

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Northern Health and Social Services Council held at 1.30pm in Ballyduff Community Centre, Forthill Drive, Ballyduff, Newtownabbey on Wednesday 7 November 2007.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Mr Tom Creighton

<u>Members:</u>	Mrs Beth Adger	Mr Sam McClelland
	Mrs Maureen Anderson	Mr Tommy Nicholl
	Ms Rosemary Armstrong	Mr Mark Nolan
	Mr Jim Brown	Mr Tony Quinn
	Mr John Millar	Mrs Kate Swain
	Mrs Noreen McClelland	

In Attendance: Mr Noel Graham
Mrs Jacqui Erwin

102/07 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mrs I Johnston, Mrs L Johnston, Professor Kernohan, Mr Kinahan, Mrs Montgomery, Mrs Morrison, Mrs McEldowney, Mr Stevenson, and Mr Wilson.

103/07 **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He referred to his attendance at meetings of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and the Modernisation and Improvement Programme Board.

Mr Creighton referred to letters he had received from the Minister emphasising the need to prepare and plan for continuation of services next year and from the Department's Director of Human Resources clarifying the arrangements in respect of the extension of certain members. A letter sent by the Health Minister to all staff working in health and social care in Northern Ireland had been shared with members.

Mr McClelland referred to the aim of the Review of Public Administration exercise which was to save money and voiced concern about the financial cost of the delay as the Minister gives further consideration to the organisational changes.

104/07 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 OCTOBER 2007**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

105/07 **MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING OF 3 OCTOBER 2007**

92/07 NHS Dentistry

The meeting with Council Chairmen and Chief Officers to discuss NHS dentistry had been postponed by the Health Minister until 19 December 2007.

It was noted that the Northern Health and Social Services Board had written to all dentists working in the NHSSB area informing them of the details of the new salaried dental service operating from the Dalriada Urgent Care facility in Ballymena. When dental practices are contacted by patients wishing to receive Health Service dental care, but that practice is unable to offer this care the patients may be redirected to the DUC service. Similarly, unregistered patients seen in the Relief of Dental Pain Service who require follow-up appointments may be referred to the salaried dental service.

The NHSSB explained that to date the salaried dental service has not been advertised in the local press, apart from the publicity surrounding the launch of the service, as the Board is mindful that demand could quickly overwhelm the service and jeopardise its development and long-term success. The NHSSB plans to increase salaried dentist capacity and when this has been achieved the service may be promoted more aggressively.

Members noted that workforce planning in dentistry is the remit of the Human Resources Directorate of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and in 2005 they had undertaken a review of the dental workforce. As a result the number of dental student places at Queens University, Belfast had increased and the number of vocational training places available in Northern Ireland had also risen.

It was also noted that the number of orthodontists per 100,000 population is considerably higher in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board area than in the Northern area. This is partly due to the current General Dental Services contract under which High Street Specialist Orthodontists work. The contract allows practices to set up wherever they can obtain planning permission and for a

number of reasons these dentists prefer to live close to Belfast. It is hoped that under the new General Dental Services contact commissioners would have significantly more control over where practices may be located.

The matter would be further discussed at the next meeting of the Primary Care/NHSSC Forum and further clarification would be sought on orthodontist training places.

Mr McClelland referred to the capitation formula review and queried if any of the shift in funding from Eastern to Northern Health and Social Services Board had been identified for dentistry.

92/07 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 currently being prepared.

92/07 NI Assembly Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety - Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm

Written evidence on behalf of the four Councils had been submitted to the NI Assembly for Health, Social Services and Public Safety following the joint Council event held on 25 October 2007. This had been copied to those in attendance and would be copied to all NHSSC members.

Ms Armstrong highlighted the lack of control over media coverage surrounding suicide, to the need for greater support for community workers and families affected by suicide and increased inter-agency working.

Reference was made to a recent suicide where drugs were involved and Mr Nicholl drew attention to the withdrawal of the Drugs Squad from Ballymena and its centralisation in Belfast. The meeting was unsure of the reason or effect this might have or what the position was in other towns within the northern area. The Chief Constable would be asked to clarify the position and comment on whether partnership working with local healthcare providers, education, local Councils, etc would be affected by any centralisation which may be taking place.

Mrs Adger referred to the problem with drug dealers targeting younger children. Mr Brown, commenting on the under-funding of

mental health services, highlighted the legacy of 30 years of problems in Northern Ireland and feared the number of suicides could escalate. He also wondered what resources were available to Education and Library Boards to address the issue. Mrs Anderson referred to the many complex factors associated with suicide and stressed that efforts were being made to deal with the situation.

