

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

To: Mr. Neil Guckian, Chief Executive, Western Health and Social Care Trust  
Cc: Dr. Tom Frawley, Chairman, Western Health and Social Care Trust

**Open Letter: Meeting with WHSCT on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**

Dear Neil,

We acknowledge receipt of your latest letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

From your comments it is clear that our request for the meeting to proceed on the agenda as set out in our original letter of 28<sup>th</sup> July, including live streaming and the chairing by the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Chairperson, has been declined by you and your colleagues. This stance is genuinely disappointing – as were your comments made this week to Derry City & Strabane Council that our community's concerns are regarded by yourself as "small beer"

It is deeply regrettable that the trust between the Western Trust and our community is non-existent. SOAS fundamentally disagrees with, and challenges, your assertions that current clinical pathways and transfers between SWAH and Altnagelvin are functioning appropriately. [Recent emergency department statistics](#) reveal significant failures in Altnagelvin ED, with 'worst waiters' sitting for over 100 hours.

The ongoing corridor care and overcrowding crisis – well-documented by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine as [cruel and undignified](#) – is a stark reality faced daily by patients, as [highlighted](#) by the recent ordeal of cancer patient Ernie Irvine who endured 50 hours on the floor in Altnagelvin ED. The Western Trust itself admits to extreme pressures, while the Health Minister acknowledges that a new emergency department is unaffordable.

For almost three years, the Western Trust has failed in its statutory duty to meaningfully involve local people in discussions on SWAH's future. This is a legal obligation under the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009, requiring involvement and consultation with the Patient Client Council, service users, and carers. We note that the Trust SDG (Strategic Development Group) hasn't [published any meeting minutes](#) in nearly a year.

Save Our Acute Services initiated dialogue with the Trust in our written questions on 27<sup>th</sup> July last. We requested information on the Vision Plan for SWAH recommended by the Minister that was to quickly restore confidence in the Trust. Your refusal to meet on this agreed focused agenda, proposal to exclude a local independent chair, and block live streaming is regrettable but unsurprising given the tone and approach you have taken.

Over the last three years, our campaign has built unprecedented community support, received 100,000 statements of support and secured backing from virtually all community

groups and both district councils. Our Roadmap for sustainable restoration of emergency surgery at SWAH remains the authoritative community-supported reference document.

Despite ongoing willingness from SOAS to engage constructively, we hold no confidence in the Trust's interest or ambition for SWAH. Your repeated shifting of the goalposts and uncompromising tone only reinforce our doubts.

Our community deserves a Trust Board committed to genuine partnership, openness, accountability, and responsiveness to public and staff concerns. Another year of inaction is unacceptable. SOAS intends to escalate its campaign in the New Year to push for urgent, meaningful progress.

While this opportunity to engage has passed, SOAS reiterates it remains open to meeting on a focused agenda with an independent chair, at an appropriate location, and in a format ensuring openness and accountability.

We will inform the Council that the Chamber is no longer required for the meeting.

Yours sincerely

*Helen Hamill (secretary)*

SOAS Committee