

## **NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Northern Health and Social Services Council held at 1.30pm in the Steeple Suite, Antrim Civic Centre on Wednesday 3 October 2007.

### **PRESENT:**

**In the Chair:** Mr Tom Creighton

**Members:**

Mrs Beth Adger	Mrs Noreen McClelland
Mrs Maureen Anderson	Mr Sam McClelland
Ms Rosemary Armstrong	Mrs Kate McEldowney
Mrs Liz Johnston	Mr Tommy Nicholl
Prof George Kernohan	Mr Mark Nolan
Mr Danny Kinahan	Mr Ian Stevenson
Mr John Millar	Mrs Kate Swain
Mrs Janet Montgomery	Mr Andrew Wilson
Mrs Rae Morrison	

**In Attendance:** Mr Noel Graham  
Mrs Jacqui Erwin

### 89/07 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Brown, Mrs I Johnston and Mr Quinn.

### 90/07 **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He referred to his attendance at a meeting of the Primary Care/NHSSC Forum, the Executive Committee of the Health and Social Services Councils of Northern Ireland and the Northern Health and Social Services Board meeting.

### 91/07 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2007**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

### 92/07 **MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING OF 5 SEPTEMBER 2007**

#### **78/07 NHS Dentistry**

Mr Graham reminded members that Council Chairmen and Chief Officers had arranged to meet with the Health Minister on the morning of 7 November 2007 to discuss NHS dentistry. Prior to this Mr Graham would meet a representative of the British Dental Association and obtain an update from the Northern Health and Social Services Board in relation to those practices in the area currently taking on NHS patients and the position with Orthodontists.

It was noted that the Health Minister had just launched Northern Ireland's first salaried dentist service which is based in the Dalriada Urgent Care premises in Ballymena. It was hoped that the service could be expanded through further appointments to include those geographical areas where patients experienced difficulty in obtaining NHS dental care. Mr McClelland commented upon the need to inform the public of the existence of such a service and Mr Graham indicated that those finding difficulty in accessing an NHS dentist tended to ring the NHSSB and would be directed to the salaried dentist service.

### **78/07 Mileage Rates**

Mr Graham had written to the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, requesting a revision of travel rates and a response was awaited. The issue of increasing fuel costs was again discussed.

### **79/07 Chief Officer's Report**

#### **Advocacy Project**

The draft report had been forwarded to the Health Minister to write a foreword. Since this representatives from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety had requested a meeting with Council Chief Officers to talk through the recommendations.

#### **Tuberculosis (TB) Incident, Causeway Hospital**

Mr Stevenson raised a number of issues in relation to notification about the TB incident and these would be raised with Dr Flanagan, Director of Medicine and Governance, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, when he meets with the Council.

#### **Breast Screening**

Dr Mairs, Chair of the Northern Area Breast Screening Co-ordinating Group had confirmed that the Northern Health and Social

Services Board was on course in keeping with the screening plan submitted to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. There were no current staffing issues and a Business Case was expected shortly from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in relation to a new mobile screening unit.

### Disability Action Plan

A Disability Action Plan was currently being produced for submission to the Equality Commission.

### **81/07 'Bugwatch' Report**

The Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust had written to thank the NHSSC for the 'Bugwatch' report, indicating that the independent observations of members had provided valuable information to the Trust to factor into plans to improve infection control practice and environmental hygiene.

The report would be considered at the next meeting of the Trust's Infection Control and Environmental Hygiene Committee which has representation from all directorates. An NHSSC representative was invited to join this Committee. It was proposed and agreed that Mr Graham represent Council.

It was noted that there had been regional action to develop information leaflets and posters for visitors and patients and that a supply of these would be received by the Trust in the next few weeks for distribution to all acute areas.

Mrs Adger drew attention to poor practice within the Intensive Care Unit of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast when visiting a patient there. Mr Stevenson spoke of the need to screen nursing staff for MRSA and Mr McClelland referred to the need to inform the public of the importance of hand hygiene. These issues would be raised at the next meeting of the Trust's Infection Control and Environmental Hygiene Committee.

### **85/07 NI Assembly Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety – Inquiry into Healthcare Associated Infections and Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm**

Mr Graham informed the meeting that he had forwarded a written submission on behalf of the four Health and Social Services Councils, however, the Committee had decided to conduct an urgent inquiry into suicide, and had therefore postponed the

Healthcare Associated Infections inquiry. An assurance was given that the submission would be taken into account when the Committee returned to the issue and contact would be made at that stage to ask if a revision was required.

In terms of the Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm the Council was invited to submit written evidence on the issue. The NI Assembly had been advised of the joint Council event to be held on 25 October 2007 and a submission would be made following this.

