

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Northern Health and Social Services Council held at 1.30pm in the East Antrim Institute of Further and Higher Education (Newtownabbey campus) on Wednesday 5 April 2006.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Mr Tom Creighton

Members:

Mrs Maureen Anderson	Mr Sam McClelland
Mr Jim Brown	Mr Mark Nolan
Prof George Kernohan	Mr Ian Stevenson
Mr Danny Kinahan	Mrs Kate Swain
Mr John Millar	Mr Andy Wilson
Mrs Janet Montgomery	

In Attendance: Mr Noel Graham
Mrs Jacqui Erwin
Mr McIlwain, Islandmagee Community
Development Association

41/06 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mrs Adger, Ms Armstrong, Mrs I Johnston, Mrs L Johnston, Mrs Morrison, Mrs McCambridge, Mrs McClelland, Mrs McEldowney, Mr Nicholl and Mr Quinn.

42/06 **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

The Chairman commented upon his attendance at a range of meetings and events. These included Board Meetings of the Royal Hospitals Trust, Homefirst Community Trust and the Northern Health and Social Services Board, the Health and Social Services Councils' of Northern Ireland Executive Committee, the Patient Client Council Working Group, United Hospitals Trust Celebration of Achievements and the launch of a Regional Bereavement Network.

Mr Creighton thanked Mrs Montgomery for attending United Hospitals Trust Board Meeting on his behalf.

43/06 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2006**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

44/06 **MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING OF 1 MARCH 2006**

30/06 Breast Screening Services

Mr Graham had written to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety voicing concern that early detection opportunities are being lost and that diagnosis is being missed or delayed until symptoms develop due to the unavailability of a screening service since November 2005 for women aged 50-64 in the NHSSB area. A further concern highlighted was the shortage of skilled staff to provide a full service throughout Northern Ireland. The Council sought assurances that the problems highlighted in the Wilson Report are being addressed as a matter of urgency. A response was awaited.

It was anticipated that the Report being produced by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority would be in the public domain shortly.

The Council would continue to review the situation.

32/06 Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS)

No date had yet been agreed for the first meeting of the ICATS Public Awareness Group.

32/06 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Consultation on the Primary Dental Care Strategy

Mr Millar advised members that of the 161 dentists in the Northern Board area 20 of these do not accept NHS patients. Mrs Montgomery referred to the increased promotion, by dentists, of a dental payment plan which involves charging patients a fixed monthly fee. Mr McClelland feared for the dental health of those people just above the benefits threshold. Mr Graham referred to difficulties experienced by people living in the Cookstown area where NHS patients are no longer accepted and to endeavours by the Northern Health and Social Services Board to recruit a salaried dentist to the area.

32/06 Proposed Relocation of Whitehouse Medical Practice

Mr Graham referred to a copy letter from the Northern Health and Social Services Board to member Mrs McClelland which confirmed that the practice's application to relocate its surgeries from the Whitewell Road to the Abbey Centre at Newtownabbey is still under consideration by the Board.

Mrs Swain drew attention to further expansion at the Abbey Centre and feared this would impact further on car parking difficulties for patients.

32/06 Presentation on Ambulance Services

The Council would write again to the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service seeking information to enable a more informed case to be put forward for additional funding.

32/06 Homefirst Community Trust Review of Mental Health Services for Older People Workshop – 26 October 2005

The Council had drawn attention to the fact that the private sector had not been invited to a workshop organised by Homefirst Community Trust. A response had been received, however, the issue would be raised again at the joint meeting with the Trust on Thursday 27 April 2006.

35/06 Consultation on United Hospitals Trust Policy on Pay Car Parking at Antrim Hospital

Mr Wilson drew attention to the Council's response and requested that any further clarification from United Hospitals Trust on the waiving of charges in exceptional circumstances be communicated back to members.

36/06 Joint Council Policy Documents

The Joint Council policies on Representation on Committees and on Consultation were agreed by members present.

45/06 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT and PATIENT CLIENT COUNCIL **46/06 PROJECT TEAM UPDATE**

Draft Paper on the Role, Responsibilities and Function of the Patient Client Council

Mr Graham commented upon a draft paper, prepared by the Chief Officers and presented to the Project Team which had been informed by Health and Social Services Councils' experiences, the joint Conference, what was happening elsewhere and the Minister's vision resulting from the Review of Public Administration. Members would have the opportunity of further comment on the paper at the feedback session arranged for Thursday 13 April 2006. The Project Team had agreed to a proposal that Chief Officers consider a structure for the Patient Client Council for the next Working Group meeting in May. Instructions to Counsel were also being drafted.

