



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Departmental Strategic Business Plan

2024-2025

MINISTERIAL FORWARD	3
OUR STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024-25	5
Strategic Objective 1 - Maximising Resources	9
Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.....	18
Strategic Objective 3 – Safety and Quality	39
Strategic Objective 4 – People	42
Strategic Objective 5 – Resilience	44
Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance	46
OUR DEPARTMENT	50
OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY – STAY CONNECTED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	55

MINISTERIAL FOREWARD

I am pleased to introduce the Department of Health's 2024/25 Strategic Business Plan – my first as Health Minister – setting out the key objectives that my Department intends to deliver in 2024/25.

I want to build on the work ongoing across the system with specific focus on tackling waiting lists including for cancer care, confronting persistent health inequalities, improving mental health services, reforming adult and children's social care and delivering transformation in primary and community care.

Although this business plan has been developed during the consultation on the draft Programme for Government, there is alignment between the Department's plan and the Executive's Priorities and Missions. This plan focuses on the functions and actions of the Department of Health and will also align with the wider HSC plans currently under development within the Department.

While I am conscious of the severe budgetary pressures facing the Executive as a whole and their impact on the provision of health services to patients and our ability to introduce reforms, I intend to seek to achieve maximum return and service improvement from the monies invested in our services.

I acknowledge that the Department continues to experience significant pressures as we continue to rebuild from the experiences of the Covid pandemic, respond to the Covid Inquiry and react to ever increasing demands with limited resources.



Due to the scale of the reform required this change will take time. I wish to commend the determination, diligence and professionalism of all the staff I have met across the Department, our Arm's Length Bodies and frontline Health and Social Care services since the start of my time in office. I am confident that together we can deliver on my vision of Better Outcomes For All.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Nesbitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

MIKE NESBITT
MINISTER OF HEALTH

OUR STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024-25

Overarching Draft Programme for Government Priority ‘Cut Health Waiting Times’

DoH has responsibility for the draft Programme for Government (PfG) Priority: ‘Cut Health Waiting Times’.

We have the longest hospital waiting times in the UK, with people struggling to get the treatment they need. This backlog is unacceptable.

Tackling waiting times requires solutions across our entire Health and Social Care system. We know that long-term solutions are required to close the gap between growing demand and what we can deliver. This requires increasing capacity within our Health and Social Care system through service reform and reconfiguration. It also requires addressing health inequalities and helping to improve the long-term health and wellbeing of our population.

This will mean moving to a model of care that is not purely focused on acute interventions provided by our hospitals, to one that is centred around patient needs, and taking proactive steps to treat and care for patients, and prevent illness through investing in primary, community, and social care. We also know that these sorts of changes will take time, and long-term investment.

The need to improve performance, increase productivity, and improve the quality and consistency of care is well understood. We know that we need to accelerate the transformation and reconfiguration of services to deliver that, and progress has and is being made to tackle the backlog of patients waiting.

It is, however, the case that with the pressure on public finances and the available health budget, the pace and impact of reform and access to additional capacity will continue to be negatively impacted for longer than any of us would like. Focusing on reforming Health and Social Care will be instrumental in increasing efficiency to improve our waiting times. This coupled with actions that help people remain healthy and tackle health inequalities will improve the lives of all our citizens and relieve pressures on the Health and Social Care System.

Mission - People

The Department also has a key role to play in the Programme for Government's People Mission.

While we have some of the highest levels of life satisfaction in Europe, not everyone is able to have a positive experience of life. People from areas where a high level of deprivation is prevalent are more likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health and are less likely to be active in their community.

Within DoH a significant programme of reform of children's social care services is underway. It is focused on early intervention, addressing workforce challenges, and strengthening cross-sectoral working between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors, to deliver meaningful improvements for children and families.

We will build on the Executive's strategic framework for public health, Making Life Better, to tackle the wider determinants of health, and we will redouble our efforts to improve the physical and mental health outcomes of Northern Ireland's population and reduce inequalities, through continued implementation of the Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031. In addition, the "Live Better" initiative will demonstrate a new place-based approach to addressing health inequalities by

seeking to promote existing initiatives and programmes so that they can be delivered intensively in communities to make a real and lasting difference.

Whilst all areas of health and public safety are important and we will ensure the continued delivery of services to the highest possible standard, we are focusing on the key strategic objectives shown on the next page for the coming year.

DoH Strategic Objectives 2024-25

Strategic Objective 1 - Maximising Resources

Maximising what can be delivered from within the resources available – focusing on using our available resources to the best effect for the benefit of health, social care and fire service users.

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, redesigning and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments

Strategic Objective 3 – Safety and Quality

Providing leadership and oversight in respect of safe, quality services

Strategic Objective 4 – People

Supporting our people post-COVID, developing and empowering them through a DoH people strategy that addresses wellbeing, leadership, skills and development.

