

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department of Health

### MINISTERIAL WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE ASSEMBLY HSC RESET PLAN

*Published at 4.30pm on Wednesday 9 July 2025*

**Mr Nesbitt (The Minister of Health):** I am pleased to inform the Assembly that I am today publishing a Health and Social Care reset plan, dealing with both opportunities for positive change and severe budgetary pressures.

This document builds on the central themes in the three-year strategic plan which I published in December 2024: Stabilisation, Reform and Delivery.

The reset plan commits to establishing a neighbourhood centred system of health and social care, bringing more services as close as possible to people's front doors. It is published on my Department's website.

The document also sets out measures to counter unprecedented financial pressures, with the projected £600m gap between available funding and the cost of maintaining existing services this year.

In summary, it is focused on 7 key areas:

- Prevention and seeing the citizen as an asset in that task;
- Investing in Primary Care, Community Care and Social Care; delivering mental, physical and social healthcare in a joined up way;
- Being as effective and efficient as we can with the resources we have;
- Adopting a whole systems approach; to optimise the whole of NI's health and care workforce and estate, and to reduce the level of unwarranted clinical variation;
- Maximising digital investment and the strategic use of data;
- Exploiting opportunities for research, supporting early adoption of new medical procedures and treatments; with the opportunity to attract the inward investment this brings; and
- Creating the system and structure that supports collaborative working and decision making.

I would emphasise to Members that this is a defining and watershed year for our health service. We have to deliver on reform and waiting list investment, while at the same time securing efficiencies and savings on a scale not seen before. There are, therefore, both challenges and opportunities of huge significance.

The reform agenda must have at its heart concrete progress on neighbourhood care. This has been a long-term objective but meaningful delivery is urgently required, including a new model of primary care and early intervention.

This neighbourhood approach will help tackle health inequalities, and support individuals to look after their own health and well-being, while recognising that health interventions are only one element to improving well-being. Of equal importance are employment, housing, education and other important services delivered across Government.

The reset plan also sets out what it calls the "most ambitious efficiency programme" in the history of NI's Health and Social Care system. It is designed to achieve £300m in savings in 2025/26, in addition to the £200m delivered in 2024/25.

The programme will involve a suite of actions focused on improving Trust financial controls, reducing locum and agency costs, increasing workforce availability through absence reduction, removing unwarranted variation in clinical care and procurement, optimising medicines spend, reducing central

budgets and administrative costs and maximising the income the HSC can attract through research and innovation.

In addition, the reset plan includes new structures to enable our Trusts to take shared decisions on a “whole system” basis.

A new approach to Systems Financial Management is also being introduced, with a focus on reducing the budget deficit and driving efficiencies in every area of the system, at every level. This is being progressed through a Systems Management Oversight Group led by my Permanent Secretary Mike Farrar, to develop and drive forward a work programme that will deliver budget savings today and build financial sustainability for the future.

Alongside this efficiency focus, support from the Executive will undoubtedly still be required to deliver on the reform agenda and manage the remaining funding pressures for the year.

Financial stability is essential to delivering on the Programme for Government commitment on hospital waiting lists. My Department’s investment plans on waiting lists were detailed in an Implementation and Funding Plan published in May. <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/elective-care-framework-restart-recovery-and-redesign>

I can also update Members on my Department’s ongoing oversight and support process for Belfast HSC Trust. I informed the Assembly last month of actions under the Department’s Support and Intervention Framework (SIF). Following the independent review of the Trust’s cardiac surgery unit, I escalated the SIF intervention for Belfast Trust to Level 5, the highest level.

I told Members last month that an expert on clinical teamwork and governance would be joining my Department’s oversight team on Belfast Trust. I am pleased to confirm that Dr Jennifer Hill, an experienced consultant physician and clinical leader, has agreed to take on this role.

Born and educated in Northern Ireland, Dr Hill recently concluded five years in post as Chief Medical Officer (Operations) at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, one of the largest integrated healthcare trusts in England. Her work in Belfast Trust will include providing independent assessment and support to the Accountability and Assurance Group on related actions and progress demonstrated for both Cardiac Surgery and the Trust corporately.