



## Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC)

UPDATE MAY 07

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### WELCOME

There has been a lot of work happening at the Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC) in the time since our last Update in December 2006 and this is just a flavour of some of the work which is ongoing.

If you have any queries about the SHSSC or our work please feel free to contact us on (028) 38 349900 or email [reception@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:reception@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk)

### ONGOING WORK

#### Update on the Patient Client Council (PCC)

Consultation on the primary legislation is complete and the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS) is currently developing a business case on the organisational structure, staffing, location and budget which will allow secondary legislation to be passed.

Whilst this is ongoing the SHSSC has several concerns;

The Southern Trust is already established and the Health & Social Services Authority is operating in shadow form. However, the PCC is nowhere to be seen. There is a fear that this could lead to the voice of service users being weakened at this early and crucial stage.

The SHSSC is also concerned that the PCC may have a small executive board and lose the broad based local membership that we currently have. We will continue to argue on the need to have strong local links and an ability to genuinely represent the views of service users.

#### Update on Consultation Meetings

Recently the SHSSC has been consulting with community and voluntary groups on a number of topics including;

- The Review of Public Administration (RPA)
- Complaints
- Rural Medicines
- User Involvement

## RPA Consultation

In February the DHSSPS issued the new Health and Social Service (Reform) (NI) Order which sets out the legalities of the Health & Social Services restructuring. From February to April a number of meetings were held with community organisations from across the southern area to discuss the order, find out their views and ensure that communities were kept up to date on what was happening.

Some of the main concerns coming from the meetings were:

- ◇ What enforcement powers the Patient & Client Council will have in terms of making recommendations / providing advice and what its influencing powers will be?
- ◇ What the responsibility and accountability of the different bodies eg Local Commissioning Groups will be?
- ◇ How to ensure smaller community / voluntary groups are not lost in the transition?
- ◇ Whether the new organisations will work with community / voluntary groups and if so how?
- ◇ Whether specialised services will become more centralised and the impact this may have on rural communities?

- ◇ What opportunities will exist for community / voluntary groups to influence how engagement takes place and the levels it takes place at when the new systems are implemented?

## DHSSPS Complaints Consultation

In November the DHSSPS issued a consultation paper setting out new proposals for handling complaints.

The new proposals remove the Independent Review Stage of the complaints process allowing the complainant to go to the Ombudsman at a much earlier stage.

To inform members of the public and ascertain their views a regional workshop was held in January and subsequent meetings took place with groups from across the southern area including carers, senior citizens and rural communities.

At the meetings a number of issues were raised including;

- ◇ The waiting time for a complaint to be fully investigated by the Ombudsman. (Currently it stands at 101 weeks).
- ◇ How the Ombudsman's office would be resourced for the additional workload.

- ◇ What the enforcement powers of the Ombudsman are.
- ◇ What links the Ombudsman has to the various Health & Social Services bodies including the SHSSC and RQIA was unclear.

Overall while participants were not fully satisfied with the current process the majority of people stated the Independent Review Stage should be kept although be more independent whilst the Local Resolution Stage should be strengthened.

The consultation period closed at the end of March. Now we have to wait to see what the Department will do however we do not anticipate change any time soon.

See our website for a copy of the joint response from the 4 Health and Social Services Councils.

### Rural Medicines

In April 2006, the DHSSPS convened a Rural Medicines Working Group to look at the provision of general inpatient medical services in local and rural hospitals and develop quality standards for inpatient medical services in rural and local hospitals.

Some of the key issues the group considered were

- quality and safety issues.

- the needs of rural populations to access high quality and safe services,
- how primary and community care could support patient access and management
- how to ensure effective responses to manage emergencies and

As part of the project a regional consultation meeting was held with community representatives in January.

Further consultation meetings will be held with local community / voluntary groups and interested members of the public are invited to contact the SHSSC for further information.

### User Involvement Standards

Following on from research conducted by the SHSSC on "Assessing the Impact of Service User Participation in the Southern Area" the SHSSC facilitated a four Council workshop to look at developing standards and indicators for each of the principles developed.

The SHSSC felt this was an important piece of work at this time as the principles, standards and indicators will not only be used to develop best practice for our own engagement with service users but also to influence the proposed

commissioners and providers in the new structures and to influence the PCC's work and promote its role as a commentator on standards of user participation and best practice.

Work has been ongoing and service users / community representatives will be consulted. If you would like to know more about the User Involvement Principles or Standards please contact the SHSSC.

