

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Health, Social Services and Public Safety

### Northern Health and Social Care Trust

*Published on Monday 10 December 2012*

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** I wish to make a Statement to the Assembly regarding the appointment of a Turnaround and Support Team to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Trust has faced significant challenges since its establishment in April 2007. In spite of support measures which have been put in place previously to assist the Trust, and the actions which have been taken, there needs to be further progress in the improvement of patient experience and care in the Northern area. There are no signs of sufficient improvement in waiting times at Emergency Departments (EDs) in spite of the earlier Hinds and Rutter Reviews of the Trust. The numbers of patients waiting over 12 hours at Emergency Departments have been unacceptably high throughout the year, and rising lately, and significant numbers of patients are waiting longer than 4 hours at the EDs.

The Trust Chief Executive has written to my Department to ask for further support in addressing these issues. Consequently, a small Turnaround and Support Team is being asked to complete a strategic overview to establish what changes and support might be required to accelerate progress. There will be a focus in particular on the challenges in relation to the Trust's ability to deliver on the services commissioned, including reducing waiting times in relation to unscheduled care. The Team will work alongside the support already being provided by the Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency. The Team will provide an assessment of the changes required to improve performance and

to support the management of the Trust in the delivery of services.

I acknowledge fully the professionalism and commitment of the Trust management and the staff in addressing the challenges. Delivery of safe and effective quality services to all of our patients and clients, across all service areas, must be the over-riding priority, and it is for that reason that I have taken the decision to appoint an external expert team to support the Trust to help turn around performance in critical areas. It is clear that clinicians must be at the heart of the improvement process.

It is essential that the concerns are explicitly and fully addressed. I believe the external team will provide the comprehensive overview on the capacity and capability needed for that to happen. Sue Page, Chief Executive of NHS Cumbria, has agreed to lead the team. Details of other members and the terms of reference for the team will be announced shortly.