Strategic Objective 5 – Resilience

Remaining agile and ready to deal with potential future events including pandemics or health security matters.

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance

Ensuring that appropriate direction and control is exercised in respect of good governance, finance, ALB sponsorship.

Business Plan – Strategic Objectives and Actions 2024-25

Strategic Objective 1 – Maximising Resources Maximising what can be delivered from within the resources available – focusing on using our available resources to the best effect for the benefit of health, social care and fire service users.		
Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Delivery of 'Valuing Medicines – A Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Medicines in NI' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude development of Strategy: July 2024. • Consultation: August – October 2024. • Publication of Strategy: December 2024. Oversight of implementation of Strategy: from January 2025.	December 2024	Michael McBride
Develop and share a 10-year strategic plan of prioritised major capital development.	June 2024	Chris Matthews
Sustainability: Climate Action Plan – Optimisation of the Estate for Energy Efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review PEL (Professional Estates Letter) 11/20 - Office Space Utilisation in Acute, Community and Administrative Facilities. • Report on the DoH and its ALB's estate optimisation proposals to 	October 2024 October 2024	Chris Matthews

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>maximise the efficiency of the estate and identify energy, cost and carbon emission savings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a buildings optimisation plan with a target to improve energy efficiency of the estate and realise carbon saving. <p>Develop and publish Net Zero built environment strategy</p>	<p>March 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p>	
<p>Continue to implement the DoH People Strategy and Action Plan 2023-24 and update this up to March 2025, to ensure we deliver our ambition that DoH is a great place to work. This includes delivering actions to support our people post covid, developing and empowering them through a people strategy that addresses wellbeing, leadership, skills and development, staff engagement, workforce planning, organisational development, equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Chris Matthews</p>
<p>Deliver the first year of work on the Department's Future Department work plan (to be agreed by SLT in advance of new business year). This programme will use an organisational development approach to maximise our Human Resource (including supporting redesign/ branch enlargement/</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Chris Matthews</p>

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
increased spans of control/ TP reduction), improve our business processes and examine our relationships with our ALBs to ensure role clarity for staff, with a focus on contributing to positive outcomes collectively as a system.		
Develop a plan of work to underpin cancer improvement through progression of Cancer Strategy and focus on performance improvement.	May 2024	Jim Wilkinson / Tracey McCaig
Implement plan in line with agreed timescales	May 2024	Jim Wilkinson / Tracey McCaig
<p>Undertake a review of the Elective Care Framework and develop an action plan for 24/25 and 25/26 – by 30 Sept 2024; and</p> <p>Lead the policy for transformation of elective care and oversee implementation of Elective Care Framework action plan.</p> <p>Oversee the regional programmes to modernise outpatient reform and endoscopy modernisation</p>	<p>By September 2024</p> <p>In Line with Implementation plan</p> <p>In line with Programme Plans</p>	<p>Jim Wilkinson</p> <p>Tracey McCaig</p>
Complete a programme of engagement on the draft (Hospital Network	June 2024	Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Framework.		
Complete Regional Review of Neurology Services final report.	May 2024	Jim Wilkinson
Identify a preferred configuration option for the development of Hyperacute Stroke Care in Northern Ireland.	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Prepare a Strategic Outline Case for a fully integrated regional Phone First 111 service. Undertake a baseline review of unscheduled care provision to inform approach to Phone First 111. Oversee implementation of Unscheduled Care Improvement Plan against agreed timescales.	July 2024 June 2024 March 2025	Jim Wilkinson Tracey McCaig
Produce a revised HSC staff health and wellbeing framework that will support employers in planning and implementing effective processes and resources for improving staff health, well-being, and safety at work. This will include ongoing development and implementation of initiatives to proactively		Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>support staff across HSC to remain physically and mentally well at work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop Framework• Develop and Implement initiatives in line with Implementation Plan	<p>June 2024 March 2025</p>	
<p>Continue to target reductions in the use of Agency and Locum expenditure across HSC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of a new procurement framework for medical & dental (by 31/12/2024).• Implementation of a new procurement framework for non medical staff (by 31/12/2024). <p>Above timeframes take account of procurement timelines and transitional arrangements within HSC on implementation of each new framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake a review of the current contract rates under the new Nursing & Midwifery Framework and consider whether it is appropriate they are reduced or maintained at the current levels (by 31/12/2024).	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Jim Wilkinson</p>
<p>Complete a comprehensive options appraisal exercise to determine a</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Jim Wilkinson</p>

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
preferred model and future configuration of Occupational Health services for HSC and wider health and social care sector, and the investment required to develop into a proactive, preventative service.		
Develop a short-medium term Women’s Health Action Plan for Northern Ireland.	October 2024	Jim Wilkinson
Publication of new obesity strategic framework and action plan, following on from the close of the public consultation in February 2024.	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Develop policy and legislation on tobacco and vaping in Northern Ireland, including implementing decisions of Health Minister, Executive and Assembly on Northern Ireland’s inclusion in the Westminster Tobacco and Vaping Bill and progressing any consequential legislation	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Respond to recommendations of the UK Infected Blood Inquiry, reporting in May 2024, including the recommendations on financial redress in the second interim report from the Inquiry (April 2023).	March 2025	Co-ordination of Department Response – Jim Wilkinson Financial Redress– Peter Toogood All other recommendations – EBM