The views of stakeholders will be paramount throughout the process therefore Councils are embarking upon a series of consultation exercises. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has made some money available for this purpose. Only a certain degree of consultation, however, would be achievable in the timescales envisaged.

47/06 **UNITED HOSPITALS TRUST PAPER ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO PATIENT SERVICES AT WHITEABBEY AND MID-ULSTER HOSPITALS PRIOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPING BETTER SERVICES**

Copies of the Trust's press release, summarising the proposals and the consultative document had been issued to members.

In order for the Council to respond with the views of those living in the Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey areas lists of community groups were obtained from the respective Borough Councils and each was issued with a short questionnaire. Of the 61 groups contacted 21 responded. The proposed reduction in opening times at Whiteabbey Hospital Accident and Emergency Department was a serious concern for 19 of the groups and a concern but not serious for 2 of the groups. The opportunity was extended to those who responded to raise their concerns directly with members at the Council meeting.

Mr Creighton welcomed Mr McIlwain from Islandmagee Community Development Association and invited him to put forward local views. Concerns expressed included the geographic location of Islandmagee, the distance to Antrim Hospital and the poor road structure, the lack of public confidence in service provision at Antrim Hospital, the dilemma faced by out-of-hours GPs on the Whiteabbey Hospital wishing to admit a patient, the availability of an ambulance and the

ability of Antrim Hospital to cope with more patients. Although it is often said that health and social care is improving generally the people of Islandmagee see no evidence of this.

In light of the time taken for an ambulance to respond to a call from Islandmagee a First Responder Scheme was established by the Association which aims to get vital life-saving care swiftly to anyone suffering coronary problems.

The concerns voiced would be incorporated with other survey comments and forwarded to United Hospitals Trust as part of the Council's response to the consultation on the proposed changes.

Mrs Montgomery commended the First Responder Scheme and anticipated that this would be replicated across the province. Mr Wilson suggested that members hear more about the Scheme when the Council next meets in Larne. Mr Brown stressed the need for effective communication throughout the emergency services and Mr Nolan felt the outcome of a risk assessment should be viewed as a challenge to raise standards rather than to reduce service provision and called for the ambulance service to be developed in conjunction with the proposed service changes.

Members agreed that a similar consultation exercise be undertaken by the Council in terms of the proposed changes at the Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt.

48/06 **CONSULTATION PAPER: IMPROVING SERVICES FOR MAJOR TRAUMA**

This policy paper focuses exclusively on the management of major trauma. Whilst there are only a small number of major trauma cases every year in Northern Ireland each one is life threatening and where they occur they require a prompt and co-ordinated approach to treatment if lives are to be saved. The proposed way forward is to develop a network for major trauma, with the Regional Trauma Centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital as the network hub and to have all patients with major trauma admitted only to the Royal, although appropriate resuscitation and stabilisation services would continue to be in place at the larger acute hospitals outside Belfast.

Members commented upon a recent accident in the Carrickfergus area where a patient was airlifted by Police helicopter to Antrim Hospital and then transferred by

ambulance to the Royal Victoria Hospital. In order to provide an efficient service members highlighted the need for an air ambulance and trained paramedics to be available to transport patients to the Regional Trauma Centre therefore they recommended a review of the costing exercise.

49/06 **TO CONSIDER AGENDA ITEMS FOR JOINT MEETING WITH HOMEFIRST COMMUNITY TRUST**

The joint meeting with Homefirst Community Trust would be held on Thursday 27 April at 11.00am in The Cottage, Ballymena. Suggested agenda items included the outcome of a Social Services Inspectorate inspection of social care support services for carers of older people, long term plans for residential care, crisis intervention service for those with challenging behaviour and implications for Trust speech and language therapists as a result of the ceasing of services provided by Speechmatters.

50/06 **TO CONSIDER JOINT MEETINGS WITH NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD, UNITED HOSPITALS TRUST AND CAUSEWAY TRUST**

Members were invited to suggest suitable agenda items at the May Council Meeting.

51/06 **VISITING**

Visit Reports

The Frocess Medical Centre, Cloughmills

The Frocess Medical Centre, formerly Cloughmills Medical Practice, opened in 2004 within a newly built complex with a number of other services on site including a pharmacy, optometry and podiatry.

The visiting team commended the excellent facilities, the friendly, caring environment and the support given by the Patients Committee.

The Council would write to thank staff for the opportunity to visit.

Ballymena Health Centre

Ballymena Health Centre opened in 1974 on the Braid Valley Hospital site.

Internally the building was clean and functional, however, staff had very little space in which to carry out their daily tasks. Each surgery, although cramped, had a range of equipment and appliances, however, the Treatment Room, also well equipped, was considered unsuitable and no longer fit for purpose given the number of Practices within the Centre. The lack of privacy was particularly concerning.

