

# **SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

**Minutes of The One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Meeting held in the  
Quaker Buildings, Lurgan on Tuesday 20 January 2004  
at 10.00 am**

**124/1        PRESENT:**     Mrs Roisin Foster, Chairman  
                                 Mr Norman Badger  
                                 Mr Patrick Brannigan  
                                 Mrs Annie Burrell  
                                 Mrs Lynne Cairns  
                                 Mr Brendan Curran  
                                 Mrs Nazy Harris  
                                 Mr Peter Kearns  
                                 Mr Brendan Montague  
                                 Mr Peter Murray  
                                 Mr John McArdle  
                                 Mr Jim McCart  
                                 Mr Wilfred McFadden  
                                 Mr Adrian McKinney  
                                 Mr Charles Rollston  
                                 Mrs Eileen Wright

**IN ATTENDANCE:**     Mrs Delia van der Lenden, Chief Officer  
                                 Karen McCoy, Research Officer

**APOLOGIES:**         Mr Sydney Anderson  
                                 Mrs Mary Ferris  
                                 Mr David Simpson

## **124/2        MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the previous meeting, which were circulated, were agreed and signed subject to amendment. Minute 123/9.2 to read *Mr McArdle said this .....* Minute 123/12.3 to record *Mr Murray raised the issue.....*

## 124/3      **MATTERS ARISING**

### 1      Solvent Abuse

In response to Mr Curran's request for statistics in relation to the number of deaths of children who had died from solvent abuse, the Chairman said the information was held by the Registrar's General Office but the Southern Board had access to the information. However when making the request we need to be specific about the age group, the area and the period related to. Mr Curran indicated he wanted information relevant to the Newry area and age 17 years. It was agreed to request this information.

The Chief Officer said that the Council had previously indicated a specific interest in information on local health promotion activities. We will seek to have reference to action to combat alcohol, drug and solvent abuse included in a planned presentation on the topic at a future meeting.

## 124/3      **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

### 1      Review of Public Administration

The Chairman reminded members of the meeting arranged for Thursday 22 January 2004 at 2.00 pm in Quaker Buildings.

She said that a paper based on the discussion at the November meeting will be circulated at the meeting on Thursday and not circulated in advance as indicated earlier. Following this second meeting of the sub-group the Council's final draft will be prepared and brought to the February meeting for approval.

### 2      Developing Better Services

The Chairman informed members that a special Board meeting to discuss the future profile of services in the Southern Board's area would be held on Tuesday 27 January 2004 at 2.30 pm in the Boardroom, Tower Hill, Armagh. The meeting is open to the public and members were encouraged to attend.

### 3 Proposed schedule of Council meetings

The Chairman presented a draft schedule of Council meetings throughout the year. Alternative meetings were scheduled to be held in the City and District Council areas and Councillors were requested to approach their relevant Council to host the meetings on the listed dates.

Mr Murray asked whether the meeting could be held in the afternoon. The Chief officer said that this would then clash with two Trust Board meetings which some Council members attend. It was agreed to bear Mr Murray's request in mind.

Mr Mc Kinney asked whether the meetings scheduled to be held in the District Council buildings could be hosted by community centres which are more acceptable to members of the public and would be likely to encourage more to attend. He made the argument that Council buildings were seen as formal premises and would not necessarily encourage public attendance. Mrs Harris supported this and said if it was likely to increase attendance by the public at Council meetings then this should be considered.

The Chief Officer explained that this schedule was regarded as a first phase of taking the meetings out to public venues and in identifying areas consideration was taken of a number of issues including; being able to accommodate the size of the meeting, accessibility and having the meeting in a politically neutral area.

Mr Brannigan and Mr Rollston said that the District Council has a number of buildings in addition to the Council's offices and these could be considered.

Members were requested to pass any suggestions for venues which could host future Council meetings to the Chief Officer.

