

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Trust Board held on Thursday 23 August 2007 in the Lecture Theatre, Fern House, Antrim Area Hospital.

Present:

Mr J Stewart	Chairman
Dr C Ackah	Non Executive Director
Ms N Evans	Chief Executive
Mr S Forsythe	Non Executive Director
Mr N Guckian	Director of Finance
Mr G Houston	Director of Women's and Children's Services/ Executive Director of Social Work
Mr R McCann	Non Executive Director
Mr J Moore	Non Executive Director
Mr M Rankin	Non Executive Director
Miss B Scott	Director of Emergency, Primary Care and Older People's Services/ Executive Director of Nursing
Professor D Whittington	Non Executive Director

In attendance:

Mr O Donnelly	Director of Mental Health and Disability Services
Mrs J Melaugh	Director of Human Resources
Mr M Sloan	Director of Strategic Planning and Performance Management
Mrs A Douglas	Assistant Director Elective and Acute Services (Representing Mrs Hinton)
Dr M Mannion	Deputy Medical Director (Representing Dr Flanagan)
Mrs M Mulholland	Head of Communications
Mrs M McDowell	Executive Assistant

Apologies:

Dr P Flanagan	Director of Medicine and Governance
Mrs C Hinton	Director of Acute and Elective Services
Ms P Montgomery	Non Executive Director
Mr T Creighton	Northern Health and Social Services Council

Five members of staff and two members of the public were in attendance.

TB47/07 Chairman's Business

The Chairman reported that on:

- 2 July 2007, with the Chief Executive he had attended a graduation dinner at the University of Ulster, Coleraine;
- 19 July, he had visited facilities on the Holywell Hospital site with Mr Donnelly;

- 23 July, he had attended a very successful conference on dementia and mental health services at the Comfort Hotel, Antrim, to launch the Trust's strategy "Adding Life to years";
- 26 July, with the Chief Executive, he had visited Mid - Ulster Hospital;
- 2 August, with the Chief Executive he had visited facilities at Whiteabbey Hospital;
- 6 August, he had welcomed the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Patricia Lewsley, to launch the Trust's Corporate Plan for 2007/10 and visit facilities at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Child Development Centre in Antrim; and
- 15 August, he had attended a meeting of the Chairs Committee of the Chief Executive's Forum held at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

Members also noted the various events associated with the Milk Cup Football Tournament which the Chairman had attended over the summer months in Ballymena, Ballymoney and Coleraine.

In referring to his visits to Holywell, Mid Ulster and Whiteabbey Hospitals, Mr Stewart stated that he had been deeply impressed by the commitment and dedication of staff and the quality of services being provided.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to congratulate Leona Robinson, Senior Occupational Therapist in Whiteabbey Hospital who was a finalist for the Occupational Therapist of the Year Ward and the staff involved in the Integrated Medicines Management Project which had been shortlisted for the Outstanding Public Service Team of the Year Award.

TB48/07 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2007, copies having been circulated, were approved, on the proposal of Dr Ackah and seconded by Mr Rankin.

TB49/07 Matters Arising

(a) Senior Appointments

On referring to the appointments summary of Assistant Directors, Mrs Melaugh was pleased to report that the recruitment process at this level was now complete and fourth level appointments were also nearing completion.

In response to a query from Mr McCann, Mrs Melaugh indicated that all applications for premature/voluntary redundancy from second level staff had been completed and the Human Resources Directorate was now dealing with applications from senior staff at third and fourth level. As RPA progressed, Directors would be notified when expressions of interest in premature retirement/voluntary redundancy could be submitted in respect of staff below fourth level.

(b) Older People's Strategy

Miss Scott reported that, as part of an ongoing process to modernise services for older people, the Trust was currently considering the care packages of 16 elderly people in the Braid Valley Hospital so that the patients could be transferred to appropriate community settings. The beds at Braid Valley would close and the funding would transfer to develop community based services to further the development of the model of care to shift focus from hospital to community home based care.

If approved the process would commence on 1 September 2007 and would result in the closure of a ward at the hospital by 31 October 2007.

In supporting this proposal, the Chief Executive paid tribute to the dedication and commitment of the staff working at the hospital, the high quality of care provided to patients over many years and the high respect for Braid Valley in the local community. However, she stated that the building was now over 170 years old and was in poor physical condition. The majority of in-patients had remained in the hospital due to the lack of adequate alternative services available in the community.

With the Trust's commitment to ensuring that people could live independently at home or in the community for as long as possible and with the additional investment in community services, member indicated their support for the proposal to reduce the complement of beds at Braid Valley Hospital by 16 by 31 October 2007.