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
		leads on relevant policy areas.
Support the overall Departmental Budget breakeven position of the DoH by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing a recurrent savings plan for SPPG budget areas to deliver assigned target for 2024/25Deliver the savings plan ensuring SPPG breaks even.	May 2024 March 2025	Tracey McCaig
Support regional efficiency programme by delivering regional performance information (finance and activity): <ul style="list-style-type: none">Oversee delivery of action plans for High-Cost Cases and Residential and Nursing.Produce a mid-year progress report for module 2 efficiency review of Elective.	March 2025 March 2025	Tracey McCaig
Refresh and deliver SPPG Estates action plan, to include rationalisation and climate action: <ul style="list-style-type: none">RefreshDelivery (reviewed mid and end of year).	June 2024 March 2025	Tracey McCaig

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>Maximising Value relating to Domiciliary Care budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of ‘Early Review of Domiciliary Care’ Teams fully commissioned in each Trust.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Implementation○ Evaluation• Develop business cases and implement preferred option for digital solutions for domiciliary care services:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Deliver business case○ Implement digital solution• Develop and agree with Trusts a new minimum data set for Domiciliary Care monitoring.	<p>June 2024 October 2024</p> <p>September 2024 March 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p>	<p>Tracey McCaig</p>
<p>Develop and refresh the Prescribing efficiency of MORE Pharmaceutical Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agreement of targets for savings in year and recurrent.	<p>June 2024</p>	<p>Tracey McCaig</p>

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">oversee Trusts delivery of plans.	March 2025	EBM/ Chief Professional Officer

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Commence a review of NI medicines access arrangements encompassing NICE (PASD lead) and IFR (SCD lead) to ensure that the NI population can access new medicines with an evidence base for clinical and cost-effectiveness on an equitable basis to the rest of the UK.	March 2025	Michael McBride
Implementation of Integrated Care System (NI) by 30 September 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement new commissioning approach by 30 April 2024• Establishment of SPPG/PHA multi-disciplinary planning teams by 30 April 2024.• Roll-out of five AIPBs complete by 30 September 2024• Establishment of Regional ICS Partnership Forum by 30 September 2024.	September 2024	Tracey McCaig

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>Improve Learning Disability Services by developing a regional Transitions Protocol in collaboration with Trust’s Children and Adults Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop protocol a Regional Transitions Protocol. • Further develop Learning Disability bed availability data by implementing a learning disability regional dashboard for use by all Trusts. 	<p>July 2024 July 2024</p>	<p>Tracey McCaig</p>
<p>Review and redesign regional Mental Health crisis services (in line with actions 12 & 27 of the Mental Health Strategy):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Mental Health Model 	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Tracey McCaig</p>
<p>Implement a programme of reform within children’s social care in response to the Review of Children’s Social Care Services. In 2024/25, key actions will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a needs analysis relating to residential placements for looked after children and develop a plan to meet the needs identified, 	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Peter Toogood</p>

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>with an emphasis on smaller children’s homes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a peripatetic fostering placement support service and agree a new fostering fee framework to address recruitment and retention issues within foster care;• Introduce a greater range of support options for children with ASD who are referred to children’s social care services;• Continue to implement the Adoption and Children Act, including by introducing, transitional adoption support services arrangements, extending support to care leavers up to age 25 and introducing provision to enable short breaks to be provided to disabled children without the need for the child to become looked after.• Take forward a number of actions under the Looked After Children Strategy, including a review of the system of care planning for looked after children and the introduction of regulation of independent fostering agencies.		

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take forward a number of workforce initiatives, including: the development of safer staffing guidance to include recommendations for skills mix; an exercise to scope the children’s social care workforce in the context of a developing 10-year social care workforce strategy; implementation of a social work workforce stabilisation programme; and the development of career, training and learning pathways for social work and social care. • Put in place a partnership framework to formalise and facilitate collaboration between the statutory, community and voluntary sectors to, among other things, give effect to the Children’s Services Review recommendation calling for a reset and greater focus on family support. 		
Improve co-ordination and quality improvement across palliative care services:	December 2024	Tracey McCaig

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a standardised data collection tool and performance dashboard to manage the four-independent hospice in patient and community specialist palliative care nursing contracts. 		
Develop data metrics for healthcare in prison, as a mechanism for determining need, for performance monitoring, and for informing commissioning and service provision.	March 2025	Tracey McCaig
Finalise, publish, and commence implementation of the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy, associated Action Plan and Performance Framework.	June 2024	Peter Toogood
Deliver a co-ordinated, proportionate, and effective HSC response to Adults in Need of International Protection.	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Introduction of Adult Protection Bill to the Northern Ireland Assembly.	July 2024	Peter Toogood
Launch consultation on Adult Protection Bill Statutory Guidance.	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Implementation of Learning Disability Strategic Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consultation-ready service model for learning disability by 	September 2024	Peter Toogood

