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entailed. "It has been tough," the breathless 26-year-old climber told the Belfast Telegraph yesterday af-

rowing the more popular route on the southern side.

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twenties, were sitting with the children as they had juice and biscuits. She said that during this time, a two-year-old was running about and refused to sit down.

She alleged Montgomery

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# Top hospital 'at risk' over staffing levels

By Nigel Gould  
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

A TOP doctor has warned that one of Ulster's key hospitals was "running at risk" in some areas over staffing levels.

Dr Liam McCaughey's shock revelation about Craigavon Area Hospital — a member of the so-called Golden Six elite — was revealed during the Trust's monthly meeting.

Dr McCaughey, the hospital's former medical director, pointed out that the Trust was "continuously running low" on nurse staffing in key areas such as ICU, Theatres, Paediatrics and Accident and Emergency.

And he said that he believed the Trust was running at risk in some areas.

The meeting also heard there was a risk in having

such a low ratio of staff to patients and that not enough resources were made available to fund staff and not enough nurses were available to appoint to posts.

The hospital's nursing director, John McNe, said he did not believe the Trust was currently running at an unsafe level but he confirmed staff were working "under great pressure".

And he gave his assurance that he would not hold back on the employment of extra staff if a risk to the safety of patients existed.

Earlier this year, Craigavon brought in 50 nurses from the Philippines to bolster nursing shortages.

Last week, the Belfast Telegraph revealed that nearly 600 overseas nurses were now employed in the NHS across Northern Ire-

land.

But despite the influx of nursing staff from all over the world, including the Philippines, India, Africa, Palestine, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, there are still massive staffing shortages in both our hospitals and the community.

Currently, there are vacancies for more than 800 nurses, midwives and health visitors across the province.

A spokeswoman for Craigavon Trust said: "Managing the risk in relation to gaps in staffing, while ensuring the continuity and quality of service, are priorities for the senior management team.

"The Trust is confident that services are not unsafe and are monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that the quality of services is maintained."

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BELFAST TELEGRAPH TUESDAY MAY 20 2003

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