

SOUTHERN HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL



RESPONSE TO:

***MEASURES TO FACILITATE
THE PROVISION OF
GP OUT OF HOURS SERVICES
ON A CROSS BORDER BASIS***

January 2007

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MEASURES TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF GP OUT OF HOURS SERVICES ON A CROSS BORDER BASIS NOVEMBER 2006

1. The Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC) was set up by the Government in 1991 to represent the views and opinions of the public in the SHSSB area in relation to health and social care services. The Councils are independent from those who plan, manage and provide health and social care services.
2. The SHSSC has input into the CAWT Cross Border GP Out of Hours (OoH) Project Board to represent the four Councils and to provide a lay public interest perspective.
3. The SHSSC welcomes the initiative to facilitate border communities' easier access to GP Out of Hours services. We recognise that this is a complex issue that touches not just upon regulatory issues but also on legal and financial matters. The SHSSC will continue to track and comment upon developments.
4. In relation to the current position, the SHSSC notes that HSS Board performers' list, whilst a useful check for the HSSBs, is an unwieldy tool. Currently, the Boards operate four separate performers' lists. This means that a GP may not be deemed acceptable to one Board but is able to operate within another Board. The SHSSC would welcome a mechanism that brought about a more cohesive system within Northern Ireland but offers maximum protection to the general public.
5. The proposal to exclude medical practitioners from the Republic of Ireland participating in the GP OoH Pilots from the requirement to be on the HSSBs medical performers' lists appears reasonable. However, it will be necessary to be assured that such a system is robust and that checks in relation to non-national GPs working in the OoHs system in both jurisdictions are comparably rigorous procedures.

6. The paper comments that GPs will not be crossing the border to carry out home visits. This appears to be an appropriate measure. However, there may be some confusion about how the system will operate and early thought should be given to communication with the public to ensure clarity and appropriate use of the service.

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