The prevention of suicide and self harm would also be raised at the Primary Care/NHSSC Forum and at the joint meeting with the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

92/07 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. In its response the Trust indicated that it currently has a number of nurse vacancies across its geographical area which would not be unusual for this time of year. The Trust proactively recruits at the local university job fairs and in the press at specific times of the year in anticipation of these vacancies.

Generally the Trust would make permanent offers for employment during the summer months, however, this year given the imminent closure of sixteen beds in the Braid Valley Hospital, Ballymena, the Trust was obliged to work through a process offering vacancies to staff currently permanently employed there. This process has now been completed and remaining vacancies are now being offered to those people who were successful at interview and placed on a waiting list.

The Trust indicated that generally it did not experience difficulty in recruiting nurses to vacant posts, running a proactive recruitment campaign throughout the year with applications frequently exceeding the number of vacant posts which results in waiting lists. There had been no active recruitment of overseas nurses for the past four years.

92/07 Alpha 5

Members were reminded of the exploratory meeting arranged with Mr Carr from Alpha 5 to hear of their vision, targets and progress towards Ireland's first Helicopter Doctor Air Ambulance Service. An invitation had been extended to the other three Councils to send a representative.

92/07 Ballymena Health and Care Centre

Rather than invite Mr MacDonnell, the Northern Health and Social Services Board's Chief Executive, to update members on progress with the Ballymena Health and Care Centre members accepted the suggestion that this be included on the agenda for a joint meeting with the Board in the new year.

94/07 Visiting Response – Broadway Workshop, Newtownabbey

The options in relation to Broadway Workshop would be raised at the joint meeting with the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

95/07 DHSSPS Review of Prescription Charges – Stakeholder Engagement Workshop – 18 October 2007

This event had been facilitated by the Health and Social Services Councils at the request of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Those in attendance gave their views on a range of options discussed within workshops. A paper would be submitted to the Minister by the end of December and it was expected that public consultation would take place early in 2008. The event had been well attended and feedback had been collated and shared both with those who attended and those who had expressed an interest in the event.

98/07 NHS Direct

The issue of NHS Direct would be raised at the joint meeting with the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

100/07 Data Protection Act

Ms Armstrong had called for clarification on the interpretation of the Data Protection Act in relation to the release of names of hospital inpatients to visiting clergymen. Mr Graham reported that he had contacted the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and been advised that Hospital Chaplains are appointed by the Trust and are fully contracted members of Trust staff. Vacant posts are now advertised and appointments made subject to a police check.

On admission to hospital a patient is asked their religion and whether they wish to be visited by the appropriate Hospital

Chaplain. A list is given to each Chaplain and those who have agreed to be visited would be asked if they would like their own clergyman to be informed that they are in hospital and if so the Chaplain would send a note to the appropriate clergymen. This differs slightly for those who are Roman Catholic as they become the parishioners of the Roman Catholic Hospital Chaplain.

106/07 **CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

Advocacy Report

Chief Officers had met with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to discuss the report. Some further work had been requested and another meeting planned for December.

Breast Screening

Reference was made to recent media coverage and it was noted that the Northern Health and Social Services Board continues with its screening plan with the number of women waiting outside the three year target for routine screening being steadily reduced.

Disability Action Plan

A Disability Action Plan for NHSSC had been submitted to the Equality Commission.

Accountability Review

The progress report against the Council's Annual Work Programme for the half year to 30 September 2007 which was sent to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was copied to members. A comment forwarded by Professor Kernohan was noted.

Car Registration Certificates

Members were reminded that any outstanding copies of car registration certificates should be forwarded immediately to the office.

Annual Review 2006/2007

The Annual Review for 2006/2007 was now available on the Council's website www.nhssc.org

NHSSC Expenditure

Expenditure to the end of September 2007 was £79,703.

Visit Reports

The reports of the visits to the WAVE Trauma Centre, Ballymoney and The Bridge Association, Antrim would be considered at the next Council meeting.

Visiting Response

Magherafelt Day Centre

In its response the Northern Health and Social Care Trust referred to the need for the Day Centre to continue to cater for people with brain injury who are referred to the centre and whose needs can be met there. Inevitably, with the mix of other client groups a balance has to be maintained in the numbers and conditions the staff and building can accommodate. Staff recruitment to some posts in all parts of the Trust remains problematic but it constantly attempts to fill vacancies as they arise.