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>April 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the Children with Disabilities Framework and develop costed proposals by April 2024. • Consultation – May-July 2024 • Finalised proposals for Ministerial decision – September 2024. 		
<p>Autism Strategy 2023-2028 – Continued implementation of the 2023-2025 Delivery Plan. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of an Independent Autism Reviewer for Northern Ireland. • Implementation of recommendations to develop a regional Autism Information Service, to be provided remotely and ‘in person.’ • Implementation of recommendations to develop and provide Adult Autism Services in a consistent way across all Trust areas. 	March 2024	Peter Toogood
<p>Complete the resettlement of the in-patient population of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Implement the closure of the hospital.</p>	June 2024	Peter Toogood

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Co-ordinate and support Departmental response to the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry.	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Implement a programme of reform within adult social care, including policy and legislative reform, in response to the Reform of Adult Social Care consultation, external system wide reports and ongoing wider systemic pressures. In 2024/25, priority actions will include: <ul data-bbox="241 826 1272 1316" style="list-style-type: none">• The development and publication of a Social Care Workforce Strategy;• Implementation of the recommendations contained in the Independent Review of Safeguarding;• Work to maximise capacity in the provision of domiciliary care and the development of a revised future model of domiciliary care;• Development of a revised Commissioning and Contracting model for care homes;• Development of a programme of support for unpaid Carers; and	March 2025	Peter Toogood

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of Standards and a regulatory framework for Supported Living. 		
<p>Developing and implementing the 24/25 Mental Health Strategy Delivery Plan, to include the following priority actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions 1&2 – Implementation of the Year 2 actions from the three-year Early Intervention and Prevention Action Plan. Action 17 – progress work to ensure the most effective mechanism/structure by which the C&V sector can use its collective experience to shape MHS implementation and support the delivery of MH services. Action 31 – progress delivery of the Regional Mental Health Service implementation plan, including establishment of the Collaborative Board and People with Lived Experience Forum. 	March 2025	Peter Toogood / Tracey McCaig
<p>Implementation of the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a Future MCA Implementation Plan 	March 2025	Peter Toogood

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement of MCA provisions relating to Acts of Restraint 		
<p>Recommence implementation of the Primary Care MDT Programme, in line with the revised plan, subject to funding being made available.</p>	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
<p>Maintaining General Medical Services (GMS) through piloting new models for GMS delivery, in partnership with GP federations and HSC Trusts, to promote stability in the service.</p>	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
<p>Maintaining General Dental Services (GDS) through reform of GDS payments/contract by redirecting existing funding from underperforming investment areas to the highest priority treatment areas, with an onus on incentivising activity.</p>	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
<p>Implementation of non-pay elements of agreements reached with TUS to end ongoing HSC Industrial Action.</p>	In line with agreed timescales	Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>Delivery of a rolling, prioritised programme of workforce reviews to inform the Department’s strategic workforce planning with an increased focus on planning by Programme of Care and integrated care pathways aligned to wider Health and Social Care services Transformation Programme. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diabetes Services (Programme of Care)• Emergency Medicine• Haematology• Medical specialties: General Medicine/Acute Medicine, Cardiology, Endocrinology, Gastroenterology, Geriatric Medicine, Genitourinary Medicine, Respiratory Medicine, Rheumatology• Microbiology, Virology and Infectious Disease• Obstetrics and Gynaecology• Palliative Care• Psychiatry and Mental Health: General Adult Psychiatry, Psychiatry	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>of Old Age, Psychiatry of Learning Disability, Forensic Psychiatry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Psychotherapy, Psychotherapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health • Surgical specialties: General surgery (including transplant, breast and gastrointestinal surgery), Cardio-thoracic surgery, ENT surgery, Neurosurgery, Ophthalmology, Paediatric surgery, Plastic surgery • Vascular Surgery 		
<p>Improving paediatric hospital, community, and palliative care services by supporting the Child Health Partnership (CHP) Programme Board in the delivery of current paediatric strategies and priority actions from CHP's ongoing work programme.</p> <p>Key tasks within 2024/5 include agreeing a programme of work for the Programme Board, which will include the development of a more seamless transition pathway from paediatrics to adult services and also to take</p>	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson / Tracey McCaig