Mr Creighton informed members that he had accepted an invitation extended by Professor McKenna, Dean of Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, University of Ulster, to become a member of the steering group for the study titled 'Providing Meaningful Care: learning from experiences of suicidal men to inform mental health services'.

Mr McClelland drew attention to the need to consider suicide chat rooms and Mrs L Johnston commented upon the service provided by the Samaritans. It was suggested that this organisation be included in the Council's visiting programme.

### **87/07 Nursing Jobs in Northern Health and Social Care Trust**

Issues surrounding the availability of nursing posts had been raised with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and a response was awaited. Mrs Montgomery indicated that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Workforce Planning Department was now considering the wider nursing family, not just those working within the NHS and Ms Armstrong informed members that Central Government had how restricted recruitment of overseas nurses to more senior grades.

### **87/07 Alpha 5**

An exploratory meeting with Mr Carr from Alpha 5, Ireland's first Helicopter Doctor Air Ambulance Service would be held on Tuesday 13 November 2007 in the Ecos Centre, Ballymena. An invitation had been extended to the other three Councils to send a representative.

### **87/07 Ballymena Health and Care Centre**

Members noted that a business case was currently being considered by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and that design teams were being appointed by Estates Services. The amount of finance available would be known in October. Mr Nicholl voiced disappointment since he understood that the Ballymena Health and Care Centre would be operational in 2009 and referred to the detailed plans shared with members during a presentation by representatives from the Northern Health and Social Services Board. It was agreed that since those who had delivered the presentation were no longer involved in the project that Mr MacDonnell, the Board's Chief Executive, be invited to update members.

### **87/07 Ambulances**

Mrs Adger reported that since the last Council meeting she no longer noticed a large number of ambulances parked at the Ross Park Hotel, Kells.

## **93/07 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

### **Modernisation and Improvement Programme Board**

Mr Graham reported that an invitation had been received from the Permanent Secretary, Dr McCormick, to nominate one of the Council Chairmen to sit on the Programme Board. Mr Creighton's name had gone forward and he would feed back both to the NHSSC and the other Councils. The purpose of the Board will be to secure sustained improvements in the quality and efficiency of health and social care services in line with Ministerial priorities by developing and implementing health and social care structures and systems that are fit for purpose.

### **Patient and Client Council/Health Authority**

Mr Graham reported that at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Health and Social Services Councils of Northern Ireland, Mr McMaster, deputising for Mrs Devlin, from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety had indicated that there was likely to be a delay in implementation as the Health Minister was currently considering various options and had yet to take a decision on the structures. Any changes to the structures proposed in the draft legislation would require further

redrafting and, depending on the degree of change, possible further consultation.

Mr Graham said he had understood that there were to be no new appointments to the Health and Social Services Councils, however, an appointment had been made to the Eastern Health and Social Services Council. It was thought that those members whose term of office had been extended to 31 March 2008 might be offered a further extension.

### Primary Care/NHSSC Forum

Following the meeting Mr Graham had submitted a paper to the Northern Health and Social Services Board's Primary Care Department outlining his views on the process that should be followed by those practices seeking to reduce their geographical area of registration. The paper had been discussed at the Board's Patient Registration Area Committee meeting and it had been agreed that in reviewing draft guidance the Committee would require future applicant practices to consult with affected patients, NHSSC, and local practices. The Committee also agreed on the information to be supplied, that for printing purposes the Board recommended Ariel 14 be used and that the translation of patient consultation letters into other languages would be kept under review depending on the ethnic composition of applicant practices.

It was noted that the Board was requiring practices to act in a reasonable and consistent manner in implementing their patient registration policy. The option for people working in an area of registering with a GP practice in that area was not included within the 2004 GMS Contract.

In terms of notifying patients, other practices, organisations, etc of any approved changes to the registration area it was pointed out by the Board that it would take decisions on the Committee's recommendations at a public Board meeting which would be reported on by local press. The Board would also require practices to display posters in their surgeries of approved changes and to amend their practice leaflet by 31 January 2008.

Mr Graham had written to Dr Harper in relation to some flexibility in GP surgery hours to provide evening or Saturday morning clinics to meet the requirement of patients. Acting on this and mindful that available funding could only be identified on a non-recurrent basis, primary care staff developed a proposal to fund evening and/or Saturday morning GP clinics over the winter period to 31 March 2008 when workload is greater and access more difficult. Based on

a scheme which had run successfully in the EHSSB area for the past two years and mirroring time-limited winter pressure schemes of the past, practices would have received £300 per clinic to fund it. However, the NHSSB's Senior Management Team had rejected the scheme preferring to wait upon a Government initiative rather than to raise public expectations in the short-term.

Since this, however, Dr Harper had been contacted by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and asked if such surgeries operated in the Northern area. He would feed back details.

Members mentioned the closing of some GP practices on a half day or full day during the week and commented upon evidence to support flexibility in GP surgery hours.