**124/5**

## **CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

### 1 Trolley Waits at CAH

The Chief Officer reported that last week trolley waits again became a significant issue for Craigavon Area Hospital. In spite of 32 additional beds in the new medical unit and a further 20 elsewhere in the hospital, 29 patients were queuing in corridors for admission on Monday 12 January. The Chief

Officer reported that she visited the hospital informally that afternoon and also spoke to Mr John Templeton, Chief Executive later that day who confirmed that following a particularly busy weekend in A&E 29 people were waiting for admission on Monday morning.

The Chief Officer reported that she raised the issue at the meeting of the Southern Board who, while sharing the Council's concern, was confident that the measures put in place in the past year to prevent delayed discharges were now having an impact and more beds were being freed up.

The Board indicated that it was continuing to work with the CAHG Trust on delayed discharges and on a range of other measures aimed at maximising the capacity of the hospital to deal with peaks in admissions.

Mr Mc Fadden said that the trolley waits were a result of closing other hospitals in the area such as Banbridge and South Tyrone and that any trolley wait was totally unacceptable.

Mrs Burrell said she was concerned about people being discharged from hospital too early in order to ease the pressures for Beds. The Chief Officer in response to this said that community representatives at the Developing Better Services meetings had raised this issue and that assurances were given that proper arrangements were made for people before they were discharged.

### **Mr Brendan Curran left the meeting**

Mr McArdle said that more investment was needed outside Craigavon Area Hospital – eg in Daisy Hill, so that the Southern Board hospital services would be able to meet the increasing pressures and demands for services which an aging population will bring about.

The Chairman said that while the winter pressures initiatives were positive there were longstanding issues that still needed to be tackled. It was acknowledged that hospitals in the Southern Board area have recruitment problems in competing with the Belfast based hospitals. Whilst the public accepted that it was not possible to have a high tech hospital in every town with

specialist services, people expect that once they do travel they will be able to be admitted when this is necessary.

Mr Montague raised the issue of the length of time taken to make discharge arrangements – in particular the time spent waiting for a doctor to write a discharge letter and the time spent waiting for the pharmacy to provide the required medication. Mr Montague questioned whether more streamlined arrangements were not possible.

It was agreed that the Council should continue to monitor the situation and report back to members.

**124/6 SHSSB – SOCIAL CARE – (Presented at 10.00 am)**

The Chairman said Dr V Tohani, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, SHSSB was to be in attendance to present to members on the topic of MMR Triple Vaccine but unfortunately his father has taken ill and he could not attend. The Chairman welcomed Mr Brian Dornan, Director of Social Services, and thanked him for stepping in at short notice.

Mr Dornan began by referring to the various statutory responsibilities which Board and the Trusts have for children in instances where the State intervenes, which include responsibilities in relation to looked after children. In the Southern Board area the total child population is 94,000 children, of which 4,000 – 5,000 are regarded as ‘children in need’. Without the provision of additional support it is accepted that many of these children may not reach their full potential. Of this number, 390 are looked after children. Looked after children comprises children in foster care, those living in a children’s home and those who stay with their family but under social work supervision. In addition, children who receive respite care are another group which falls into this category. These are mainly children with a disability who live with their families but respite is provided as a support to the parents in their caring duties.

Mr Dornan outlined that the Trusts have key responsibilities towards looked after children. This includes a monthly visit to the child from the allocated social worker and a 6 monthly review meeting. Some difficulties have been experienced by

Trusts in the Southern Board area in relation to meeting these commitments. In November 2003, of the 390 children looked after; 5 children did not have an allocated social worker although all were visited by another social worker. 14 didn't receive a monthly visit (7 of these were due to one social worker being ill); 10 were visited by a social worker who wasn't their allocated social worker and in 5 cases, the 6 monthly review meetings did not take place on time.

Mr Dornan outlined the reasons why full compliance with these standards had not been possible. Trusts experience difficulties in recruiting social work staff. Armagh & Dungannon HSST currently have 30%-40% of vacancies not filled as it is particularly difficult to recruit on a temporary basis to cover either maternity or sick leave. 50% of social workers work in the area of childcare, which is recognised as a particularly challenging area of practice. Many choose to move to other programmes of care and some staff have been lost to the Republic of Ireland where social work salaries and terms and conditions are more attractive. There is also a loss from social work practice to management in order for individuals to progress their careers.

