Health Minister Michael McGimpsey has welcomed the opening of a new state of the art theatre at Craigavon Area Hospital.

The theatre - which features a number of firsts for theatre design and construction in the UK - is a replacement for the hospital's existing Theatre 5, which will now be used as a dedicated emergency endoscopy facility.

Health Minister, Mr McGimpsey, said: “This is an excellent new facility, one which will bring significant benefits to patients and staff. The innovative design and finish of the theatre make it one of the most modern in the UK and it is a great example of the investment in health service modernisation in Northern Ireland.”

This new theatre build represents an investment of around £2m and the project has been completed in under a year. The new development includes the theatre, a scrub area, preparation room, anaesthetic room along with utility and storage space.

Acting Director of Acute Services at the Southern Health and Social Services Trust, Joy Youart, said: “Our patients will benefit from access to an excellent new theatre, which has the highest standards of infection control, and the latest advances in technology.”

She added “It is another important investment for our patients, and is part of our commitment to continuous development of acute hospital care in this area.”

Trust Chair, Anne Balmer, said: “This is another example of how we are working to improve and enhance services in the Southern area and I pay tribute to all of the staff involved in developing this excellent new facility.”

Colm Donaghy, Chief Executive of the Southern Trust with Theatre staff; Ann Courtney, Sister, Wendy Stothers, Sister, Cathy Murray, Sister, Orlagh Marner, Staff Nurse, Kathleen McKeown, Nursing Auxiliary and Ruth Greer, Nursing Auxiliary.
Three Trust nurses have won awards at the Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards. Stroke Nurse Specialist Hilary Thompson won the Patient’s Choice Award and Wendy McGregor, Community Sister in Learning Disability, won the Directors of Nursing Award. Una Turbitt, Child Protection Nurse, was commended in the main Nurse of the Year Award category.

Nominated by the wife of a patient, Hilary was awarded for her outstanding care to the man who, having suffered a severe stroke, spent three months in an acute unit, followed by three months’ rehabilitation. Her nominator said, “Hilary has helped so many stroke patients and carers since I met her through her dedication and caring role. She has been a lifeline when I and many others have tried to come to terms with such an upheaval in our lives.”

The Directors of Nursing Award aims to recognise staff who have delivered high-quality, person-centred care that has improved the patient experience. Wendy was nominated by Assistant Director Bryce McMurray and was awarded for her role in the development and delivery of a training and education programme to raise awareness of the needs of those with a learning disability in a hospital setting. Wendy was part of a team of hospital and community staff, service users and carers and the successful outcome has been that staff knowledge and their confidence in caring for people with a learning disability has improved.

Nominated by Julie McConville, Head of Health Visiting and School Nursing, Una was commended for her role in securing funding and implementing a project to promote the safety and well-being of children through the development of healthy parent-child relationships in the first year of life. The work, which involved helping parents to understand and respond appropriately to the way in which their child communicates, has now been integrated within mainstream health visiting practice and is making a major contribution to the strengthening of infant-parent relationships.

The Trust’s Executive Director of Nursing Francis Rice said, “I’m delighted that Hilary, Wendy and Una have taken these awards and that their work in stroke rehabilitation, learning disability and child protection is being recognised across Northern Ireland.”

Launch of DVD ‘Care in the System’

A new DVD called ‘Care in the System’ was recently launched by the Trust. The DVD has been made by young people who have been in care and will be used as a training tool for student and current social work staff.

The young adults used their combined knowledge and experiences from being in care to put together the DVD. The project was facilitated by the Southern Trust’s Training and Development Team along with support from Bardic Educational Arts and Media (BEAM). BEAM worked with the young people through drama, scriptwriting and film to create the DVD which is both engaging and a valuable learning tool.

The experience of this group of young adults provides a clear understanding of the feelings and perceptions of young people who receive our services. The DVD highlights from the young person’s perspective what it feels like to be on the receiving end of social work intervention. It addresses areas such as conflict, communication, stigma, powerlessness and neglect.

Kate Mooney, Training and Development Consultant, Southern Trust, said: “This DVD focuses on the real experiences of being in care and I hope will assist in providing an insight and understanding of working with young people in care and lead to further improvements in professional practice.”
The Trust has launched its first ever Excellence Awards. Roberta Brownlee, Non Executive Director and Chair of the Staff Excellence Awards Working Group says: “All our staff deserve recognition and among them are those who often go the extra mile. We want to highlight the exceptional achievements and contribution of individuals and teams in their work with service users, each other, partner organisations and for the Trust.” She added “we think they deserve a special appreciation and you can nominate them in the Southern Trust’s first ever Excellence Awards.” Any member of staff can put a nomination forward. Self-nominations are also accepted. All nominees will be invited to attend a special Excellence Awards presentation evening on 10 November 2009. Winners for each award category will be selected in advance of the presentation evening with the overall winner of the 2009 Excellence Award being chosen during the big night. The winner will receive £5000 with the runner up receiving £2500. All money will be used to further develop the service area within the Trust.

