

News release



28 June 2006

FUTURE PROVISION OF OUT OF HOURS CARE IN THE MOURNE AREA

A packed meeting attended by over 300 people and hosted by the Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC) had an opportunity to debate proposals to enhance GP Out of Hours provision in the Mourne Area recently.

The meeting heard from representatives of the Southern Health and Social Services Board (SHSSB), NI Ambulance Service and Newry & Mourne HSS Trust about plans to make the service more local and responsive to need. The SHSSB is currently consulting with the local community about a number of options to develop the service from April 2007.

Mrs Stella Cunningham, Chief Officer of the SHSSC, said, "We are delighted that so many people took the opportunity to hear about the proposed changes and express their views. The meeting was very lively, with great concern being expressed about how the Out of Hours system currently operates in the Mourne Area. The clear message from the meeting was that the local community want to see a more locally based

service that can offer appropriate and timely access to a GP. The SHSSC, in our role as representing the public interest in health and social care matters, will be responding to the Board's consultation document to reflect the feeling of the public meeting. We will be watching developments in this area to ensure that the public is adequately engaged with by the Board in reaching its final decision.

Anyone using the Out of Hours service in the Mourne Area who feels that they are not getting the best out of the system, can contact the SHSSC, for assistance in taking the matter up with the service."

The Council can be contacted on Tel: 028 3834 9900 or e-mail: reception@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk

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