(c) Capital Development - Day Surgery Unit

Mr Sloan reported that the tender for the new day surgery unit at Antrim Area Hospital had been awarded, as agreed at the previous meeting, and he hoped that the work would be completed by March 2008, with an operational date of May 2008 expected.

TB50/07 Finance

Mr Guckian circulated a paper on the financial position as at 31 July 2007. This stated that, although the financial strategy for the year had identified a projected deficit of £3.47 million, the current estimate, based on four months financial analysis, was for a deficit of £5.47million. He explained the key problem areas, both corporate and specific to directorates, and advised that the Senior Management Team would be working to address the deficit through a combination of deficit reduction, identification of additional income and cash releasing measures.

It was noted that the original forecast identified a deficit of approximately £2 million associated with Agenda for Change and it was assumed that this deficit would be covered by additional income.

Members recognised that the high level of agency costs in administration posts was associated with the effects of RPA and the moratorium placed on filling posts on a permanent basis. The over provision in residential and nursing care was being caused due to the efforts being made to reduce the number of delayed discharges in hospitals. Both areas were currently being examined.

The main deficit area in elective and acute services was noted as pharmacy, x-ray and laboratory costs and additional activity was reported in these services. It was recognised that the provision of pharmacy supplies would be centralised through the Regional Supplies Services and a check would be made to ensure that there was no evidence of over stocking items in these departments.

Mr Guckian advised that budget reports were being developed to reflect the new directorate structures and first cuts were now being distributed to managers to inform decision making at all levels. Financial control measures will need to be developed and implemented in the coming months.

TB 51/07 Trust Board Committees

Mr Stewart proposed that minutes of Trust Board Committees would be approved by the respective Committee before being presented to Trust Board. In presenting minutes to the Trust Board meeting, the Committee Chairman would provide an outline of the business undertaken, provide clarification on issues where required and seek Trust Board ratification, where necessary.

This approach was agreed by members.

(a) Audit Committee

Mr McCann then presented the minutes of the first meeting of the Audit Committee held on 26 June 2007, copies of which had already been circulated. He highlighted that the main business had been in relation to the annual accounts for 2006/07 for the three legacy Trusts and the presentation of the reports and draft Management Letters from the External Auditors. The Audit Committee had approved the annual accounts and these would be presented with the annual reports at the Trust Board meeting on 27 September 2007.

With regard to the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee, which had been based on regional best practice and had been circulated to members, it was felt that reporting on the Assurance Framework would be more appropriately undertaken by the Governance Committee. The Terms of Reference were therefore approved, subject to the deletion of the reference to the Assurance Framework.

(b) Governance Committee

Professor Whittington presented the minutes of the first meeting of the Governance Committee held on 2 July 2007.

Following discussion regarding the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee, and the requirement to include reporting on the Assurance Framework within the Governance Committee's remit, Professor Whittington indicated that the Committee would be reviewing the terms already circulated and would report back to Trust Board when these had been amended.

Members noted that there had been much discussion around the Governance Development Plan which supported the Trust's

Corporate Plan and was a means of developing governance within the organisation.

One of the objectives noted in the plan was to develop a strategy for integrated governance. Whilst this needed to be considered in more detail, it was felt that priority should be given to producing a risk management strategy for the Trust as soon as possible. Professor Whittington indicated that risk management appeared to be well embedded within the three legacy Trusts but each Trust had different policies and procedures operating. It would therefore be important to develop one uniform procedure for the Trust.

Further consideration needed to be given to the information on risks to be provided to Trust Board members, and this issue, along with other relevant governance matters, would be considered and developed at the Governance workshop to be held in October 2007.

Reference was made to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and Ms Evans reported that, as some concern had been expressed by the Chief Executives of Trusts in relation to workload associated with responding to RQIA inspections, this issue was being taken up with the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Authority.

TB 52/07 Scheme of Delegation of Statutory Functions

Mr Houston presented two reports detailing Homefirst and Causeway legacy Trusts' Discharge of Statutory Functions for the period 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007 in relation to community, disability, mental health and children's services. He indicated that the statutory functions concerned were those placed on the Northern Board and delegated to the Trust to discharge. The reports presented were required by the Northern Board on an annual basis and were produced in the prescribed format.

It was noted that all future annual Delegated Statutory Function Reports would be provided on a Northern Trust basis.

