Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Minutes of the twenty-sixth meeting of Trust Board held on Thursday 25 June 2009 in the Robinson Hospital, Ballymoney

Present:
Mr J Stewart Chairman
Ms N Evans Chief Executive
Dr C Ackah Non Executive Director
Dr P Flanagan Director of Medicine and Governance
Mr S Forsythe Non Executive Director
Mr N Guckian Director of Finance
Ms P Montgomery Non Executive Director
Mr R McCann Non Executive Director
Mr M Rankin Non Executive Director
Professor D Whittington Non Executive Director
Mr C Worthington Director of Children’s Services/Executive Director Social Work

In attendance:
Mr P Graham Assistant Director Intermediate, Rehabilitation and Community Support (representing Miss Scott)
Ms B Donaghy Assistant Director of Planning and Modernisation
Mr O Donnelly Director of Mental Health and Disability Services
Mrs R McFerran Assistant Director of Human Resources (representing Mrs Melaugh)
Dr M Mannion Deputy Medical Director (representing Dr Flanagan)
Mr M Sloan Director of Acute Hospital Services
Mr D Heaney Communications Manager (representing Ms Mulholland)
Mrs M McDowell Executive Assistant

Apologies:
Mr J Moore Non Executive Director
Dr P Flanagan Director of Medicine and Governance
Miss B Scott Director of Primary Care and Community Care for Older People’s Services/Executive Director Nursing
Mrs J Melaugh Director of Human Resources
Mrs M Mulholland Head of Communications

Mrs A Milliken and Miss M Trimble from Trade Union Side, one member of the public and two participants from the “Get On Board” Training Programme were welcomed to the meeting.

Members conveyed their best wishes to Mr D Lowry, RCN Officer, for a speedy recovery following his recent injury.
The Chairman reported that he had received notification from the Chief Executive of her intention to retire at 30 September 2009. He paid tribute to Ms Evans for her dedication and commitment to health and social care in Northern Ireland over 39 years and for her leadership as Chief Executive of the Northern Trust. On behalf of Trust Board, the Chairman wished her a happy and fulfilling retirement.

Mr Stewart said that it was most unfortunate that Ms Evans retirement had been linked in the press to the Trust’s financial and performance position. The Trust’s financial position had been challenging for some considerable time and he anticipated that it would take some further time to resolve this situation.

He advised that he was working with the Minister and colleagues at DHSSPS to agree arrangements for a new Chief Executive for the Trust and would keep members informed of developments.

Members were also advised that Mr Neil Guckian had accepted the post of Director Finance in South Eastern Trust. Mr Guckian was thanked for his services and contribution to the Northern Trust and wished every success for the future.

The Chairman then advised that:

22 May 2009: he had visited the Accident and Emergency Department at Antrim Area Hospital;

25 May – 10 June: he had been on leave but during this time he had completed the e-learning training package on discovering diversity. Mr Stewart encouraged Directors and Non Executive Directors to complete this training to raise the profile of the e-learning package and this would then filter down through the organisation;

4 June: with the Chief Executive and other Trust officers, Dr Ackah and Mr Moore had attended the RCN Nurse of the Year Awards 2009 at which the Trust had won two awards. Congratulations were extended to Avril Montgomery who had won the Student Award and Carmel Neil for winning the Health Care Support worker Award;

17 June he attended an open day at Spring Meadows Children’s Home when MLAs and local councillors had been invited to view the new facility;
19 and 22 June he attended meetings with Minister McGimpsey; and

25 June he attended the finance workshop which had been held that morning for Trust Board members

On behalf of the Senior Management Team, Ms Evans took the opportunity to congratulate the Chairman on being awarded a CBE in the Queens Birthday Honours in recognition of his contribution to Warrenpoint Harbour Authority. She also referred to his service to Health & Social Services, and expressed her appreciation to him for the support and leadership he had provided, particularly during the recent difficult period for the Trust.

TB88/09 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2009, copies having been circulated, were approved on the proposal of Mr M Rankin, seconded by Dr C Ackah.

TB89/09 Finance

Members reflected on the workshop which had been held that morning to review in detail the financial position of the Trust and the future outlook.

At this workshop, members had recognised that presently a deficit of £30.75m was being forecasted for the end of year. This was against a forecast deficit of £29.7m. The challenge was even greater because significant elements (over £6m) of Recovery Plan actions had already occurred. Thus the underlying problem had increased by £7m.

The Trust was fully committed to address this deficit and had already made considerable progress in implementing efficiency measures. Recovery Plan actions would also continue to be implemented but the Chief Executive highlighted that the key challenges for the Trust related to the acute services profile, in having to continue to provide acute services in four sites as well as five other hospitals in the Northern Trust area, 11 care homes, a legacy of underfunding in the former United Hospital Trust and demography within community care.

Although Trust Board recognised the importance of continuing to implement as many cash releasing measures as possible, it was acknowledged that no action could be taken to introduce savings in areas which would result in a reduction in service delivery.

