

Ref: SM/ND

17 January 2001

Mr A Hamilton
Director of Finance
DHSSPS
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3SJ

Dear Mr Hamilton

ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL BOARDS: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WEIGHTED CAPITATION FORMULA - A THIRD REPORT FROM THE CAPITATION FORMULA REVIEW GROUP

Thank you for giving the Southern Health and Social Services Council (Council) an opportunity to comment on the Third Report from the Capitation Formula Review Group. The Council acknowledges the efforts made by you and your colleagues in attempting to consult on what is a fairly complex issue. In considering the Report, the Council has also had discussions with the Southern Health and Social Services Board who are obviously better placed to provide an overview of the implications of the review for residents in its area.

The Council is committed to equity and equality in the distribution of resources and accepts the principle that resources should be targeted and focused on those in greatest need. However, the Council remains unconvinced that sufficient information is yet available to be definitive with regards to the distribution of resources. The position is likely to improve following the analysis of information gathered for the 2001 Census. The Council, therefore, contends that further work is required before the formula can be implemented and to do so without full information could adversely impact on vulnerable populations.

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The Council would like the Review Group to take the following matters into account.

Cross Border Issues

These have not been adequately addressed in the Capitation Formula. A study of the impact of cross border workers and the use of health and social services needs to be conducted. In addition, a large number of people from the South use accommodation addresses in border areas enabling them to receive free medical care. There has also been an increase in people from the South being admitted to nursing homes in the North. Once resident for a period of time they become the responsibility of their host Board. The formula must recognise the reality of these situations and build in a range of variables to cope with this unique situation.

Urban v's Rural Need

The Council is not satisfied that the variables used have satisfactorily taken the rural needs of the population into account. Further work needs to be done to ensure the disadvantages faced by rural populations are adequately addressed in the formula. Car ownership, for example, in rural areas is often higher. This, however, is not because the population is more affluent but that access to public transport is poor and people have no choice.

It would be appreciated if further work could be conducted to address the particular issues facing the Southern and Western Board areas. Any further reduction in resources to either of these Boards will have a serious repercussion in terms of delivery of an equitable range of services.

I trust these comments will be of assistance to the Review Group.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seamus Magee". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.

Seamus Magee
Chief Officer