To mark the launch of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global hand hygiene initiative, SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands, the Southern Trust is urging staff, patients and visitors to practice good hand hygiene.

Hand hygiene is a critical factor in reducing health care associated infections and this initiative has been developed to support health care workers to improve hand hygiene and stop the spread of infection. The current global outbreak of influenza A (H1N1) is an important reminder that good hand hygiene is vital. Taking the simple steps of hand hygiene at the right time in the right place and the right way can contribute to reducing the level of health care-associated infections world wide. 4,761 health care facilities from 114 countries across the world are taking part in the campaign.

To mark the launch of the WHO campaign on Tuesday 5 May, the Southern Trust hosted hand hygiene events at Craigavon Area, Daisy Hill and Armagh Community hospitals to raise awareness of how staff, patients and visitors can help prevent the spread of infection. The Trust’s Infection Control Team invited patients, staff and visitors to test how well they washed their hands by placing them in an ultra-violet light box.

Trudy Reid, Southern Trust's Lead Infection Control Nurse said: “This global challenge ties in with the Trust’s existing Clean Hands Safe Hands campaign in its two acute hospitals, Daisy Hill and Craigavon Area. Simple hand hygiene has a significant role to play in controlling the spread of infection in hospitals. We continue to encourage patients, staff and visitors to wash their hands regularly and thoroughly or use the hand rub at the hand hygiene points that are clearly marked throughout our facilities.”

The WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care and a revised suite of hand hygiene tools are available from www.who.int/gpsc/en/
Celebrating Foster Carers

To mark Foster Care Fortnight, Foster Carers along with staff from the Southern Trust and Regional Fostering Service recently attended a special celebration event hosted by Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.

Brian Dornan, Director of Children and Young People, Southern Trust paid tribute to the 291 foster carers within the Southern Trust area who offer a loving, safe and stable family life to foster children, saying: “I would like to thank each and every one of you, both on behalf of the Trust and on a personal level, for your valuable contribution to the children you look after”. Mr Dornan acknowledged the achievements in the recruitment and training of Foster Carers and in particular the support from the Regional Recruitment and Training Team. He also congratulated Sharon Galway (a Foster Carer) for being the first person in Northern Ireland to complete the online training in BTEC Level 3 Advanced Skills in Fostering provided by Akamas.

Mr Dornan went on to congratulate John and Mary McGrane from Keady who have been named as Foster Carers of the Year by leading charity the Fostering Network. They have fostered 25 children over the past decade. He said: “I’m really delighted that John and Mary’s invaluable work as foster carers has been recognised with this award. They have developed their role as foster carers over the past 10 years and have used their strengths and skills to work with young people with a range of complex needs.” John McGrane said: “We couldn’t believe it when we heard we had won, we were just so surprised. To be named Foster Carers of the Year is such an honour, we really are delighted. Fostering means so much to us, it really is such a rewarding job.”

The Fostering Service in the Southern Trust would like to congratulate Aoife South, aged 6 from Kilbroney Integrated Primary School, Rostrevor and Katie McKenna aged 9 from Bridge Integrated Primary School, Banbridge in winning the recent fostering colouring in competition.

The Best Way

Staff in the anaesthetics directorate are supporting The Best Way charity cycle event on 14 June – a 40 mile route from Larne to Portadown. This is in aid of cancer charities (Marie Curie and Cancer Research) and in memory of Andrew Best who died from skin cancer last year. Andrew was the son of Maureen Best who was the ICU administrator in Craigavon for many years and is well known to many staff around the hospital. Anaesthetist Darrell Lowry is already in training for the event, so if you would like to support him go to the website: www.thebestway.org.uk. Sponsorship can be made through Just Giving on this website or alternatively there is a sponsorship form on the ICU noticeboard.
Research and Development Strategy launched

Chief Executive, Colm Donaghy has launched the Trust’s Research and Development Strategy. Acknowledging the importance of having a skilled workforce with a strong history and involvement in research, Mr Donaghy said the aim of the Strategy was to support all staff who wished to undertake clinical and social care research. “We can improve the health and well being of patients and clients by increasing the understanding of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease,” said Mr Donaghy. As well as the direct benefits of providing new treatments or interventions and increasing the quality of care provided, research encourages staff to identify service improvements and can improve recruitment and retention of high quality staff.

Developments in Learning Disability

Sandra Wylie has been appointed as Epilepsy Nurse Specialist for adults with a learning disability. She will facilitate a local provision of care to enable service users to gain access to appropriate services to meet their needs. Sandra will provide advice, support and training to service users, carers and professional healthcare staff on the treatment and management of epilepsy, and the administration of rescue medication.

Healthcare Facilitators Marie Loughran and Brea Crothers will liaise between Adult Learning Disability Teams and GP practices in order for people with a learning disability to access primary health care services. The facilitators also have an educational role in ensuring that primary health care staff are aware of the particular health care needs of patients with a learning disability. The Trust is the first health authority in Northern Ireland to make such appointments.

