

# Press release: Antrim Area Hospital visit

Earlier this morning the Secretary of State, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, visited Antrim Area hospital to see at first hand the issues and challenges that our current Health Service professionals face on a daily basis, and how the current political instability and lack of devolved institutions in Northern Ireland continues to add further burdens to an already pressurised health system.

The Northern Health Trust, of which Antrim Area Hospital is one of the major hospitals provides services for a population of approximately 471,000 – the largest resident population in Northern Ireland. Over recent months, the Trust have launched a reform and modernisation of the services they provide with a strong emphasis on maximising the range and sustainability of local services as well as ensuring integrated, and locality based community services delivered in partnership to allow and support people to live independently and avoid hospitalisation as far as possible.

Speaking after his visit, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I was absolutely delighted to be able to visit Antrim Area Hospital and witness the truly remarkable work that is delivered by the doctors, nurses and support health care professionals on a daily basis. They provide a modernised approach to healthcare, ensuring local people can avail of a range of services close to their home locality. But the lack of devolved institutions provide uncertainty for those providing vital front line services.

Public services will suffer if there continues to be political stalemate. Budgets need to be established in order to provide much needed services for the public. That is why I am urging the political parties to continue to talk and find a way through the outstanding issues. It remains important that an agreement is reached which enables the restoration of devolved government – this is absolutely critical for Northern Ireland and its people.

Whilst I recognise some of the issues are difficult, they are not insurmountable. The window in which this can happen is narrow, but it is my hope that the politicians will do all in their power to help to bring about the resumption of secure devolved government, an objective supported by the majority of the people in Northern Ireland, is our shared aim.

We owe it to the entire community to deliver the best outcome for Northern Ireland – strong devolved government with locally accountable Ministers.