The award categories are:

- Raising Standards - for Excellence in Patient/Client Safety and Quality of Care
- Anything’s Possible - for Excellence in Service Creativity and Innovation
- Views into action - for Excellence in staff involvement
- Working Together - for Excellence in partnership working
- Best Care, Best Value - for Excellence in delivering improved efficiency
- Behind the scenes - for Excellence in non-clinical services

Closing date for nominations is Wednesday 8 July 2009. Nomination Packs and Forms are available on the intranet and Trust website at www.southerntrust.hscni.net/staffexcellenceawards2009 and from Employee Engagement and Relations on Tel: (028) 3026 0505.

Local older people write their own book of short stories from yesteryear

Members of the Palms Day Centre, Flush Place, Lurgan have recently completed a booklet of short stories from their own lives called ‘Palms People’. The contributors, who are all over 65, have recorded these to help give their families, friends and other local people an insight into what Lurgan and the surrounding area was like when they were growing up. The booklet contains 10 stories, featuring tales of farm and school life, older forms of transport, baking and playing, dancing and courting!

The stories were compiled by social work student, Robert Hagan, who was based with the Older People’s Team at Lurgan Health Centre, between March and May 2009. Robert stated that one of the main aims of the project was to ensure that the voices of ordinary people were captured for posterity.

Each person attending the Day Centre received a copy of the booklet, not just those contributing stories. Most have been thrilled to receive it. Already members have been asking for more booklets as they pass on their own copies to families and friends.

Palms Day Centre runs from Wednesday to Friday each week and is located within the Jethro Centre. The Centre has been running since the mid 90s and is a partnership between the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the Shankhill Parish Caring Association.
Ten Health Visitors from the Trust have recently been successful in achieving the “Baby Yoga and Infant Massage” diploma. These newly trained Health Visitors will be able to provide baby yoga and infant massage on a one to one basis in the home setting, or alternatively they will provide short courses for parents to attend along with their babies.

Julie McConville, Head of Health Visiting and School Nursing, Southern Trust says: “The benefits of baby yoga and infant massage are well recognised. The emotional and physical well-being of the baby is promoted through enhanced communication between parent and baby and this promotes the attachment and bonding process, it can help settle babies and improve sleep patterns, it helps stimulation of all the senses and of course it is relaxing, calming and fun.”

New Eye Care Liaison Officer

The appointment of an eye care liaison officer in the Trust will strengthen services for people affected by sight loss who need information, advice and support.

Diane Hudson’s appointment by the Royal National Institute for the Blind means she is based in the Southern Trust area and the service is provided through all the Eye Clinics: Daisy Hill Hospital (Monday), South Tyrone Hospital (Tuesday), Armagh Community Hospital (Wednesday) and the Thursday clinic at Craigavon Area Hospital.

Pat McAteer, Head of Sensory Disability Services, explains, “Diane’s role as an eye care liaison officer is a very important development for patients with a visual disability and their carers. She will spend time with people, provide information on eye conditions and eye health, discover their individual needs and find out how their sight loss is affecting them on a day to day basis. Patients will have opportunities to discuss how they are coming to terms with sight loss and concerns they may have.”

Diane can also make contact with community services on behalf of patients and carers, and assist with access to sensory support services which provide specialist rehabilitation and mobility training. Diane can be contacted by email diane.hudson@rnib.org.uk or telephone 028 9032 9373.

Traveller Support Workers in SHSCT area attend Training Course on Home Safety

Delegates representing groups such as the Armagh Traveller Support Group, Craigavon Traveller Support Committee and An Tearmann as well as Home Safety Officers from the Southern Safer Homes initiative recently attended a training course on Home Safety. The training was held in Armagh and it was the first time local support workers have come together to look at the issue of home safety for members of the Travelling Community.

Travellers are among one of the main groups identified in the Home Accident Prevention Strategy as being at particular risk from home accidents. This course looked at the environmental and behavioural factors that could lead to home accidents among members of the Travelling community as well as ways to engage and educate Travellers to prevent home accidents.

Baby Yoga and Infant Massage

A number of mothers and babies were invited to participate in the final training day of a Baby Yoga and Infant Massage course. Many of the mothers commented on how helpful they had found baby massage in the early days when developing confidence in handling their new babies.

If you would like to know more about baby yoga and infant massage please contact: the Health Visiting Service - Craigavon & Banbridge locality Tel: 028 40 620070, Armagh & Dungannon locality Tel: 028 37 522381 and Newry & Mourne locality Tel: 028 30 834200.