The difficulties of achieving Priorities for Action targets within current resources was also recognised as a very significant challenge for the Trust.
The Chairman said that the only element of the projected deficit which should be a surprise would be £5 million overspend that was projected as a result of an increased demand on services during in 2009. Throughout 2008/09 the financial position in the Trust had been well explained in the monitoring reports which had been submitted to DHSSPS and Northern Health and Social Services Board/Health and Social Care Board.

Mr Stewart then indicated that he would now write to the Minister to advise of the current financial position, the actions and achievements of the Trust to address the deficit and the key challenges still existing. He would also confirm the high priority being given to Financial Control and Trust Board’s commitment to working with the Health & Social Care Board and other stakeholders to resolve the current financial challenges.

TB90/09  Performance Report

In presenting the report on performance against targets at May 2009, Ms Donaghy advised that the Trust continued to deliver on the majority of targets. Some of the areas which were presenting challenges after 2 months were highlighted as follows.

- **Acute services**

  For cancer services, although the Trust had achieved 100% for the 31 day target for commencement of treatment and 100% of urgent breast cancer referrals being seen within 14 days, only 85% of urgent patients with suspected cancer were beginning their first treatment within 62 days, against a target of 95%. It was noted that this was due to capacity issues within diagnostics and that patients outside the target time had received their treatment shortly after the 62 day deadline.

  Two audiology patients had waited over 9 weeks for a diagnostic test at 31 May 2009 but both these patients had been seen on 2 June 2009.

  Due to a recruitment issue for paediatric physiotherapy, 3 physiotherapy patients had waited over the 13 week target for an appointment with an Allied Health Professional.

  With regard to accident and emergency services, it was noted that there had been a breach of one patient waiting in excess of the 12 hour target during May 2009. Overall, 87.2% of patients had been seen and discharged from accident and emergency departments within 4 hours and this represented a modest improvement on both Antrim and Causeway sites.
Community Care Services

Although 93% of complex cases had been discharged from hospital with a suitable care package within 48 hours of being determined medically fit during May 2009, the Trust had 11 complex cases waiting over seven days. Mr Graham advised of some of the reasons why such delays occurred, including the non availability of suitable specialist placements, and he assured members that information on waiting lists and the length of time users were waiting for services was closely monitored.

Particular reference was also made to the following matters.

- During May 2009, the Trust was within the monthly limits for episodes of MSSA/MRSA and C Difficile. This position was noted as the lowest number of figures reported within the last two years and represented the tremendous efforts being made by staff, despite the difficulties previously identified in relation to the infrastructure which existed in some hospitals.

- With regard to complaints, members noted that the target of 72% of replies being issued within 20 working days had not been achieved, with the performance of the Trust being reported as 65%. Although the Chief Executive advised of the difficulties with some complaints in that they were becoming more complex and involving issues to be addressed by various directorates, she reported that significant efforts were being made in the current year to improve performance in this area.

- Members noted that the Cleanliness matters section had been updated for the acute sector to categorise the areas monitored by risk category and that the minimum standards for environmental cleanliness were being met.

- Mr Sloan confirmed that within the Service and Budget agreement with the Commissioner, account was taken of periods of medical staff leave, including annual leave and public holidays, sick leave and study leave and an exercise was currently being undertaken to examine elective capacity based on a 42 week year. Following a query from Professor Whittington, Dr Mannion explained how study leave was managed for medical staff and how this was a key area in the appraisal process.

The Chairman reflected that this latest performance report presented was very positive and illustrated that staff were committed to achieving improvements and that they had already made strenuous efforts in this regard. However, there were still areas presenting significant challenges for the Trust and it was important to keep staff engaged and focused to maintain and improve the current performance.
Governance

(a) Infection Control

Dr Mannion updated members on the activity of the Panel established by the Minister to undertake the public inquiry into the C Difficile outbreak in the Trust and members noted details of the visits undertaken by panel members to five hospitals in the Trust on 21 and 22 May 2009.

It was also noted that Dr Mannion and Dr Flanagan had met with Professor B Stout from the Panel on 17 June 2009 to discuss the methodology to be used for examining the number of deaths that occurred during the outbreak for which C Difficile was the underlying cause of death or was a condition contributing to death.

(b) Risk Register

Dr Mannion presented the Corporate Risk Register at 15 June 2009 which showed 15 risks scoring a risk rating of 20 and above.

Particular reference was made to the two new risks added since the previous report which related to compliance with RQIA Inspection reports on Trust residential care homes and compliance with regional guidance on protection of vulnerable adults.

In relation to the residential care homes, members noted that the issues requiring management's actions without funding being required had all been addressed. However, for other areas where action could not be taken without capital or revenue funding being made available, it was recognised that failure to comply notices could potentially be issued to the Trust if these issues were not addressed.

The Chief Executive advised that although all homes now met Firecode Standards, the essential work which had been undertaken to meet the standards did not improve the living conditions for residents at these homes.

With regard to the protection of vulnerable adults, although an officer had been appointed in March 2009 to oversee allegations of abuse in nursing/residential homes, it was noted that no additional resources had been received for this work and therefore this post was currently unfunded.