In relation to the Causeway report, Mr Houston referred to the major challenges faced by family and child care services and advised that addressing the 160 recommendations of the Social Services Inspectorate's Child Protection Inspection had been one of the main priorities in 2006/07. This had resulted in 86% of recommendations having been achieved to date and all referrals identified as child protection being allocated within one working day.

Whilst significant progress had been made on many matters, Mr Houston also highlighted some of the pressing difficulties and shortfalls in other areas of child care, such as looked after children and waiting lists for family support which would continue to be addressed.

Mr Forsythe praised the work of the staff within child care and the achievements that they had made under such significant pressures. He was assured that appropriate support was being given to these staff and, with the significant amount of investment and new staff having recently been made, it was felt that improvements would continue in the future.

In relation to the Homefirst report, members noted that activity levels and pressures of previous years had continued into the latest period and that the Trust had continued to deliver delegated statutory functions effectively.

Although some level of unallocated cases had been reported during the year, it was acknowledged that these had not been child protection/safeguarding cases

Particular reference was made to the difficulties related to the provision of respite services for children with a disability as a result of the closure of a residential unit in Randalstown. Members acknowledged that the unit had recently partially re-opened under the direct management of the Trust.

With regard to the discussion which had taken place at the previous meeting when members' attention had been drawn to the impact of the PSNI's decision to refer to social services all cases of domestic violence where there were children in the family, members noted that 1037 such cases had been referred to Homefirst between April 2006 – March 2007 and these represented a large proportion of the 1814 referrals from the Police.

Members also noted the work which had been undertaken in other areas such as mental health services, disability services and management of sex offenders.

Mr Houston and his staff were congratulated on preparing such detailed and informative reports which were recognised as being important reference documents for the Trust, the Northern Board and the Department. However, some concern was expressed regarding administrative workload involved in the production of future reports due to the amount of resources required to compile such detailed statistics and with significant savings on administrative costs being required by the Review of Public Administration and the Comprehensive Spending Review.

TB 53/07 Communications

Mrs Mulholland presented three papers for discussion and consideration:

(a) Communications Action Plan 2007/08

The objective of this plan was to communicate the Trust's business priorities and to promote and develop the culture and values of the Trust. Members were pleased to note that this plan addressed both internal and external communications.

There was agreement with the proposal to establish a communications group to include representatives from each Directorate and Staff Side and that it should be chaired by a Non Executive Director. Mr Rankin was nominated and he agreed to undertake this role.

It was also noted that media training would be arranged for Directors and relevant staff in the Trust. It was suggested that Non Executive Directors could participate in a programme as appropriate.

(b) Communication with Political Representatives

Mrs Mulholland outlined the need to develop and maintain effective relationships with public representatives and the communities served by the Trust and she presented a paper which aimed to develop a process to ensure that the Trust engaged with key influencers and kept them informed of corporate and operational developments within the Trust.

Members recognised the need to build influential relationships with public representatives and that feedback would be required through the process to ensure that the right approach was being taken.

(c) Media Activity

Members noted a paper which included details of media activity and public affairs tasks during July and August and Trust events planned to October 2007.

TB 54/07 Services to Children in Mainstream Schools

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Mildred Bell, Speech and Language Therapy Services Manager, to the meeting to make a presentation on the evaluation of the Language and Learning Project.

Mrs Bell reported that that this project was a multi agency model of service delivery co-funded by the Northern Health and Social Services Board, the North Eastern Education and Library Board and Causeway and Homefirst Legacy Trusts. It was designed to assist mainstream schools in recognising and supporting children with learning difficulties in the areas of speech, language and co-ordination.

Members noted how the project was managed by a Steering Group and Project Team and that 14 schools had been involved, each receiving training and in-class support for teachers, classroom assistants and children. On outlining the aims and objectives of the project, Mrs Bell indicated that the independent evaluation report had found that all of the aims of the project had been met, with teachers and classroom assistants being more confident and knowledgeable, children making improvements and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work being enhanced.

Mrs Bell then drew members' attention to the recommendations emanating from the project, making particular reference to:

- the need for early intervention;
- the importance of parental involvement;
- future development of interagency protocols and management structure;
- joint funding and training between health and education; and
- a greater degree of Occupational Therapy support.

With regard to developments, it was noted that the project would become established as a service in schools from 1 September 2007, new funding had been secured for specialist language teachers and multi agency support teams for schools had been developed.

Mr Houston congratulated Mrs Bell on her involvement in such an excellent initiative which he expected would have a significant impact on waiting lists and would improve integrated and co-ordinated services.

