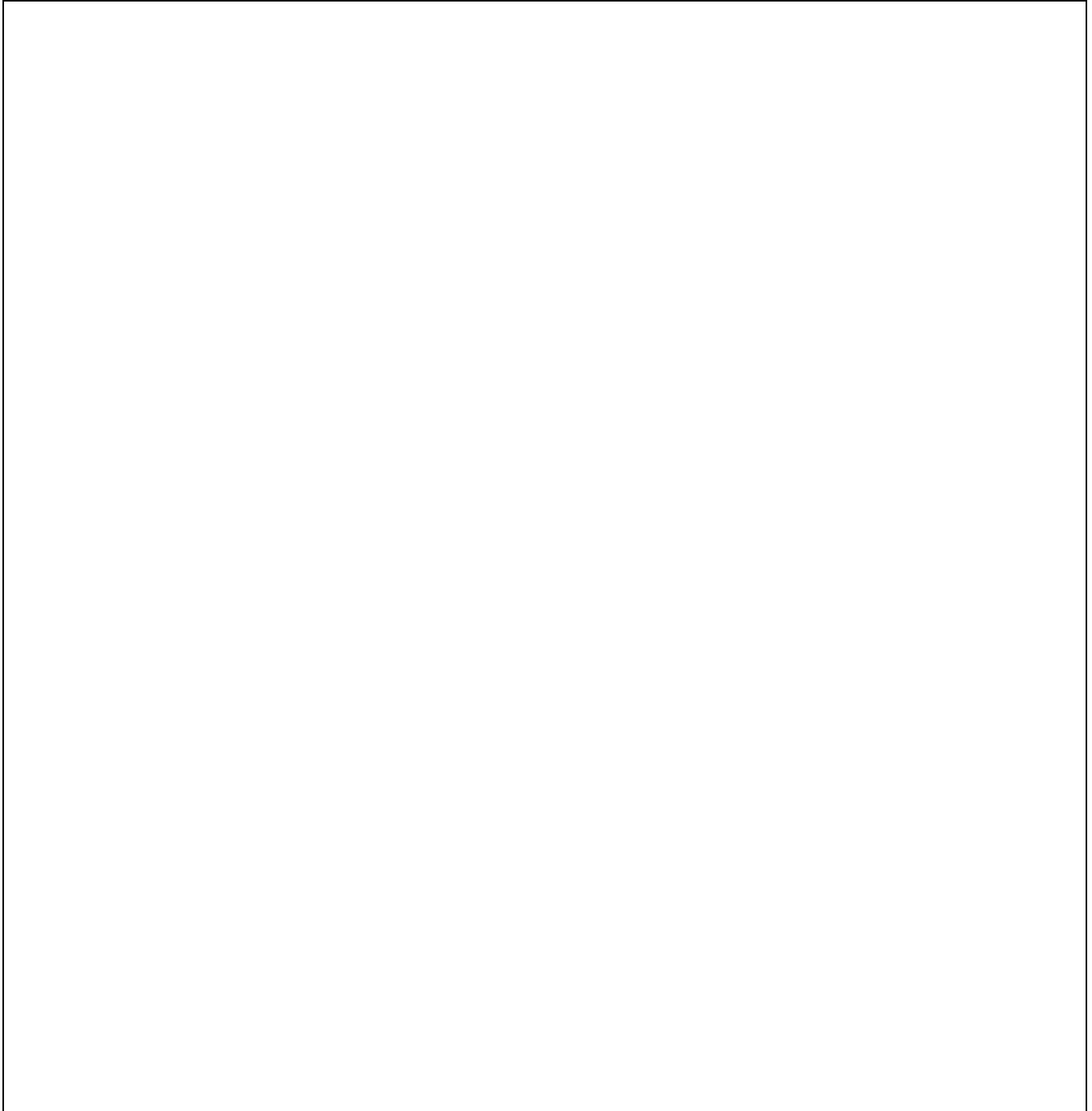


2. The Trust has implemented a 'Phone First' model to mitigate the risk to patient safety and proposes temporarily renaming the department an 'Urgent Care Centre' to better reflect the services provided.

Question: Do you consider these actions are reasonable and will address some of the challenges faced by the service and facilitate patients receiving treatment in a timely, suitable and safe environment based on their clinical need? (If no, please provide any further or alternative actions that could be taken).

3. The outcome of initial equality screening considerations is available on the Trust website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>.

Question: Do you have any further views on the assessed impact of the proposals and any other potential impacts you feel we should consider?



4. The Rural Needs Act places a duty on public authorities, including government departments, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services.

The Trust's Rural Needs Assessment for this consultation is available on the Trust website at <https://setrust.hscni.net/getinvolved/consultations/>.

Question: Do you have any evidence to suggest that the actions taken by the Trust create an adverse differential impact?

5. General comments

Please provide any other comments that you wish to make.

APPENDIX 2: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What is Urgent and Emergency Care?**

Urgent and Emergency Care services are provided when an individual needs urgent or emergency medical help.

Emergency services are for life threatening illnesses or accidents which require immediate, intensive treatment. Services that should be accessed in an emergency include ambulance (via 999) and emergency departments.

Urgent services should be used for an illness or injury that requires urgent attention but is not a life-threatening situation. Patients can receive treatment through their GP Out of Hours service, Minor Injuries Unit, community pharmacy or Urgent Care Centre.

- **What does consultant-led mean?**

Consultant-led means the consultant has clinical responsibility over the service. This does not mean the consultant will be physically present for each patient's appointment or treatment, but that they have the overall responsibility for the care being given to the patient.

- **What is a middle grade doctor?**

A middle grade doctor is a junior doctor who has less experience than a consultant. Middle grade doctors include staff grades, clinical fellows and specialist registrars.

- **What is a locum doctor?**

A locum doctor is a doctor who is not permanently employed by the Trust. They are usually recruited through an Agency and are intended for short periods of cover.

- **What is a type 2 Emergency Department?**

Type 2 Departments are consultant-led services with designated accommodation for the reception of Emergency Care patients, but do not provide both Emergency Medicine and Emergency Surgical services and/or has time-limited opening hours. This definition is outlined in various Northern Ireland Department of Health publications.

- **What is a Regional Day Procedure Centre?**

The Regional Day Procedure Centre is a place where patients from all over Northern Ireland travel to for scheduled minor operations. Patients are admitted, have their procedure carried out and are discharged all on the same day.

- **What is meant by a 'Phone First' model?**

A 'Phone First' model means that the patient is required to phone the hospital before attending. Patients contacting the telephone service will be assessed, given advice and, if required, directed to the most appropriate local service. That could be the Ambulance Service, an Emergency Department, an Urgent Care Centre, GP Out of Hours service, a community nurse, an emergency dentist or community pharmacy.

- **Will this be reviewed? / When will the opening hours go back to normal?**

The Trust is currently doing all it can to recruit the appropriate medical staff to work in LVH ED, and we are continuously reviewing our position. We are awaiting the outcome of the Urgent and Emergency Care Review, which will inform the direction of any future changes. The Trust is committed to undertaking a further public consultation in the event that any permanent changes are proposed.

- **How can I access urgent or emergency medical care outside of these opening hours?**

If you need access to LVH ED, the service is available 8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday by phoning **(028) 9260 4643**. Alternatively, if you have an urgent care need you can contact your local GP Out of Hours service.

Outside of these hours, in cases of serious emergency, such as a life-threatening conditions including chest pain, symptoms of a stroke or a serious head injury patients should continue to phone 999 immediately.