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
forward the recommendations of the RQIA report into Paediatric General Surgery.		
<p>Improving and modernising HSC diagnostic services by addressing demand-capacity gaps across imaging and pathology services to support wider HSC service delivery and performance improvement. Key actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the Regional Medical Imaging Board, DoH will oversee completion of business case for the NI Imaging Academy (to be hosted by Belfast Trust); and • As Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the HSC Pathology Blueprint Programme, DoH will oversee completion of the final design, business case, Ministerial approval and legislation for the 	October 2024	Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
new regional HSC Special Agency for Pathology Services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HSC Pathology Special Agency Design and OBC ○ Decision 	July 2024 Dec 2024	
Improving services for people with rare diseases by overseeing implementation of NI Rare Diseases Action Plan for 2024/25 in line with UK Ministerial strategic commitments.	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Ensuring equitable access to modern genetic testing for rare diseases and cancers by continuing to develop NI genomic and molecular diagnostics services in line with UK Ministerial strategic commitments.	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Design and agree a robust methodology for an Optimum Workforce Model – an approach to Strategic workforce planning that will utilise outputs from the workforce reviews; improved workforce data and a new approach to modelling to provide a system wide view of workforce requirements and	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
investment needs across the reconfigured health and social care system.		
Improving HSC gynaecology services and waiting times by overseeing implementation of priority actions and recommendations from the Getting It Right First-Time (GIRFT) review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan and • Oversee implementation. 	March 2025 Dec 2024 March 2025	Jim Wilkinson / Tracey McCaig
Launch the Maternity Support Worker Standards for Education Programme Review.	September 2024	Maria McIlgorm
Progressing the implementation of the Ministerial approved Nursing and Midwifery Task Group recommendations including communication. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and take forward implementation plan for the refreshed delivering care policy framework. • Creation of a Nursing and Midwifery Quality Assurance Framework 	March 2025 September 2024 March 2025	Maria McIlgorm

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>for NI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of regionally agreed guidance, education, and training to support the role of the Charge Nurse / Team Lead / Lead Nurse. Program to include aspects such as: workforce / workload planning and effective rostering a key enabler in supporting safe and effective staffing. • In conjunction with Workforce Policy Directorate (WPD) and Digital Health, developing agreed data definitions across the region in relation to electronic rostering, Quality Performance Indicators to monitor effective rostering, reduce reliance on temporary staffing and helping to support safe & effective care. • Develop an action plan and implement recommendations of the review of Post Registration Nursing and Midwifery Education to agreed timetable. This will include a review of the current commission of post graduate education for Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health 	<p>March 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p>	

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>Professionals (AHPs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a nursing, midwifery and AHP strategy for population health and public health. • Developing a national career pathway for Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs for NI – so education can be commissioned to support pathway progression and meet current and future workforce requirements. • Develop and implement the career pathway for Maternity Support Workers to have access to undergraduate midwifery programme at Queen’s University Belfast. • Commissioning of two-year Advanced Practice programme for NMAHP professions within NI by Sept 2024 to support service transformation and sustainability. 	<p>March 2025</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p>	
<p>Deliver workstreams to support learning disability nursing, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a review of learning disability nursing • Development of a quality assurance framework for learning disability 	<p>June 2024</p> <p>August 2024</p>	<p>Maria McIlgorm</p>

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Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
nursing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a career pathway for learning disability nursing 	March 2025	
Develop an implementation plan for the recommendations included in the AHP workforce reviews to support current and future workforce requirements.	September 2024	Maria McIlgorm
Establish a task and finish group to consider the recommendations in the Orthotist service review.	June 2024	Maria McIlgorm/Peter Toogood
Continuing to deliver implementation of the Encompass programme in 2024/25, target dates for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BHSCT in June 2024 • Northern Trust in November 2024 	June 2024 Nov 2024	Tom Simpson
Complete DHCNI Digital Transformation and Innovation (DT&I) stakeholder engagement, including the finalisation of the relationship with Encompass (for regional transformation leadership) and the establishment of digital	September 2025	Tom Simpson

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>maturity levels. Produce the plan for accountabilities, structure, staffing, relationships by the due date, and continue to implement these functions – with complete set-up of DT&I by end of FY24/25.</p> <p>DT&I is part of the implementation of the DHCNI Operating Model 2.0 and focuses on reviewing, re-designing, and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users.</p>		
<p>Overseeing and ensuring co-ordinated approach to the implementation of major digital programmes – to build the foundational IT systems that will capture and utilise high quality and timely information across the HSC, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Ireland Picture Archiving and Communications System (NIPACS) – deliver phase 2 ‘other -ologies’ functionality in parallel to Encompass go live in BHSCT (June 24) and NHSCT (Nov 24); • Northern Ireland Laboratory Information Management System 	<p>June 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p>	<p>Tom Simpson</p>

