



Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC)

Update December 06

Patient Power in Kilkeel

People living in the beautiful but remote area of the Mournes around Kilkeel have been concerned for some time about the new GP out-of-hours (OoH) arrangements. Concerns came to a head on 27 June at a meeting hosted by the SHSSC when about 360 people came to the Kilmorey Arms to express their views.

Worries about the existing service included the difficulty of travelling to the facility in Newry and the perceived reluctance for GPs from the centre to make home visits to the Mournes. The Southern Health & Social Services Board (SHSSB), which had agreed to review the arrangements for the Mourne area, published a consultation document earlier in the summer in a bid to make the service more acceptable to Mournes' residents. Its favoured option was to provide a nurse led service backed up by GP visiting service available at a point during the evening. The Board requested that the SHSSC convene a public meeting to support the consultation.

The lively and forthright meeting on 27 June was attended by local politicians, community activists and service users from every part of Kilkeel and the surrounding area. People took the opportunity to tell their experiences of deficits in the current service and were concerned that the Board's preferred option would not facilitate proper access to a GP when needed.

The SHSSC was able to use the views expressed at the meeting to make our response to the consultation document. In total the Board received some 50 responses and a petition with over 5,000 signatories. At its September meeting the Board decided to engage with the local community to explore alternative options. It has invited the SHSSC to help it put in place a suitable method of doing this.

The SHSSC is happy that there will be now be a partnership with the local communities to explore how the service can be improved. Our role will be to seek to ensure that service users are fully involved in the process. Watch this space for further news!

Complaints News

The Council offers a confidential, independent and free Complaints Support Service to people who have concerns about care provided by Family Health Service Practitioners (GPs, Dentists etc) and Trusts (hospitals and community care services). Last year we helped with 84 complaints ranging from dissatisfaction about staff attitude and behaviour to concerns about the care of a loved one who has died. In 05/06 most complaints related to treatment and care. This continues to be the single greatest source of dissatisfaction year on year.

Whilst we do not investigate complaints the Council's Complaints Officer, Colette Hart provides advice on the complaints procedure and helps you to make your complaint – drafting letters, contacting health providers on your behalf, attending meetings and preparing applications for Independent Review and the Ombudsman.

If you would like more information, or wish to discuss a matter in confidence, contact Colette on 028 3834 9900 or at cmhart@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk. Colette can also provide information on a range of matters including - changing GP, registering with a dentist and access to health records.

Equality Matters!

The Council, like other designated bodies, is required to have regard to the Section 75 Equality Obligations in carrying out its work.

“A guide to the Health and Social Services Councils” has been translated into a range of languages including - Portuguese, Polish, Chinese, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian and we are working on the translation of “Your Guide to Helping you to make a Complaint”.

Earlier in the year we made links with Lithuanian mothers-to-be via Sure Start in Dungannon. February saw the launch of “We are People Too! – What Adults with a Learning Disability think of GP Services”. This was a joint project with Prospects Day Opportunities in Newry. Dr Keith McCollum, who accepted the report on behalf of the Southern Health and Social Services Board, said that it would be used as a training tool for staff in GP practices.

For information on more of the Council's equality initiatives, and the picture across the Southern Health and Social Services Board, see Issue 2 of Equality in Action (available from the SHSSC or by contacting the Equality Assurance Unit on 028 3831 6691).

GMS Contract

The GMS Contract Report was produced in September after months of gathering data and information about the new contract.

The SHSSC were interested to find out what the GMS Contract meant to people using local GP services. In particular, the project focussed on communication and patient access. The key findings included;

ACCESS:

GP Practices do not all operate the same system for organising the 3 most important issues for patients which were opening times, making appointments and ordering repeat prescriptions.

Patients are experiencing difficulty making appointments or ordering repeat prescriptions with some practices stipulating that patients must come into the surgery to order prescriptions, while other practices facilitate this by telephone

COMMUNICATION:

The majority of practices provide patients with information on rights, opening times, prescriptions, GMS Contract etc. However it is evident from the data that the majority of patients do not seem to be getting such information.

Leaflets are often left at reception desks, while notice boards can be overlooked if they contain too much information. There may be a link between the way in which information is presented to patients and their ability to access it.

Copies of the report are available at the office or on request.

Casualty Watch 2006

The Council continues to work hard for those patients who are using health services and Casualty Watch enabled the Council to visit the A&E Departments in both Craigavon Hospital (CAH) & Daisy Hill Hospital (DHH) to assess what the experience for patients was like.

Council members accompanied staff to both hospitals for a week to see what it was like to go through the system and assess how both hospitals might improve services to become more patient friendly.