With respect to the issue of transport the Trust clarified that it provides transport for the majority attending the Centre, however, where possible relatives are encouraged to provide transport as this results in a longer period of attendance during the day and allows more flexibility regarding arrival and departure times. The Council was assured that transport needs are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The dementia unit, including the indoor gardening area, was constructed at the same time as the remainder of the building. Subsequently garden paving was provided as a result of fund-raising. The Trust explained that the indoor gardening area was not equipped with heating as it was never intended to be used as a sitting area, more as an activity area. As priorities within the dementia unit have changed staff have requested that alterations are made. The Trust assured members that staff proposals would be costed and as resources become available, will be considered along with other priorities.

Mr Millar referred to the issue raised by the visiting team in relation to the need for smaller buses, manned by a driver/care assistant. Further clarification would be sought from the Trust. The disparity in terms of requirements for private use of buses would be queried.

November Visits

Arrangements were made for visits to the Samaritans, Coleraine and Ahoghill Health Centre.

As a follow-up and to provide further insight into the work of the Samaritans it was suggested that at a future date the Director of the Samaritans be invited to give a presentation to members.

108/07 **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 strongly supported the issue of this guidance and explained that the Health and Social Services Councils had already looked at a number of standards for public and personal involvement by HSSCs. These were being compared to those issued by the Department.

109/07 **CONSULTATION ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL CARE – NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has developed the draft policy on the provision of social care to adults resident within the Trust area. It aims to introduce criteria that ensures that the provision of services is fair and consistent and targeted at those in greatest need and to bring together the processes currently operating within the Trust area.

Mrs McClelland commended the policy but wondered if it would work in practice, particularly considering the limited resources and the need to ensure the completeness of information. Mr Nolan felt

the implication was that each Trust had a different criteria and Ms Armstrong called for a regional approach.

Members agreed that this should indeed be a regional Department-led policy as the Council would not wish to see different eligibility criteria applied to individuals depending upon where they live. All persons with the same circumstances should be treated equally.

It was unclear whether the procedure had a commencement date or whether it is currently applied or indeed will be applied retrospectively to those who are currently receiving support services.

The Council would include the issues raised by members in its response and encourage the Trust to constantly communicate with the public in relation to their expectations of the services and what can be provided.

110/07 **USING MOBILE PHONES IN HSC HOSPITALS BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE AUGUST 2007**

Members noted that the guidance offers a legal framework and an evidence base for Trusts to use in compiling a mobile phone policy. The Council would be in contact with Northern Health and Social Care Trust on this issue.

111/07 **CONSULTATION ON THE FINDINGS OF THE GMS GLOBAL SUM FORMULA REVIEW FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

As part of the original negotiations on the new General Medical Services Contract in 2003, it was agreed that the GMS global sum formula would be reviewed in light of the developing contract and the availability of new data. The Northern Ireland General Medical Services Working Group has now completed a detailed examination of all the factors in the current global sum formula and investigated a number of additional factors for possible inclusion in a revised formula. Members were invited to forward any comments to the Chief Officer for inclusion in the Council response.

112/07 **CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT STRATEGY FOR AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER IN THE NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD**

The consultation attempts to outline a realistic and achievable approach to improving services for those with autistic spectrum disorder. Mr Keenan, Acting Director Social Services, Northern

Health and Social Services Board, would be asked to give a presentation to members on 5 December 2007. A response to the consultation would be prepared following this.

113/07 **TRANSFORMATION OF BUSINESS SERVICES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE – SHARED SERVICES**

The purpose of this consultation is to assist the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety develop a policy on the most effective and efficient arrangements for the provision of business and other common services to the Health and Social Care System in Northern Ireland through the use of a Shared Services Organisation. Ms Armstrong referred to the uncertainty amongst staff and drew attention to the vast amount of bureaucracy and duplication within the health service and cited police checks as an example. It was suggested that people be given a license when first checked to avoid rechecking between jobs. This would reduce cost and the knock on effect on the community as a result of lengthy waits for police checks to be undertaken. The matter would be raised with the appropriate authorities.