Mr Dornan highlighted the actions which have been taken to attempt to address the current problems. At a local level a group has been convened, consisting of the Directors of Social Services and the Directors of Human Resources, with the task of identifying how a career in social work in the Southern Board area could be made more attractive. This group has initiated recruitment drives in the South of Ireland and has identified ways to reorganise social work teams to facilitate specialisation as a means of retaining experienced staff. The Southern Board have also directed additional resources towards childcare social work including funding an additional team of social workers in the Newry & Mourne area.

A number of initiatives are taking place at a regional level. Currently there are 2,100 social work practitioners in Northern Ireland (social worker or senior social worker). Of these 50% work in childcare and 270 are in management and senior professional grades. From October 2004, social work training will become a 3 year degree course (with a shortened 2 year course for those with relevant qualification/experience). It is

hoped that this will increase the level of interest in school leavers identifying social work as a career option.

The number of social work training places has been increased. Last year the number totalled 163, this year the number expected to qualify is 219 and in 2007 the number anticipated is 258. Post-qualifying training including specialist training will also be available. The social work pay dispute has essentially been resolved - social work will be brought under the NHS pay arrangements under Agenda for Change. Under this, 2 additional senior grades will be created.

In summary Mr Dornan said that the staff shortages in social work will not be totally resolved in the next 4-5 years but it is expected that the situation will be much improved. Trusts continue to experience difficulties in meeting their statutory responsibilities but they are making every effort to do so. Work is ongoing locally and regionally to attract people into the social work profession.

Mr Dornan responded to a number of questions and comments raised by Council members.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dornan for his presentation and he left the meeting.

**124/7**

**SHSSB - WAITING LISTS**

**SHSSC 04/01**

The Chief Officer referred to the SHSSB report of January 2004 on Waiting List Performance Management. The Department had given Boards targets in relation to reducing waiting lists for hospital treatment to be met by March 2004. With 2 months still to go the SHSSB has exceeded its general target for the total number of inpatients and day cases waiting but there is still some way to go to achieve the target for those waiting 18 months or longer.

The Chief Officer reported that the issue of the lack of targets for outpatients' waiting lists had been raised with the Southern Board and will also be raised at regional level. For waiting list targets to be meaningful the number of people waiting to get into the system needed to be considered.

Mr McCart expressed concern in relation to the high number of people waiting 18 months or longer in November 2003 and the target to be achieved by March 2004. Mrs Foster commented that targets may be set because this is the level that is achievable in the timeframe and not necessarily the best quality of care as it may not be appropriate for anyone to wait 18 months for treatment. The Chief Officer referred to the fact that waiting list in Northern Ireland, and in particular the numbers waiting in excess of charter standards are the worst of any UK region.

## **124/8 ASADOC - Update**

The Chief Officer referred to the presentation Mr Eddie Ritson at the November meeting on the Board's plans to put in place a new integrated model of out-of-hours services by October 2004 and the possibility of GP services being co-located with hospital services. He indicated that the Board would be consulting the public on the changes and he would welcome input from the Council to this consultation process.

Following that meeting the Chief Officer met with Mr Ritson to discuss the role of the Council in the consultation process. The Council is not in a position to play a part in facilitating the consultation process on behalf of the Board. It will however be undertaking its own programme of engagement with local communities to inform its response to the Board's consultation paper. It was anticipated that the Board would issue the consultation paper in April with responses invited by September. The outline of the Council's plan for engaging with the public on the out of hours issue will be available for members at the February meeting. This plan will form part of the published work programme for 2004/05.

Council members raised various issues which they identified as problematic in the current arrangements for GP out of hours services. These included the issue of home visits, pharmacy access at night-time and week-ends, the location of the centres and parking facilities.

124/9

**BRIGGS CASE – SHSSB PROGRESS REPORT**

**SHSSC 04/02**

This report had been presented to the Southern Board at their January meeting. Chief Officer said that she was satisfied from the reports that the lessons learned from this tragic case were being applied within the service.

