Written Ministerial Statement

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Department of Health

DAISY HILL HOSPITAL (DHH) INPATIENT MATERNITY SERVICES

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Mr Butler (The Minister of Health): As Members will be aware the Southern Trust Board have confirmed that births and inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital will temporarily consolidate at Craigavon Area Hospital from 23 November 2026, while efforts continue to recruit consultant obstetricians and secure the workforce required to sustain services locally.

The decision was taken at a public Trust Board meeting yesterday following careful consideration of the current workforce challenges, the options available to maintain local services, and the contingency arrangements necessary to ensure the continued delivery of safe maternity care.

Having considered the available evidence and professional advice, the Trust Board concluded that they had no choice but to temporarily consolidate births and inpatient maternity services at Craigavon Area Hospital from Monday 23 November 2026 to protect the safety of women and babies and maintain high-quality care during this period of workforce pressure.

The service has been under significant workforce pressure following the retirement and resignation of several consultant obstetricians. Despite sustained national and international recruitment efforts, the Trust has been unable to fill the vacancies, reflecting a wider shortage across Northern Ireland and the UK. Five additional permanent consultants are required to provide a safe and sustainable service at Daisy Hill Hospital.

While I deeply regret this position, the overriding priority has to be the safety of women and babies, and ensuring that every woman has access to safe, responsive maternity care. The temporary arrangements will remain under regular review as the Trust continues its efforts to recruit consultant obstetricians and restore services at Daisy Hill Hospital as soon as it is safe and sustainable to do so. My Departmental officials will continue to support the Trust and oversee both the temporary arrangement and the drive to re-establish the Daisy Hill Service.

I appreciate the depth of public support for local maternity services and recognise how important they are to women, families and the wider community and recognise the distress that this announcement will cause. It is my intention that inpatient maternity services will be restored onto the Daisy Hill Hospital site as soon as it is safe to do so. I also understand the concerns of staff impacted and I expect the Trust to listen to and respond to their concerns.

In closing I would reiterate the significant contribution provided by Daisy Hill staff in providing health and social care to its local population and reiterate the important role it plays within the HSC hospital network. As Minister I remain committed to the resumption of services in Daisy Hill Hospital.