114/07 **REPORTS FROM:**

NI Cancer Registry Launch of 2nd NI Cancer Survival Report on 4 October 2007

A report compiled by Professor Kernohan had been issued to members. It was noted that there had been improvements in cancer survival in Northern Ireland between 1993 and 2004. Survival is one of the best indicators as to the efficiency of diagnostic and treatment methods for cancer in Northern Ireland. During presentations the need was emphasised for community support in persuading women to attend for breast and cervical cancer screening and for widespread support for the new colorectal screening service, to be introduced next year. Patient stories proved a need for improved support when a screening test is positive, when a diagnosis is confirmed and at certain other critical points in the cancer journey. The theme of partnership was emphasised to address the disease in terms of prevention, treatment, support and palliation.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine Conference 2007 - Promoting Health and Well-being in the Community Conference – 10 October 2007

Mr Nolan explained that the purpose of the Conference had been to explore good practice in integrating complementary and alternative

medicine in health and social care. The keynote speech had been delivered by the Health Minister and the themes for the Conference were support, well-being and quality of life.

Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone 5th Annual Conference – 12 October 2007

Mr Nolan and Mr Millar attended the Conference, the theme of which was building healthier communities. The programme focused on three key building blocks for tackling health inequalities – building community capacity, building community networks and building social capital. Speakers provided a greater understanding of the Health Action Zone model, of the challenges and health related issues facing local communities within the Board's area and of the role that local communities can play in the development of health and social care services.

Mr Nolan noted that Dr Hunter, Chair of the North East Local Commissioning Group and guest speaker, felt that GPs were in the best position to know what the priorities are for patients and clients and to voice their concerns, and was surprised that this view went unchallenged by the audience.

Northern Ireland Cancer Network Stakeholder Workshop on Patient and Public Involvement in the Planning and Development of Cancer Services – 12 October 2007

The workshop afforded the opportunity to gain a full understanding of the Cancer Services Framework and to inform and influence the drafting and development of both the generic standards and the cancer specific standards for inclusion in the framework.

Over 140 delegates had attended the workshop, including Professor Kernohan and Mr Quinn. Mr Quinn reported that when afforded the opportunity to speak from personal experience he had highlighted the various difficulties faced by so many people and had queried why after ten years the survival rate for pancreatic cancer was still 2%.

A synopsis of the event had been shared with members. A second stakeholder workshop would be held in January 2008 when it is hoped a draft framework document will be shared for discussion.

Future Development of Service Framework Programme Workshop – 17 October 2007

The Safety, Quality and Standards Directorate of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has commenced work on a programme to develop service frameworks which will set specific measurable outcome focused standards for a range of health and social care services in Northern Ireland. Frameworks for five initial areas identified as regional priorities are currently being worked on and the next stage of the programme is to identify further priority areas for service framework development.

Mr Nolan reported that while the workshop provided the opportunity to influence the prioritisation process the identification of further framework areas had already been done. He encouraged the four Councils to liaise with the Department.

NHSSB Ambulance Liaison Committee

Mr Millar provided an overview of the meeting commenting upon the discussion that had taken place on transport for renal patients, ambulance response times, benchmarking of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service against Staffordshire Ambulance Service, airport alerts and provision of new ambulance stations.

The NHSSC representatives were pleased that the Committee would now meet bi-monthly and that dates had been agreed in advance for the next three meetings.

A number of members commented upon the abuse of ambulances for non-emergencies, the Trust status of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, its management structure and accountability.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Rights and Righteousness: Religious Pluralism and Human Rights Conference – 1-2 November 2007

Mrs Anderson and Mr Stevenson attended this Conference and would provide feedback at the next Council meeting.

115/07 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence list had been circulated with the agenda.

Mr Millar drew attention to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Minutes of 23 August 2007 and requested details of what

schools had been involved in the Language and Learning Project designed to assist mainstream schools in recognising and supporting children with learning difficulties in the areas of speech, language and co-ordination. This information would be sought from the Trust.

An additional item of correspondence was the WHSSC Minutes of 7 September 2007.

116/07 **OTHER BUSINESS**

Primary Care

Attention was drawn to the increase of 10% in GP salaries and calls made for the General Medical Services Contract to be reviewed. It was felt that GPs had no accountability and reference was made to the regular closing of many surgeries for training purposes half a day each week resulting in the number of contracted hours not being fulfilled. Reference was also made to the inflexibility of surgery hours and Mr McClelland commended his practice for providing two late evening clinics on a weekly basis. The matter would be raised at the next meeting of the Primary Care/NHSSC Forum.

The Care Quality Commission

Mr Millar informed the meeting that the Government planned to establish a new super-regulator to oversee health and social care in England with powers to fine hospitals and shut down wards. It would combine the functions of the existing Healthcare Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Mental Health Act Commission.

117/07 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the December Council Meeting be replaced with a workshop and be held on the morning of Wednesday 5 December 2007 in the Ross Park Hotel, Kells.

The meeting closed at 4.20pm.

Chairman

Secretary

Date