

Question:

1. An evaluation of the Overarching Winter Preparedness Plan for 2025/26; and
2. Copy of the Overarching Winter Preparedness Plan 25/26 and 26/27 or where to access the documents.

Response:

In response to question 1.

A paper is attached at separately at **Appendix A*** which provides an evaluation of the health and social care system's performance over the period of winter 2025/26, the challenges faced, action taken and lessons learned which informed the approach for 2026/27 winter preparedness. This paper was provided to the Health Committee in April 2026.

In response to question 2.

A copy of the Winter Preparedness Plan for 25/26 is in the public domain and can be accessed at the following link: [Overarching Winter Preparedness Plan 2025/26 | Department of Health](#)

Taking into account the learning from winter 2025/26; in July of this year, the Department issued Winter Surge Planning Guidance to the Health and Social Care system. This guidance sets out the Minister's priorities and expectations ahead of winter 2026/27. A copy of this guidance is enclosed (separately at **Appendix B***).

Operational plans to deal with the additional pressures brought about by winter for are the responsibility of each Health and Social Care Trust/organisation. The Winter Surge Planning Guidance issued by the Department required Trusts to produce operational delivery plans for winter 2026/27 in response to the guidance. These Plans are available on the respective organisation's websites as below.

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust:

<https://belfasttrust.my.canva.site/winter-surge-plan-26-27>

South-Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

https://setrust.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/SEHSCT-Winter-Surge-Plan_public-document_18.09.26-FINAL.pdf

Southern Health & Social Care Trust

<https://southerntrust.hscni.net/news/winter-updates/>

Northern Health & Social Care Trust

<https://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/our-trust/corporate-plans/northern-health-and-social-care-trust-winter-plan-2026-2027/>

Western Health & Social Care Trust
<https://westerntrust.hscni.net/winter-plan-2026-27/>

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
<https://nias.hscni.net/nias-launches-winter-plan-for-2026-27/>

Public Health Agency
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/draft-pha-winter-surge-plan-202627>

Strategic Planning and Performance Group
<https://online.hscni.net/winter-surge-planning-2026-27/>

You have the right to request a formal review by the Department within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to do so, please write FAO Internal Reviewer (foi@health-ni.gov.uk), Room A3.5a, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

* If you would like to request a copy of attachments related to this response, please contact FOI@health-ni.gov.uk

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