## **Mental Health**

Mental Health services in the SHSSB area have seen a significant investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) over the past few years.

From 2000 the number of staff employed has doubled, however services remain under pressure and research indicates that at least 10% of children in the area are likely to have some degree of mental health disorder.

A review of Child and Mental Health services in the southern area highlighted some of the main problems including carers / patients being unaware what services are available and difficulties experienced by HPSS professionals when attempting to work across boundaries with other statutory agencies.

The review also made a number of recommendations including the development of a managed network across the southern area to provide additional capacity and ensure more integration between agencies.

Further work is ongoing however we will continue to keep you updated on this issue.

## **Difficulty finding a dentist?**

Many people are finding it increasingly difficult to get an appointment with an NHS dentist.

In October 2006 we carried out a telephone survey of dentists. Results indicated that over 50% of dentists in the southern area were no longer taking on NHS patients and would only register new patients as private.

If it was difficult to find an NHS dentist last October, the situation is much worse now. Many people don't realise that registration with a dentist has to be renewed every 15 months. So if you haven't visited your dentist for some time, you may no longer be on their list. The SHSSC is encouraging everyone to register with a dentist and to attend regularly for appointments. We have also urged the DHSSPS to speedily negotiate a new contract for dentists to ensure that treatment is accessible on the NHS.

## **Complaints Update**

### Has the merger on 1 April changed anything on the complaints front?

There have been no major changes so far. The mechanisms for dealing with complaints within the old Trust structures are still there so if you have an ongoing complaint, your contact point will be the same.

This is a period of transition and it will take some time for all the changes to be put in place. It may be confusing for complainants, as complaints leaflets are out of date and there is limited information on the New Trust's website.

There will also be changes of personnel in the coming months as some of the Directors responsible for complaints within the old organisations move to new posts.

In the new Southern Health and Social Care Trust complaints will come under the Medical Directorate.

Until the changes are finalised we would advise you to contact the SHSSC if you have a new complaint.

## **Advocacy Project Update**

The issue of advocacy was brought to our attention via the Office of Fair Trading 'Super-Complaint', which highlighted the lack of this service.

Over the past year a joint project led by the Health & Social Services Councils and RQIA (The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority) and involving other key stakeholders has been set up to review what advocacy services are available for older people in residential nursing homes.

The aim is to produce a report on access to advocacy services for elderly people living in registered nursing and care homes.

The report will include details of current services, their strengths, weaknesses, best practice and issues and how best to provide this service based on the needs of the elderly people residing in care homes.

The project involved several components;

- Sending residential nursing homes questionnaires to assess the knowledge of advocacy services.
- Sending a questionnaire to community / voluntary groups who provide advocacy services to ascertain the level of the service.
- Holding focus groups with relatives of patients in care.
- Holding semi-structured interviews with residents.

- Collating and analysing these findings.

A seminar will be held in June and work is ongoing.

*Watch this space for more information*

### **Council Meeting Dates / Venues.**

The SHSSC holds regular meetings which are open to members of the public. The next meetings are;

19 June 07 at 10.00am  
Banbridge District Council

18 September 07 at 10.00am  
SHSSC, Quaker Buildings, Lurgan

20 November 07 at 10.00am  
SHSSC, Quaker Buildings, Lurgan

15 January 08 at 10.00am  
SHSSC, Quaker Buildings, Lurgan

### **Community Information Programme**

In response to uncertainty on what services were available and how / when to use them the SHSSC has been piloting a community information programme for community / voluntary groups on health and social services. The programme is entitled "What you always wanted to know about Health and Social Services".

As part of the pilot an evaluation has been recently carried out. Findings indicate that the majority of participants had a high level of satisfaction with the training on how to complain and how to access services however organisational structures not of as much interest. In light of these findings and recent changes in health & social services structures the programme will be revised for future training sessions.

The evaluation and information on the programme is available by contacting the SHSSC office.

### **On the Move!**

In the past few months a few staff have moved on from the SHSSC. We would like to say goodbye to Debbie Harrison, Receptionist Patricia Jordan, Projects Development Officer and Caroline McGuigan, Community Participation Officer who have left the SHSSC to take up new posts.

The staff and council members thank them for their hard work and dedication and wish them well for the future.

### **Further Information**

*If you would like any further information on any of the topics in this update please contact Stella Cunningham, Chief Officer.*