

# News release



19 December 2005

## **"EXCELLENT" AMBULANCE SERVICE SAY SERVICE USERS**

The Ambulance Service in the Southern Area provides an excellent service with limited resources, according to the Southern Health and Social Services Council (SHSSC), the body charged with representing the public's view of services to the planners and providers of health care services.

The December Council meeting heard a presentation from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) and Council Members had an opportunity to raise a number of issues particularly in relation to ambulance response times in the Banbridge, Rathfriland and South Armagh Areas.

Mrs Lynne Cairns, Chairman of the SHSSC, said after the meeting, "The Council was most encouraged to hear of new developments within the ambulance service. These will further improve the service's ability to meet target response times. There are a number of areas in the Southern Area where the Council believes that there is inadequate ambulance cover and we will continue to raise these with the SHSSB as the service commissioner. However, we were most impressed by the

innovative approach of the ambulance service and the commitment to caring by ambulance staff."

The meeting also explored how members of the public can support the emergency service. Mrs Cairns added, "We would like to remind members of the public that ambulance personnel are greatly aided in responding to emergencies where house numbers are clearly displayed and where emergency callers from their own homes can provide the postcode of their house."

The meeting also heard of the development of a 'First Responder' service for rural areas. This scheme allows NIAS work alongside members of isolated communities to ensure a speedy first aid response to those in need. Anyone interested in finding out more about the 'First Responder' system should contact, Mr John Wright, NIAS, Knockbracken Health Care Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast. Tel: 028 9040 0999

Ends

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- **The Southern Health and Social Services Council is one of 4 Health and Social Services Councils set up in 1991 to represent the views of patients and users of the health and social services. The Council has a total of 24 members, 40% of whom are nominated by District Councils in the Southern Area. The remainder are appointed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety – 30%**

**voluntary/community representatives and 30% are nominees with an interest in health and social care.**

- **Health and Social Services Councils have a right to be consulted by Health and Social Services Boards about and plans for development of services, or where significant changes are being considered. Councils play an important part in representing the views of consumers of services to the decision makers, and provide advice and support to patients and service users in relation to complaints procedures.**

**If you require any further information please contact :**

**Mrs Stella Cunningham, Chief Officer. Tel: 028 3834 9900**

**The Council's website address is: [www.shsscouncil.net](http://www.shsscouncil.net)**