Bryce McMurray, the Trust’s Assistant Director of Learning Disability Services, says: “The appointment of Sandra, Marie and Brea will strengthen services across the Trust. Adults with a learning disability are the largest group of people with epilepsy and are more likely to have multiple seizure types, and have chronic and severe conditions requiring more than one type of drug. They also have a higher incidence of physical and mental health problems than the rest of the population but tend to access health care services less frequently than those without a learning disability.”

Breastfeeding Awareness Week

To mark Breastfeeding Awareness week (10-16 May 2009), the Southern Trust organised a number of information events throughout all localities. National Breastfeeding Awareness week is a nationwide annual event that has taken place since 1993. The week aims to highlight breastfeeding as the healthiest feeding option for babies and mothers. This year’s theme was ‘encouraging young mothers to breastfeed’.

In Armagh and Dungannon there were information sessions at all GP and midwife led antenatal clinics and information stands at South Tyrone and Armagh Community hospitals. Health Visitors and Midwives also joined forces with Uplift breastfeeding counsellors to host a pampering day for breastfeeding mothers. Uplift also launched a billboard campaign throughout the area. In the Craigavon and Banbridge locality, Banbridge Community Midwives organised a coffee morning for breastfeeding mothers at Banbridge Civic Centre. The event gave breastfeeding mums the chance to speak to each other and get advice and support from community midwives.

A range of information and posters were on display at Craigavon Area Hospital and advice was at hand from the Parentcraft Team. In Newry and Mourne, the Trust teamed up with South Armagh Women and Family Health Initiative to offer advice from an information stand at Daisy Hill Hospital throughout the week. The Women and Family Health initiative provides lay breastfeeding support workers for the hospital.

A Celebrating breastfeeding awareness week at a coffee morning in Banbridge are Community Midwife Yvonne Henning with local mums and their babies.
The Southern Trust is one of the largest providers of home care services says report

The Southern Trust is the second largest provider of care services to people at home (domiciliary care), in Northern Ireland, according to a recent report by The Department of Health. The report states that the Southern Trust has 4,685 people receiving care services at home, this includes: home helps (practical and personal care); respite and day care.

There are many types of domiciliary care to support people who may need regular care, short-term care after being in hospital, or perhaps have an illness or disability that means they need help occasionally. Domiciliary Care can help people with personal care and essential household tasks that help them to stay at home and be as independent as possible. Domiciliary care services are provided by the Trust's own domiciliary care workers and also via independent providers, who are commissioned by the Trust to deliver domiciliary care in this region.

The Southern Trust is also the second largest Trust in terms of the total number of people (1,603) receiving more ‘intensive’ care services at home (i.e. people receiving 10 or more hours and 6 or more visits during the survey week). The survey was completed by each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts between October 2008 and January 2009. All publications are available online at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm

Releasing time to care - project success for Ward 1 South

Ward 1 South at Craigavon Area Hospital has been taking part in the Trust’s ‘Releasing Time to Care’ project, looking at how to improve the patient experience on a busy medical ward. The 1 South team, led by ward manager Sharon Kennedy, used a variety of methods to look at how their ward worked, and the impact that had on time available for direct patient care. Assessment methods used included:

- An activity follow - a member of the nursing team was observed during a 12 hour shift
- A waste walk - photographs and videos were taken which highlighted lack of space and overstock of ward items. They also highlighted the high level of ‘human traffic’ around the ward.
- A spaghetti diagram to plot staff movements around the ward. This highlighted the need to organise ward stock more efficiently.

Staff have drawn up an action plan which, when implemented, will allow staff to spend more time in direct patient care and enhance a culture where staff feel valued.

Patients satisfied with cross border GP Out of Hours services

A cross border scheme giving people access to urgent GP Out of Hours services on the opposite side of the border, is now being used by patients on a regular basis, according to a report by the Centre for Cross Border Studies. This scheme allows people living in border areas of South Armagh to avail of GP Out of Hours services in the North East Doctor on Call (NEDoC) Out of Hours centre in Castleblayney, County Monaghan.

The scheme which was set up in 2007 is running in two geographical regions: South Armagh/Monaghan and Donegal/Derry. Both schemes were initially facilitated by the cross border health services partnership, Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) with funding from the European Union INTERREG IIIA programme. The CAWT partnership is comprised of the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Southern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland.

Local people have expressed appreciation for the new service "It is a very handy service and you are seen very quick and there is very little travel time which is good when you have a sick child" says one local lady. Users of the cross border service consistently highlighted the benefits to them in terms of convenience and reduced journey time. Some patients, particularly parents of young children mentioned this reassurance of being able to access the doctor closest to where they live, irrespective of the border, in an emergency situation. The schemes were evaluated by the Centre for Cross Border Studies who recommend that they are maintained with a view to putting in place longer term arrangements for their continuance and their possible expansion along the border.

The cross border GP Out of Hours schemes are under review by the DHSSPS, the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive to determine their longer term viability. Copies of the Centre for Cross Border Studies evaluation report can be downloaded directly from the CAWT website at www.cawt.com.

Key Events in June 2009

- Launch of the Southern Area Online Walking Group Directory - 24 June Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Oxford Island
- Launch of Staff Excellence Awards