On the day of the visit the visiting team reported abuse of the designated parking bays by able-bodied drivers for people with disabilities and the ambulance parking area at the front door.

Overall the visiting team considered the building to be no longer suitable for the number of staff who work within it nor for the patients who attend.

A copy of the report would be sent to Homefirst Community Trust.

Community Addiction Unit, Ballymena

The Community Addiction Unit provides a locally-based treatment service which offers treatment, advice and information to individuals over the age of 18 years who are experiencing problems with alcohol or drugs.

A range of treatment options are available, and treatment plans are developed in agreement with the client and their individual therapist.

The visiting team noted the networking with a range of other bodies including Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-anon, Women's Aid, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, local church groups and voluntary organisations.

In general the visiting team was very impressed with the work carried out and the services offered. It was encouraging to note that staff would consider offering evening or weekend appointments which could include Group therapy sessions should it become practical to do so.

A copy of the report would be sent to Homefirst Community Trust.

52/06 **REPORTS FROM:**

Changing the Culture: Infection Prevention and Control Conference 13 and 14 March 2006

This Conference was attended by Mr Millar. He reported that the event had included presentations from a number of international, regional and local speakers and covered important areas in infection prevention and control. In addition to plenary sessions there were four masterclasses in the areas of surveillance, decontamination, risk communication and ventilation and isolation in hospital planning. In a written report prepared by Mr Millar and issued to members he expressed disappointment that he had not learned more from the event.

Social Services Inspectorate Inspection of Social Care Services for Carers of Older People in Homefirst Community Trust

The inspection by the Social Services Inspectorate in Homefirst Community Trust took place between 3 and 16 March 2006. Mr Graham and Mr Millar had represented the Council at a meeting held on 3rd March when the Trust and the Social Services Inspectorate had made presentations regarding the inspection and its remit. Homefirst Community Trust was the fourth Trust in which this inspection has been carried out and took the form of file sampling, meetings and presentations with and to the inspection team. Mr Millar had attended a feedback meeting held on 16th March 2006 and his report would be copied to members.

Launch of New Regional Bereavement Network – 9 March 2006

Following the Report of the Human Organs Inquiry and similar reports in Great Britain it was decided to establish a Regional Bereavement Network which would develop and co-ordinate bereavement care, standards and training. At the launch, attended by Mr Creighton and Mr Graham, the remit of the Regional Bereavement Network was outlined and the five Area Bereavement Co-ordinators introduced.

53/06 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence list had been circulated with the agenda.

Mr Brown asked that the Council request a follow-up report from the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities to the Launch of the Floating Support Pilot Project for Ethnic Minorities in the Northern Board area.

Mr McClelland and Mr Millar expressed an interest in membership of the Project Board to take forward the development of a DHSSPS implementation plan following the publication of the Shipman Inquiry reports by Dame Janet Smith.

Mr Millar, Mr Nolan and Mr Graham expressed an interest in membership of GMS Clinical Governance Partnership.

Additional items of correspondence included:

- DHSSPS Publication Quality Standards for Health and Social Care
- Fit Futures: Focus on Food, Activity and Young People – Report to the Ministerial Group on Public Health
- Changing the Culture: An Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections in Northern Ireland 2006/2009
- Third report from the Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (NI). This report sets out a new vision for alcohol and substance misuse services in Northern Ireland and proposes a range of challenging recommendations for improvement in these services.

54/06 **OTHER BUSINESS**

Speechmatters Funding

Mr Quinn had requested this item be raised. He had attended a meeting of the Speechmatters group in Cookstown and been advised that funding had ceased from 20 March 2006. This was seen as a devastating blow and the group was proposing to write to MPs and MLAs.

The Northern Health and Social Services Board had been contacted and had explained that each year it receives a financial allocation from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which is invested on a recurrent basis in line with regional priorities. In addition, the Board uses

its Voluntary and Community Grants Scheme to support the work of voluntary and community organisations.

This scheme is publicised widely and application packs are mailed to organisations who have applied previously to the Scheme or have requested an application pack.

All organisations are judged against agreed criteria and awards are then made and organisations advised accordingly.

Application packs were forwarded to Speechmatters, however, the charity did not apply to this year's Scheme. The Board will be looking at alternative arrangements to address the needs of those who have been attending conversation classes with Speechmatters.

The Council would raise the issue with the Northern Health and Social Services Board and Homefirst Community Trust.

55/06 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Mr Graham informed members that the next meeting of the Patient Client Council Working Group had been arranged for Wednesday 3 May 2006 and asked that the Council meeting be put back a week to Wednesday 10 May 2006 and be held in the Magherafelt District Council area. This was agreed by members present.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.

Chairman

Secretary

Date