TB55/07 Agenda for Change

In presenting her report on the position with regard to Agenda for Change at August 2007, Mrs Melaugh was able to advise that significant progress had been made with 72% of staff assimilated on to AFC paycales. 65 staff were currently receiving salary protection as a result of assimilation.

Mrs Melaugh informed members that arrears had only been paid to 2450 staff and that the Senior Management Team had committed ongoing support for payroll to ensure that arrears would be processed as quickly as possible.

Members recognised the complexities of this process and , although it would be difficult to identify a completion date, were assured that there was full commitment from managers and staff to prioritise this work. The importance of keeping staff fully informed of developments was also recognised and this would be included in the Chief Executive's letter issued to staff each month.

TB 56/07 Zero Tolerance on Abuse to Staff

Copies of a leaflet produced by the DHSSPS Promoting Zero Tolerance on Abuse of Staff had been produced and it was reported that this leaflet would be issued to each member of staff with the Chief Executive's August letter. Trust Board reinforced a commitment to promoting and maintaining a safe working environment for staff and that attacks on staff would not be tolerated.

The Chief Executive advised on the policies and measures in place within the Trust to protect lone workers and those working out of normal hours and in emergency situations and also the appropriate action which would be taken where high level risks had been identified.

It was noted that various types of training on the management of violence and aggression were provided for staff who were required to deal with behaviours associated with certain types of illness suffered by service users.

Mrs Melaugh advised that information on violence and aggression towards staff would be included in the Human Resources report which was being developed for Trust Board and would be circulated in the near future.

The Chairman encouraged members to wear the badge supplied with the leaflet at appropriate times to reinforce the Zero Tolerance message and show their support for the campaign.

TB 57/07 Performance Report

In presenting the performance report at July 2007, Mr Sloan highlighted the key issues for the Trust.

- **Absence levels**

Members noted that absence levels remained high at 6.48% to date compared to an end of year outturn of 6.35%. Mrs Melaugh advised that detailed information identifying the problem areas had been produced for the Senior Management Team to help address this issue and she hoped that a Control of Absence Policy for the Trust would be available for consideration at the next Trust Board meeting.

- **Access Targets/ Waiting Times**

Whilst significant progress was being made to meet access targets and waiting times, Mr Sloan highlighted the other targets which were presenting challenges, such as numbers waiting for Dermatology, ENT and Gynae services and in breast cancer referrals. It was recognised that performance in these areas needed to be improved if targets were to be met and action plans were being prepared.

- **Commissioner targets**

It was noted that although the Service and Budget Agreement with the Northern Health and Social Services Board had not yet been agreed, the volumes inserted were being considered as targets at this stage. It was anticipated that these volumes would have to be delivered before any additional funding would be made available to respond to increased levels of activity to meet targets. It was recognised that structures and capacity plans needed to be in place if achievements were to be reached and work on this area was currently being undertaken.

Mr Sloan highlighted that the additional in-house activity over and above Service Budget Agreement activity and the use of the independent sector to help achieve access targets may create a financial risk if baseline volumes were not met.

- **Governance**

Excellent progress was noted in relation to the targets in respect of responding to complaints and for cleanliness and it was hoped that this performance would continue.

The Chairman stressed the importance of continually monitoring and reviewing the Trust's performance and this would be seen as a priority area for Trust Board.

TB58/07 NI Patient Safety Forum

The Chief Executive asked members to note a letter dated 10 August 2007 which had been received from Mr J Compton, Chairman of the NI Patient Safety Forum. This letter asked members to note the creation of the NI Patient Safety Forum in June 2007 to promote a safety culture within health and social care organisations and share best practice nationally and from around the world. The Northern Trust was a full member and would contribute to and participate in their work. The Forum aimed to keep Trust Boards informed of progress throughout the year.

Members noted the Terms of Reference for the Forum and that Mrs Hazel Baird, Head of Governance and Patient Safety, had been appointed as the Northern Trust representative on the group.

TB59/07 Public Questions

Mr D Lowry, Royal College of Nursing, was assured that the management of change process would be applied in the initiative to modernise services for older people and, in requesting to be advised of future plans for this service, he indicated his support for management and staff.

He also endorsed the comments made earlier at the meeting regarding the role of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, particularly in relation to dealing with complaints in residential and nursing homes, and his offer of support from Staff Side was welcomed by the Chief Executive.

TB60/07 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 27 September 2007 at 2.00pm in the WS Tweed Room, Robinson Hospital, Ballymoney.

TB61/07 Resolution for Closed Session

There was resolution to go into closed session to consider remuneration and care issues.