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>(NILIMS) – deliver single integrated Laboratory system for NHSCT in parallel to Encompass (Nov 24);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Ireland Digital Identity Service (NIDIS) - Phase 2 complete, which includes replacement of NHAIS (Nov 2024); • Blood Production and Tracking Solution (BPaT) – complete design deliverables for implementation of new vein to vein blood tracking processes and information systems; • Equip programme – complete design deliverables for implementation of new back office processes and systems to support finance, procurement, logistics, HR and payroll services. <p>Microsoft End User Licensing arrangements (MSEA) – purchase strategic license deal to continue to operate (in a legally compliant way) the Microsoft technologies for SET and NIAS</p>	<p>November 2024</p> <p>March 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p> <p>May 2024</p>	
<p>Secure resources, implement management structure and grow analytics capability area for the Data Institute using anticipated slippage revenue to</p>	<p>June 2024</p>	<p>Tom Simpson</p>

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
recruit data team members		
Finalise business case for cyber security programme and resolve the lack of funding for the cyber investments in FY24/25. Deliverable here is either an approved and affordable business case or a clearly defined increased risk due to inability of the HSC to invest adequately to mitigate the growing threat of cyber-attack.	September 2024	Tom Simpson
Oversee the implementation of the new HSC Digital Services organisation through delivery of the Evolve programme. Detailed milestones to be provided following re-plan (which will be triggered if Perm Sec approves revenue requirements following submission of Evolve time criticality paper on 26/01).	March 2025	Tom Simpson
Finalise approach with PHA for maintenance and replacement of Screening systems and functionality.	December 2024	Tom Simpson
Project Management Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement project management platform ‘A-site’ for use on the 	March 2025	Chris Matthews

Strategic Objective 2 – System Improvement and understanding our system and our performance.

Reviewing, re-designing and transforming services to deliver improved access to health and social care services, a better service experience and improved outcomes for users. Improving the use of data to provide an understanding of capacity and demand, manage performance, improve services and prioritise investments.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner
Project Management and contract administration of capital projects managed by Health Estates and ALBs. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce dashboard reporting to be shared with the Departmental P3O (Projects, Programmes and Portfolio Office).		EBM/ Chief Professional Officer

Strategic Objective 3 – Safety and Quality

Providing leadership and oversight in respect of safe, quality services

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Deliver implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Neurology Inquiry and Inquiry into Hyponatraemia Related Deaths (IHRD) to agreed timescales.	December 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Continue to actively engage with the Urology Services Inquiry, including responding to requests for Permanent Secretary attendance and servicing the inquiries disclosure requirements.	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Open, Just & Culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of a regional Being Open Framework (consultation on new Framework Summer 2024);• Deliver a Redesign of the current Serious Adverse Incident procedure (consultation on new Framework Autumn 2024); and To work, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman to develop a model complaint handling procedure for HSC Trusts (likely to be finalized 25/26).	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson
Working with all relevant stakeholders including the Public Health Agency as	May 2024	Tracey McCaig/ Jim Wilkinson

Strategic Objective 3 – Safety and Quality

Providing leadership and oversight in respect of safe, quality services

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<p>lead partners, to develop an action plan to enhance compliance with the implementation, monitoring, reporting and assurances of SPPG safety and quality processes as well as other multi-agency processes where SPPG is a key stakeholder.</p> <p>Implementation of the action plan will facilitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of enhanced information systems and structures to provide greater intelligence to support oversight, analysis and triangulation of all data sources;• A better understanding and prioritisation of the key safety and quality issues impacting the HSC system• Holding provider organisations to account on the delivery of safe services which are of sufficient quality.• The HSC system embedding a culture of learning	March 2025	
Improving safety of HSC maternity and neonatal services by taking forward a number of work strands in the work of the Maternity and Neonatal Services Safety Oversight Group, including overseeing implementation of	March 2025	Jim Wilkinson / Tracey McCaig / Maria McIlgorm / Michael McBride

Strategic Objective 3 – Safety and Quality

Providing leadership and oversight in respect of safe, quality services

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
priority actions/recommendations arising from: External review midwifery-led care (Feb 2024).		

Strategic Objective 4 – People

Supporting our people post- COVID, developing and empowering them through a DoH people strategy that addresses wellbeing, leadership, skills and development.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
Sustainability – Climate Action Plan Develop a climate action literacy programme to be available to the DoH and its ALBs by Sept 2025.	September 2025	Chris Matthews
Deliver on 2024/2025 priorities for ongoing programme of social work workforce reform including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of safer staffing guidance for two programmes of care;• Reform of entry pathways into the profession;• The implementation of a further phase of HSCT social work workforce stabilisation programme to recruit the June 2024 newly qualified cohort;• Development of a framework for career, training and learning pathways for social work;• Development of guidance for best practice in supporting social workers;	March 2025 March 2025 September 2024 October 2024 March 2025 March 2025	Aine Morrison

Strategic Objective 4 – People

Supporting our people post- COVID, developing and empowering them through a DoH people strategy that addresses wellbeing, leadership, skills and development.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner EBM/ Chief Professional Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of a social care workforce strategy;• The development of a framework for career, training and learning pathways for social care;	Dec 2024 Dec 2024	
Develop capacity and capability of SPPG staff through implementation of the Ambition plan.	Monthly monitoring and final position March 2025.	Tracey McCaig

