

Written Ministerial Statement

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Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

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Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make a statement to the Assembly regarding the position of Mr Jim Stewart, the Chair of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. I wish to advise the Assembly that I have terminated Mr Stewart's appointment with immediate effect.

Against a background of very serious and unresolved issues with the performance of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on emergency care, I need to be sure that the leadership team are all working together to resolve the problem. Whatever may or may not have been said before Monday 10 December, it was wholly inappropriate for Mr Stewart to speak publicly as he did on Monday. His statement was very damaging to the reputation of the Trust and confirmed that Mr Stewart does not share my view that much better performance against the 12-hour standard for A&E Departments is both possible and essential in the short term. I have brought in the Turn Around and Support Team to help ensure that the required improvement is secured.

I firmly believe that public service values must be at the core of Health and Social Care. Non executive members who are appointed to the boards of HSC bodies are placed in positions of responsibility, and as such, must demonstrate the highest standards of corporate and personal conduct based on recognition that patients and clients always come first. Regrettably, in addition to a number of performance issues at the Northern HSC Trust, upon which the Chair was recently challenged by my Department, Mr Stewart fell short of these high standards in recent days. I have therefore taken all factors

into account and decided that in the interests of the organisation that his position as Chair should be terminated.

My primary concern is and always will be the need for our Health and Social Care Trusts to provide safe and effective services for the patients and clients they serve. I want to say that I fully recognise the efforts, professionalism and dedication of all staff working at the Northern HSC Trust.

My Department will now move to fill the vacancy as soon as possible. Until a substantive Chair is appointed, the existing Board at the Trust will elect an interim chair from its Non Executive Directors.