### Accountability Review

Members noted that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety had asked for a progress report against the Council's Annual Work Programme for the half year to 30 September 2007. This was currently being compiled by the Chief Officer and would be shared with members at the next Council meeting.

### Car Registration Certificates

Following a 'spot check' by staff from the Northern Health and Social Services Board's Finance Department members were reminded of the requirement for the Council to hold a copy of all current car registration certificates so they can be examined to ensure the authenticity of details included on claim forms.

### NHSSC Expenditure

Expenditure to the end of August 2007 was £66,638.

94/07

## **VISITING**

### **Visit Reports**

#### **Hope Centre, Ballymena**

The mother of a child with a drug addiction was instrumental in founding the Ballymena Family and Addicts Support Group in 2000. The success of this venture has meant that the service is now more of an area wide service offering information, advice and support to

families and support and guidance to substance abusers. The name has now become The Hope Centre and there are 259 registered clients.

While there is no formal referral process, the support of the Hope Centre is suggested to substance abusers and families by GPs, Social Workers, Mental Health Services, Community Addiction Team, Probation Service, Youth Justice Agency and Voluntary agencies.

Funding is a constant issue for the Hope Centre. The manager reported that grant funding is designated for particular projects over a given time frame. While this can present uncertainties about the sustainability of such projects the main funding problem comes from the staffing and overhead revenue costs.

On the wider geographical area there is the identified need for similar services in for example Larne/Carrickfergus. At present the Hope Centre can offer advice and encouragement but would like to be in a financial position to outreach and set up and run locally based centres in other areas.

The Centre provides a very worthwhile range of services. It is well equipped and the people involved are enthusiastic and forward thinking.

### **Naomi Centre/Women's Aid**

Women's Aid describes itself as the lead voluntary organisation challenging domestic violence in Northern Ireland. It provides refuge and emotional support to women and their dependent children suffering from mental or physical harassment within the home.

The Ballymena based Naomi Centre is the centre for group work within Antrim, Ballymena, Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey. It offers a drop in or referral service and Resource Service for all women which includes a crèche, counselling and a number of classes covering self-esteem, computers, DIY, etc. While women can self refer they would also be referred by the Police Service Northern Ireland, Community Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health Services.

The refuge, known as Virginia House, also located in Ballymena, has 32 beds and 12 bedrooms with communal facilities. It was funded by Northern Ireland Housing Executive through Supporting

People and was purpose built about nine years ago within a complex of houses and other buildings all owned by Ulidia Housing Association Ltd.

The success of the centre relies heavily on partnership between the many statutory sectors and Women's Aid. The Manager spoke highly of Social Services, GPs, Health Visitors, School Principals, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Solicitors, etc in their quick response to crisis situations.

### **Visiting Response**

#### **Broadway Workshop, Newtownabbey**

Members noted that Mr Donnelly, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's new Director of Mental Health and Disability Services, had visited Broadway Workshop to view the condition of the building and to meet staff and service users. In respect of the building he felt it did not do justice to the quality of the service and commended the significant efforts made by Centre staff and the Trust's Estates Department to make the best of the building in the interest of clients. He felt the only long term option was the closure and replacement of the building.

Mr Donnelly explained that capital planning with the Trust is being taken forward through the Developing Better Services /PCCI initiatives. These are comprehensive business case planning processes looking at establishing priorities for capital investment. The Business Case for the Northern Area indicates under the Phase 2 programme a need to replace Broadway Workshop. This phasing would, unfortunately, mean a replacement some years hence and clearly there are a great many demands for new accommodation and a limited budget.

Mr Donnelly indicated that he wished to explore if there may be other options to either provide an alternative facility or to increase the priority for the Broadway Workshop with the Developing Better Services/PCCI process.

Members would raise the issue with Mr MacDonnell, Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

### **October Visits**

Arrangements were made for visits to the WAVE Trauma Centre, Ballymoney and the Bridge Association, Antrim.

95/07 **DHSSPS REVIEW OF PRESCRIPTION CHARGES –  
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP**

The Health Minister, Mr McGimpsey, has charged the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) with undertaking a review of the current arrangements for prescription charges in Northern Ireland. The DHSSPS has requested that the Health and Social Services Councils facilitate a stakeholder engagement workshop to engage with, and seek the views of, members of the public on the arguments for and against the range of options emerging from the review of prescription charges in Northern Ireland.

A workshop would be held on Thursday 18 October 2007 from 10.00am to 1.00pm in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown.

96/07 **JOINT COUNCIL EVENT**

A joint Council event would be held on Thursday 25 October 2007 in the Seagoe Hotel, Portadown. Topics for discussion would include dental services, protecting life and regional out-of-hours service. Mr Graham had met with the Northern Health and Social Services Board's Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator, Ms Gabrielle Nellis, and distributed some information in relation to key facts about suicide and self-harm.

