

# News release



13 February 2006

## **WE ARE PEOPLE TOO!**

A visit to the GP can be a puzzling experience for a person with a learning disability, according to a recent report produced jointly by the Southern Health and Social Services Council (SHSSC) and Prospects Day Opportunities Newry.

The report, 'We Are People Too', explores the patient's journey through the GP service from the perspective of the Citizenship Group at Prospects Day Opportunities Newry. This group of 16 adults with a learning disability and their support staff worked with the Southern Health and Social Services Council to jointly produce the report.

Speaking after the launch, Stella Cunningham, Chief Officer with the SHSSC, said, "We hope that the report will encourage GPs to provide a person centred service. The report highlights how confusing the system can be for people with a learning disability. It appeals for doctors and other staff to speak to the patient rather than their parents or carers and to consider how to improve communicate and understanding".

It was highlighted on the day of the launch by the members of Prospects Newry Day Opportunities Citizenship Group, that they had valued the

opportunity of working with the SHSSC in producing an accessible report regarding GP services for adults with a learning disability.

Sheila McComish, Manager, Prospects Newry Day Opportunities commented, "Identifying their own health needs can be a major challenge for people with learning disabilities, the majority of people want to live 'ordinary lives', what does this mean - well, the basics of life: to have choices and be able to make those choices, to have meaningful activity and of course *good health care* appropriate to their particular needs and circumstances"!

The launch saw the report being presented to Dr Keith McCollum, GP and Primary Care Medical Advisor, representing the Southern Health & Social Services Board (SHSSB), as the commissioner of GP services. Dr. McCollum said, "I really wish to commend these young people for their colourful and enlightening report. We hope to use this in future training to highlight to staff working in practices, the difficulty folks with learning difficulties experience when they use our services".

Anyone wishing to receive a copy of the report should contact SHSSC on Tel: 028 3834 9900 or Prospects Day Opportunities Newry Tel: 3025 2501

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](http://www.shsscouncil.net)**