



Western Health  
and Social Care Trust

## Public Representatives Briefing

Update on Emergency General Surgery Services at South West Acute Hospital

# Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Thursday 17 November 2022



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# Agenda for today's Briefing

- **Introduction** from Chief Executive, Neil Guckian
- **Presentation Update on Emergency General Surgical Services**
  - Geraldine McKay, Director of Acute Services
- **Department of Health**
  - Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary
  - Prof Mark Taylor
  - Dr Tomas Adell
- **Overview**

## What is General Surgery?

- **General Surgery** is a wide-ranging surgical specialty that focuses on diseases of the alimentary (digestive) tract. Over the years more sub-specialism has developed across general surgery for example: colorectal surgery, upper and lower gastrointestinal surgery.
- **Emergency general surgery** relates to the treatment of patients presenting with acute abdominal pain, infections, bleeding, trauma. In children, the most frequently performed emergency surgeries are appendicectomy, testicular conditions.
- **Elective general surgery** means surgery that is planned in advance, as opposed to emergency or unplanned treatment.



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# General Surgical Services SWAH

- **Context**

- Funded 6.5 Consultants
- Funded 6 Middle Grades
- FY1/ FY2 / ST Doctors

## **21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 – CE / Director meeting requested by Clinical Lead SWAH GS**

- Outlined issues regarding provision of a compliant rota
- Issues with retaining locum staff with appropriate skills / competence to provide a safe service
- Recruitment June 18 yielded no surgical applicant with endoscopy skills

## **12<sup>th</sup> August 2020 – escalation to JJ DOH – rota unsafe and not sustainable**

- EA submitted by Dr Kilgallen to HSCB / DOH – 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020
- DOH meeting with Permanent Secretary and Trust Officers
- Regional summit 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020 for Regional solution to support SWAH emergency GS rota
- Current consultant rota covered until 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022







## Non elective General Surgery Admissions

**Ave GS admissions (2017/18 – June 22)**

Non elective patients	16 Years & Above	Under 16 Years	Total
Annual average 17/18-june 2022	1573	178	1752
Per Day	4.3	0.5	4.8

**Ave GS admissions (2019/20 – pre-pandemic baseline year)**

Non elective patients	16 Years & Above	Under 16 Years	Total
19/20			
Per Day	4.9	0.5	5.4



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## Current position

- The current position is that out of the 6.5 permanent consultant General Surgeon posts required to deliver the general surgery service in SWAH, there are 3 substantive consultants currently in post. The latest position for those 3 post holders is set out below:
  - A resignation received on Monday 3 October 2022 from one substantive consultant who will leave the Trust on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022
  - Notice of a period of absence from another substantive consultant who, following a risk assessment, can work only on a green pathway from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022
  - A resignation received on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 from a further substantive consultant who will leave the Trust on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023. This was notified to Department of Health via an update to the early alert (EA 22-21) 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022
  - A **temporary emergency unplanned change** is required as emergency general surgery admissions to SWAH will need to temporarily cease from 4<sup>th</sup> December 2022.



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## Patient pathways and Bypass Protocols

- **Trauma patients:** A patient pathway is agreed which will see some trauma patients being managed in SWAH. Specific criteria have been agreed with the regional trauma network, NIAS and SWAH Emergency Dept. colleagues and will continue to be reassessed on a weekly basis with NIAS.
- Travel times to Sligo University Hospital can be less, depending on where a trauma call originates for NIAS. Initial discussions have taken place and final arrangements can now be progressed given that SWAH criteria have now been agreed for management of trauma patients.
- SWAH Emergency Department Doctors will have the option to refer to a Middle Grade Surgical Doctor on site between the hours of 09:00- 17:00, Monday- Friday. The Trust will continue to develop ambulatory surgical services alongside its contingency arrangements.
- **Abdominal Pain:** This pathway will ensure that patients who self-present to the ED department will continue to be assessed and managed with inter-hospital transfer as required. Some patients who present to NIAS with abdominal pain will be bypassed to Altnagelvin or Craigavon Hospital based on agreed criteria.
- **Upper GI Bleeding:** Patients with active upper GI bleeding will be bypassed to Altnagelvin Hospital or to Craigavon Hospital.



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## Patient Pathways and Bypass Protocols

- **Children under 5 years and under with a surgical emergency:** These patients will also be bypassed to Altnagelvin Hospital, Southern Trust or Sick Children's in Belfast Trust depending on their presentation.
- **Children with a head injury:** These patients will be admitted to SWAH and managed on an inpatient basis by the Paediatric team at SWAH.
- **Colorectal surgery:** All patients requiring colorectal surgery during the period of the temporary change to services will have their surgery on the Altnagelvin site.
- **GP Referrals:** Patients who have been assessed by a GP and would normally have been referred to a general surgical team at SWAH should refer to Altnagelvin or Craigavon. Presentations include appendicitis, cholecystitis and abdominal pain with vomiting and abdominal distension who are not critically unwell



## Services NOT affected

- SWAH status as an Acute Hospital WILL NOT change
- Obstetric and gynaecology service are not affected
- Acute Medical / Care of Elderly specialties / services are not affected
- Out patient services including general surgery OP are not affected
- Elective surgery is not affected
- Critical Care / ICU are not affected
- Emergency Department will continue to receive and treat more that 90% of current attendances
- Paediatrics and Cardiology



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## Approval and Consultation

- DoH Circular “Change or Withdrawal of Services” is engaged
- Specifies that proposals which are major and/or controversial require Departmental approval, and that this should be sought through SPPG/PHA
- Provides for situations when temporary changes are necessary “to protect public health and/or safety”
- Foresees situations when consultation will take place following an event of a temporary change
- Consultation document and proposed consultation approach in preparation
- Co-ordinated approach to consultation being explored with other Trusts
- DLS engaged as legal challenge is anticipated

## Trust Mitigating Actions

- **Engagement with Royal College Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**
  - 3 recommendations which Trust has implemented in full
- **Engagement with Emergency and Medical Clinicians on site re support required**
  - Progression and development of SWAH as an Elective Overnight Stay Centre
- Trust has received a letter of Policy intent (DOH 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022) that SWAH will be an Elective Overnight Stay Centre



## Next Steps

- Robust Communication Plan to:
  - Staff,
  - Media,
  - Public Representatives and
  - population of Fermanagh and West Tyrone
- Immediate preparation to progress DOH policy intent that SWAH will be a Regional Elective Overnight Stay Centre (DOH Letter 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022)



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## Further Comments and overview

- **Department of Health**
  - Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary
  - Prof Mark Taylor
  - Dr Tomas Adell
  
- **Summary and Overview**

Note: Statement and information will be issued to Elected Representatives following today's briefing.