97/07 **PERSONAL AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH AND  
SOCIAL CARE**

The Guidance on Strengthening Personal and Public Involvement in Health and Social Care, issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is intended to assist Health and Social Care organisations improve the quality and effectiveness of user and public involvement as an integral part of good governance arrangements and to support the development of a more patient and user-centred health and social care envisaged by the reform programme.

It does not place new requirements on health and social care organisations, rather it seeks to clarify and standardise good practice in implementing existing policy requirements and statutory responsibilities.

Mr Graham explained that the Health and Social Services Councils had come up with a number of standards for public and personal

involvement and these would be compared to those of the Department. The document would be copied to members for consideration at the November Council meeting.

#### 98/07 **NHS DIRECT**

Mr Stevenson raised the issue of Northern Ireland not having access to NHS Direct. He reported on his attendance at a consultation workshop organised by The Consumer Council on NI Direct where he had taken the opportunity to raise the issue. NI Direct is a new initiative that aims to provide a simple, more efficient way for people to access government services using existing mechanisms like telephone, internet and face to face alongside emerging mechanisms like digital TV and texting. Although the Consumer Council felt it inappropriate to raise NHS Direct at this event, they did however take note of Mr Stevenson's comments.

Mr Graham referred to a Health Service Journal article which stated that doctors had asked the government to re-evaluate NHS Direct as it is increasing their workload and indicated that within some areas of health and social care there was not a great deal of support for NHS Direct.

Various views were expressed by members and it was agreed to raise this issue with Mr MacDonnell, Chief Executive, Northern Health and Social Services Board.

#### 99/07 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence list had been circulated with the agenda.

- Mr Nolan and Mr Millar accepted the invitation from the Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone to 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Friday 12 October 2007
- Mr Stevenson and Mrs Anderson would attend the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to Rights and Righteousness: Religious Pluralism and Human Rights Conference from 1-2 November 2007
- Mrs Adger would attend the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry Meeting on Tuesday 20 November 2007
- Professor Kernohan would attend the Northern Ireland Cancer Network Stakeholder Workshop on Friday 12 October 2007.

Several absent members would be contacted and their interest sought in attending.

- Mr Nolan, Mr Stevenson and Mr Millar expressed an interest in attending the DHSSPS Future Development of Service Framework Programme Workshop on Wednesday 17 October 2007. Only one representative had been requested, however, the DHSSPS would be contacted and asked if others could attend.
- The consultation on the Findings of the GMS Global Sum Formula Review for Northern Ireland would be considered at the next Council meeting

Additional items of correspondence included:

- Northern Ireland Cancer Registry Cancer Services Audit 2001/2 and 2004/5 Thyroid
- Age Awareness Week 2007 Events Guide
- Minutes of Executive Committee of Health and Social Services Councils for Northern Ireland
- An invitation was received from Action MS to attend the Mobile Care Centre Launch on 23 October 2007. Mr Quinn would be contacted to see if he could attend.

## 100/07 **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Dalriada Urgent Care**

Mrs Adger raised an issue on behalf of an employee of Dalriada Urgent Care. However, since it related to terms and conditions of employment it was suggested that the employee be asked to contact her employer.

### **Ambulance Services**

Mr Nolan referred to the update on ambulance services in the Northern Health and Social Services Board Minutes of 23 August 2007 and Mr Stevenson to his attendance at the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust Annual General Meeting. Referring to the 8 minutes response time Mr Stevenson pointed out that the Northern Board still had some way to go in reaching the 75% target set by Government. Mr Millar referred to a pilot planned for the provision of an out of hours service to deal with Category C calls which would enable the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to

focus on priority cases. Mr McClelland also outlined the possible value of NHS Direct and walk-in centres in helping to reduce the work of the Ambulance Service.

### **Data Protection Act**

Ms Armstrong called for clarification on the interpretation of the Data Protection Act citing an instance when a visiting clergyman to a hospital was refused the names of in-patients from his Parish. She highlighted the importance of Christian support during an illness and felt the system had become too bureaucratic. Mr Stevenson suggested that the Hospital Chaplain, who would have access to the names of in-patients, request permission for named clergymen to also have access to the names. Clarification would be sought from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on its data protection policy in this regard.

### **Excellence in Benchmarking Awards**

The congratulations of the Council would be conveyed to the Northern Health and Social Services Board on being awarded a National Excellence in Benchmarking award, presented by the NHS Benchmarking Club following a submission of the 2005/06 Quality and Outcomes Framework Report.

## 101/07 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held at 1.30pm on Wednesday 7 November 2007 in the Newtownabbey Borough Council area.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

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Chairman

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Secretary

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Date