She reminded members that earlier we had sought a copy of the confidential Case Management Review Report from the Area Child Protection Committee and had now received a summary of that document. The Chief Officer told members that this document provides useful information on the CSM process and considerable detail on how the Lewis recommendations were being implemented. However it does not fill in the gaps in our knowledge about what should have happened in relation to the various professionals monitoring and visiting the Briggs twins and what the specific deficits in the service provided were. Following discussion it was agreed that that our focus should now be on monitoring the implementation of the Lewis recommendations. The Council would respond to the ACPC correspondence accordingly.

Mrs Harris expressed her surprise and concern at the outcome of the General Medical Council's (GMC) hearing in relation to the pathologist who conducted the autopsies in this case. The Chief Officer in response said that the State Pathologist Office came under the ambit of the NIO and was thus outside the remit of the Council.

124/10

**DEVELOPING BETTER SERVICES – Update on Public Engagement**

The Chief Officer said that a final draft of the Board's plan to implement the Minister's decisions on Developing Better Services would be considered at the special Board meeting on Tuesday 27 January 2004.

In relation to the public meetings which were held, the Chief Officer said that while attendance was variable the level of discussion at all the meetings was very good and the views expressed had been incorporated into the draft document.

124/11

**TRUSTS' BUSINESS**

**SHSSC 04/03**

1 Armagh & Dungannon HSS Trust

Minutes of Trust Board meeting held on 5 November 2003 and agenda for meeting on 14 January 2004.

2 Craigavon Area Hospital Group Trust

Minutes of Trust board meeting held on 16 December 2003 and agenda for meeting on 20 January 2004.

124/12

**VISIT REPORTS**

1 Newry Social Education Centre (SEC) – verbal report

Mr McCart reported on the Council visit to Newry SEC. He said that the building was unsuitable for its current use. The top floor of the building was unused due to the nature of the users' disabilities and because there was no lift access. The Council team were impressed by the dedication of the staff team but considered they were not able to use their skills to the full potential because of the inadequate accommodation. Mr McCart said they saw people with very severe and complex disabilities being cared for in very difficult circumstances. He expressed concern that a feasibility study in relation to a replacement building had been carried out some years previous but nothing further progressed. It was agreed that because of the serious concerns expressed the Council would contact Newry & Mourne HSS Trust for an update on the plans for a replacement building.

Mrs Burrell enquired about the waiting lists for a place in a SEC. Mrs Foster in response said that previously people attending a SEC may have been allocated 5 days per week but at present more people are being offered a limited number of days because of the availability of places. Ms McCoy, the Research Officer, outlined the work the Council is currently conducting on day services for people with a learning disability. She stated that she has yet to meet with representatives of Newry & Mourne HSST and Armagh & Dungannon HSST but from the information provided by Craigavon & Banbridge HSST it seemed that the number of people attending SECs with profound and/or complex disabilities had increased and demand would continue to do so in the next couple of years.

Mrs Harris said that Ceara School in association with some interested individuals including herself had identified the lack of day opportunities for school leavers in the Lurgan area as a problem. As such the Housing Executive was approached to provide premises which they agreed to do and Ceara School was now providing day opportunities post-school.

2 Rehabilitation Stroke Unit, Lurgan Hospital – response to visit report

Letter of response was tabled.

**124/13 FOR INFORMATION**

- 1 SHSSB Minutes of Board Meeting – 9 December 2003
- 2 SHSSB – Monthly update on Care Management Pressures
- 3 C/B Comm HSS Trust – District Nursing Newsletter
- 4 Southern Investing for Health – Health Improvement Plan and Beyond – ‘Dare to Dream’
- 5 Wraparound Update – December 2003
- 6 News Article – Retailers in drive to tackle solvent abuse

**124/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Murray reported that he attended a meeting of the R & I Unit on 19 January and deputised for Mrs Mary Ferris at Newry & Mourne HSST Board meeting.

Get well wishes were extended to Nancy Downard.

**124/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 17 February 2004. Venue to be arranged

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_