Strategic Objective 5 – Resilience

Remaining agile and ready to deal with potential future events including pandemics or health security matters.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner Executive Board Member (EBM)
Windsor Framework – to progress the necessary work to ensure full implementation of requirements as laid out in the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024.	December 2024	Michael McBride
Reviewing and replacing current health protection legislative framework to ensure routine and emerging health protection concerns can be identified early and appropriately managed. A consultation paper on policy underpinning a draft Public Health Bill to be published in the second quarter of 2024, with subsequent work progressed, timing subject to the return of the NI Executive. Introduction of a draft Public Health Bill for Assembly scrutiny.	Autumn 2024	Peter Toogood
Review and update of Emergency Planning Core Standards and aligning as appropriate with the rest of the UK. Engaging with Trusts and Agencies as appropriate to ensure effectiveness of the standards and setting out an appropriate ‘Deep Dive’ exercise as part of the annual assurance process.	March 2025	Peter Toogood

Strategic Objective 5 – Resilience

Remaining agile and ready to deal with potential future events including pandemics or health security matters.

The review to include lessons learned from the Covid response and the Manchester Arena Inquiry Recommendations.

Develop a Strategic Pandemic Resilience Framework to underpin pandemic planning across four key fronts: Health and Social Care; on an NI wide basis in partnership with all NI government Departments; on a UK-wide basis ; and with ROI.

March 2025

Peter Toogood

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance

Ensuring that appropriate direction and control is exercised in respect of good governance, finance, ALB sponsorship.

Priority Actions	Timescale	Owner Executive Board Member (EBM)
Medicines Legislation Programme:- To legislate through the NI Assembly for key proposals on the governance of medicines and controlled drugs by taking forward amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 and Misuse of Drugs Regulations (NI) 2002. Proposals include enhancing patient safety through original pack dispensing; enabling dental hygienists and dental therapists to supply and administer medicines using exemptions in order to ensure patients receive the best care in the right place; introducing a new framework for the provision of Point of Care medicines, such as personalised blood product treatments, advanced therapies using patient stem-cells, and 3D printed tablets; expanding the number of services, professionals or organisations that are able to supply naloxone without a prescription and to strengthen a UK clinical trials regulatory framework.	March 2025	Michael McBride
Health Estates Statement of Governance to ALBs	March 2025	Chris Matthews

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance

Ensuring that appropriate direction and control is exercised in respect of good governance, finance, ALB sponsorship.

Implement and review compliance with Statement of Governance as issued to ALBs. The purpose of this is to:

- Replace the superseded Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the DoH and DoF and the Local Operating Agreement(LOA) between DoF CPD Health Projects and DoH ALBs that was brought in in 2014 when Health Estates moved from DoH to DoF.
- Record updated, simplified governance arrangements.
- Clarify the role of Health Estates as a Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) and a Centre of Specialist Expertise (CoSE) within the Department of Health and with the Department's ALBs.
- Update the role of the SRO, taking into account Dear Accounting Officer letter DAO (DoF) 05/23.
- Provide an updated Project Execution Plan to be used on all major capital construction projects.
- Health Estates will organise presentation of the updated document and to ALBs assist in their understanding of the refreshed arrangements.
- The document will be instructive in updating governance

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance

Ensuring that appropriate direction and control is exercised in respect of good governance, finance, ALB sponsorship.

arrangements where required across major capital projects.		
Finance – to live within/manage the budget allocated.	March 2025	Chris Matthews
To lead the development of a programme to drive Best Value throughout the Department and its ALBs, driving increased levels of efficiency and productivity across the system to realise both cash releasing and non-cash releasing savings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the projects to be monitored under the Delivering Value Programme. • Monitor and report on progress against agreed targets. 	April 2024 March 2025	Chris Matthews
Support the improvement of public safety by developing a Fire Framework Document for NI	March 2025	Chris Matthews
Finalise policy position on Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol and start the process to bring forward legislation, if required.	March 2025	Peter Toogood
Review SPPG Governance and Oversight arrangements to ensure alignment with Department approach.	September 2024	Tracey McCaig
Improve Children’s social care services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Guidance for the Management of Waiting List/Unallocated cases in children’s services 	September 2024	Tracey McCaig

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Governance

Ensuring that appropriate direction and control is exercised in respect of good governance, finance, ALB sponsorship.

- Identify priorities for investment, or better use of existing resources to address the issue of waiting list/unallocated cases in the most effective way.

December 2024

OUR DEPARTMENT

The Department of Health (DoH) has a statutory responsibility to promote an integrated system of Health and Social Care (HSC) designed to secure improvement in:

- The physical and mental health of people in Northern Ireland;
- The prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness; and
- The social wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland.

Under the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009, the Department is required to:

- Develop policies;
- Determine priorities;
- Secure and allocate resources;
- Set standards and guidelines;
- Secure the commissioning of relevant programmes and initiatives;
- Monitor and hold to account its ALBs; and
- Promote a whole system approach.

