

News release



20 April 2005

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL MEETS

The April meeting of the Southern Health & Social Services Council, held in Kilkeel, was well attended by the public and local politicians who are concerned about the impact on the Kilkeel and Mourne area of changes to GP Out of Hours Services. The Council, which has a role to act on behalf of the public to improve the range, type and quality of health and social care services and to monitor the quality of services, holds a monthly public meeting at various locations throughout the Southern Area.

Mr Eric Bowyer, Chief Executive of Newry & Mourne HSST addressed the meeting on service developments planned for the area. These included options for the upgrading of facilities at Daisy Hill Hospital and a plan recently submitted to the DHSSPS to replace the existing Social Education Centre in Newry.

Members of the public expressed considerable concern to the Council about the new 'doctor on call' arrangement being operated in the area by the Southern Health & Social Services Board. One of the problems raised was the length of the journey from Kilkeel and Annalong area to the Out of Hours Centre in Newry. Local residents reported that the

journey was likely to take anything between 45 - 60 minutes, which could have safety implications for a seriously ill person.

Council Chairperson, Mrs Lynne Cairns, speaking after the meeting, said, "The Council is concerned about the difficulties being experienced in the Kilkeel area. We will be contacting the Southern Health & Social Services Board to take this matter up with them. We are aware that the Board is currently monitoring response times in this area and reviewing access to the minor injuries service locally. It is important that everyone works together in this matter to ensure that an effective Out of Hours service is delivered to everyone in the Southern Area."

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 :
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The Council's website address is: www.shsscouncil.net