Both hospitals were fully co-operative in the matter and found it a useful exercise to get the patients perspective on using the department.

The findings suggested areas for improving the patient experience, such as providing more parking spaces, more information and introducing more comfortable and user friendly surroundings.

The experience enabled the SHSSC to gain an insight into a particularly busy and hectic world and we welcomed the chance to work with both hospitals in carrying forward improvements for patients. Staff in both hospitals, carry out tremendous work, in what were sometimes very difficult circumstances and that needed to be recognised.

Recent developments show there have been improvements and at follow-up meetings to assess the impact of the recommendations it is heartening to note that some of the improvements have been made.

CAH has now installed a plasma screen television to inform patients about charter times and provide entertainment. Canopies have now been placed over the public telephones to provide patients with greater privacy.

We plan to re-visit Casualty Watch in 2007 and look forward to helping improve services for patients.

Improving Medical Services to Rural Communities

Following concerns about patient safety in Sperrin & Lakeland Trust earlier the year, the DHSSPS has convened a Rural Medicine Working Group to look at the provision of rural medicine across Northern Ireland.

There been a particular emphasis on the provision of general inpatient medicine in local and rural hospitals which do not offer the full range of acute services.

The Health & Social Services Councils have been asked to become involved in these discussions to represent the public interest. The Working Group plans to establish standards for rural medicine and as part of this process will be consulting with service users and the public. Watch this space for further news

Patient Client Council

Under RPA, The Patient Client Council (PCC) is due to replace the four Health and Social Services Councils in April 2008. The Councils have been involved in a DHSSPS Project Team to explore how the PCC should carry out its functions of representing the public interest in health and social care.

To date, four possible options for the PCC's structure have been identified. The DHSSPS will continue to look at the feasibility of these with the aim of producing a preferred option, which will then go out for formal consultation.

The SHSSC will continue to promote a model that we feel will best meet the needs of individuals and communities in the Southern Area.

Members of the SHSSC

The members of the SHSSC are:

District Council Representatives

Armagh City & District Council

Ms Sharon Haughey

Mrs Sylvia McRoberts

Banbridge District Council

Mr Wilfred McFadden

Craigavon Borough Council

Mr George Savage

Dr Phillip Weir

Mr Kenneth Twyble (Mayor)

Dungannon & South Tyrone

Borough Council

Mr Norman Badger

Newry & Mourne District Council

Mr William Burns

Mr John Feehan

Mr Brendan Curran

Lay Members

Mrs Lynne Cairns, (Waringstown),
Chair

Mr Peter Kearns (Newry)

Mr Jim McCart (Warrenpoint)

Mrs Nazy Harris (Tandragee)

Mr Adrian McKinney (Portadown)

Mr Peter Murray (Newry)

Mrs Eileen Wright (Banbridge)

Mrs Florence McMahon (Newry)

Mr Lawrence Donaghey (Aghalee)

Mr Kieran Murphy (Dungannon)

Mrs Annie Burrell (Waringstown)

Mr Clive Henning (Portadown)

Mrs Mary Ferris (Newry)

Staff in the SHSSC

Stella Cunningham is the Chief Officer. Stella's role includes influencing the activities of the SHSSB regarding proposals/plans for ensuring that the views of the general public are taken account of. Stella also monitors the performance of particular services against the standards set out in their charters and provides the public with information about services.

Colette Hart, Complaints and Equality Officer provides advice and support to members of the public wishing to make a complaint or access information about services / issues.

Patricia Jordan is the Project Development Officer. Patricia supports the research and analysis of data to monitor and assess the ongoing provision of health and social care in the local area and takes forward projects to develop and enhance the Council's role. Patricia's main projects this year were the Casualty Watch 2006 and assessing the new GMS contract. She has also recently commenced work on a regional Advocacy project in Nursing / Residential homes.

Caroline McGuigan is the Community Participation Officer and links in with community/voluntary groups who have an interest in health and social care issues. Caroline promotes a rights based approach to accessing services and assists in identifying and meeting the needs of the community/voluntary sector in order to highlight concerns to the Council.

Nancy Downard is the Office Manager and provides administrative support to the Chairman, Chief Officer and members of the Council.



Members and Staff of the Southern Health & Social Services Council at the launch of the Southern Health & Social Services Council Review 2006

If you would like any further information please contact:

Caroline McGuigan, Community Participation Officer
SHSSC, Quaker Buildings, High Street, Lurgan, BT66 8BB
Telephone: 028 3834 9900 / Fax: 028 3834 9858 or
Email: carolmc@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk

Information is also available on our website at www.shsscouncil.net