The Department is also responsible for establishing arrangements for the efficient and effective management of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS). The Department discharges its duties both by direct Departmental action and through its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).

Working in Partnership

- The Department has 16 Arm's Length Bodies:
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)
- South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT)
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT)
- Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust (NIAS)
- Business Services Organisation (BSO)

- Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service (NIBTS)
- Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)
- Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing & Midwifery (NIPEC)
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)
- Children’s Court Guardian Agency Northern Ireland (CCGANI)
- Public Health Agency (PHA)
- Patient and Client Council (PCC)
- Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)

In addition to our ALBs, the Department relies on working collaboratively and in partnership with other NICS departments, a wide range of local government representatives, community groups and professional bodies and with the Food Standards Agency, a non-Ministerial government department with devolved policy responsibilities in Northern Ireland and access to the Assembly through the Health Minister. The Department also maintains close working relationships with 2 North-South bodies: The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPHI) and the Food Safety Promotion Board (also known as Safefood).

Resources – Finance and People

The Department’s annual budget is approximately £8billion, with 96% allocated to our 16 Arm’s Length Bodies for running costs and service delivery and 4% allocated for the running costs of the Department itself. The Department also receives an annual capital budget of approximately £400m, with the majority of this allocated to our 16 ALBs for the delivery of new major projects and strategies, IT, research and development, investment in primary care, mental health, in our emergency services and for the ongoing maintenance of the Health Estate.

The financial position is particularly challenging. Our forecast outturn in 2024-25 excluding pay was some £252m in excess of the opening budget allocation. In year adjustments have increased the 2024—25 Resource DEL Budget to £8.5bn and while this should enable DoH to live within budget, it means that a full pay offer cannot be made to staff. Despite the positive news about additional funding being

made available to the Executive in in the 2025-26 budget, it is still likely Health will be facing a significant funding gap as a result of both inflationary pressures and increased demand. Therefore, our expectation is that the future funding position won't significantly improve, and it will be extremely challenging to secure funding for any new activity. As a result, we will need to focus on making the best use of the resources we already have through greater levels of efficiency and productivity.

For capital, the 2024/25 allocation was **£417m**, including **£81m** for ring fenced flagship projects, although this has reduced by **£48m** due to slippage in the Mother and Children's project and **£336m** for the non-ring fenced capital programme. This allocation did not meet the capital requirements, and the department has approximately **£61m** of in-year capital pressures which remain unfunded. There is a risk that our forecast outturn in 2024-25 will breach the budget allocation if submitted capital bids are not funded and normal patterns of slippage in the last quarter do not materialise this year.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff	
Department	SPPG formally HSCB
578	447

With closure of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) on 31 March 2022 the former HSCB staff now work as part of DoH Strategic Planning and Performance and Chief Digital Information Officer Groups. These staff are not Civil Servants. They remain HSC employees hosted via the Business Services Organisation (BSO).

Departmental Board

The Departmental Board supports the Minister and Permanent Secretary, as Accounting Officer, in directing the business of the Department as effectively as possible to achieve objectives and priorities. Within the overall policies and priorities established by the Minister, and subject to his approval, the remit of the Board is to:

- set the Department's standards and values;
- agree the Department's strategic aims and objectives as set out in the Departmental Business Plan;

- oversee sound financial management and corporate governance of the Department in the context of the Departmental Business Plan;
- oversee the allocation and monitoring of the Department's financial and human resources to achieve aims and objectives set out in the Departmental Business Plan;
- monitor and steer the Department towards the achievement of agreed performance objectives as set out in the Departmental Business Plan;
- scrutinise the governance and performance of ALB's; and
- set the Department's 'risk appetite' and ensure appropriate risk management procedures are in place

The Departmental Board usually meets six times per year and comprises the following Members:

Peter May	Permanent Secretary (Chair)
Tracey McCaig	Chief Operating Officer, Strategic Planning & Performance Group
Andrew Magowan	Independent Non- Executive Board Member
Chris Matthews	Deputy Secretary, Resource and Corporate Management Group
Michael McBride	Chief Medical Officer
Jim McCooe	Independent Non- Executive Board Member
Peter Toogood	Deputy Secretary, Social Care and Public Health Policy Group
Tom Simpson	Chief Digital Information Officer
Jim Wilkinson	Deputy Secretary, Healthcare Policy Group
Brigitte Worth	Director of Finance

OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY – STAY CONNECTED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Department has a legal commitment to conform to the ICO's model publication scheme. However, in addition, we aim to make available as much information as possible in respect of the work that underpins our strategic objectives, good governance and wider business.

See our website - www.health-ni.gov.uk

Contacts

Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 028 9052 0500

Email: webmaster@health-ni.gov.uk

The above email address is for non-emergency queries only relating to the work of the Department of Health.