(c) Swine flu

Dr Mannion advised that 55,000 cases of swine flu world wide had now been reported and the World Health Organisation pandemic alert had
been stepped up to Level 6. Up to the present time, 24 cases had been confirmed in Northern Ireland and all these were community cases and were travel related.

Members heard of the planning work being undertaken in the Trust, including the updating of pandemic flu plans for each Directorate and the production of a Trust Pandemic flu plan. A desk top exercise for acute hospitals had been held on 23 June 2009 and further exercises would be held in the near future.

Members also noted that staff absence monitoring was being done on a weekly basis and it was hoped that a vaccine would be available in mid September 2009 for administration to staff.

It was recognised that, although there was significant preparation being undertaken in the Trust, much work still required to be done and this added to the other pressures faced by staff, such as the challenges of meeting CSR and PfA targets.

**TB92/09 Absence Report**

Mrs McFerrran presented detailed information on absence levels at the end of May 2009 which had been broken down by Departments, Directorates and occupational families. Although there had been a very slight increase in figures from the previous month, 4.81% to 4.86%, it was recognised that this was an excellent performance when compared against a target of 5.5% for 2009/10 and a significant achievement for a public sector organisation.

Directors and their Managers were congratulated for how absence was being managed and how the Trust’s Absence Policy was being successfully implemented.

**TB93/09 Corporate Parenting Report**

Mr Worthington presented the Corporate Parenting Report for 1 October 2008 – 31 March 2009 which detailed the activity engaged in by Trust staff in support of children in need and those who were looked after by the Trust. It was noted that this report had been produced in the standard format required and that a summary version was now included in the report of the Discharge of Statutory Functions.

**Children In Need**

Members noted that the number of looked after children had increased from 2971 at 30 September 2008 to 3085 at 31 March 2009 and the number of children being referred for assessment of need had also increased. It was recognised that these trends were also being seen by other Trusts in the province.
Unallocated cases within disability teams had also increased in the latest report and it was noted that this was due to staffing and capacity issues. The number of unallocated cases overall had reduced from 100 at 30 September to 83 at 31 March 2009 but none of these cases had been within gateway teams and were not cases of a child protection nature. Mr Worthington reported that unallocated figures were collated on a weekly basis and were closely monitored by Heads of Services. This area had been included as a PfA target for 2009/10 and would be reported on monthly in the Performance Report.

**Child Protection**

Members noted that the steady increase in the number of children on the Trust Child Protection Register since September 2003 had continued, with an increase of 3% on September 2008. However, the rate of increase was diminishing when compared to increases of 10% and 9% over the previous two periods.

**Looked After children**

Although only a slight increase in the number of looked after children was reported, members were encouraged to note the positive increase in the number of children in family placements at March 2009.

On highlighting that the number of children placed in residential care remained unchanged, Mr Worthington was pleased to report that the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority had inspected the new Spring Meadow Home in Antrim and arrangements were now being made for children to be accommodated in the home at the start of July 2009.

In line with the PfA target, the number of foster carers had increased from 435 at October 2008 to 460 at 31 March 2009 and progress was continuing to meet the target of 473 by March 2010.

Mr Worthington also pointed out that the number of children adopted in 2008/09 had decreased, reflecting the lower number of freeing orders granted in 2007/08. Significantly the number of freeing orders in the past year had increased and therefore it was anticipated that the number of adoption orders granted in the current year would increase accordingly. It was important to note, however, that all children adopted and freed were placed with dual approved carers or approved foster parents throughout the duration of the legal process to avoid further disruption for children.

The Director of Children’s Services was also pleased to draw members’ attention to articles which detailed the achievements of some children who had been looked after by the Trust and said how such examples illustrated successful corporate parenting.
Mr Forsythe expressed his support for the work being undertaken by staff within children’s services under difficult and challenging circumstances and members subsequently approved the report for onward transmission to DHSSPS.

Members noted that a Trust Board workshop on Corporate Parenting would be arranged in the near future.

**TB94/09 Discharge of Statutory Functions**

Mr Worthington presented the report on the Discharge of Statutory Functions for the period April 2008 to 31 March 2009 in relation to older people, learning and physical disability, mental health and children’s services. He advised that this report was produced as a new referral template which would act as a key governance tool for the Trust and said that this framework would be of standard use in all Trusts in the province.

Members recognised that this report illustrated the volume of activity, hard work and dedication staff had given over the last 12 months in meeting the requirements in discharging statutory duties. It showed that the majority of functions were being met but Mr Worthington drew members’ attention to the areas which presented significant challenges for the Trust.

These included:

- the reform and modernisation agenda and the limited resource availability;
- the use of unregulated accommodation places for 16-18 year olds outside of those places commissioned under the Joint Commissioning process with supporting people;
- the issue of unallocated cases which was subject to weekly and monthly monitoring;
- the standards for adult residential, domiciliary and day care and associated inspection by RQIA;
- the high dependency on fostering arrangements with independent providers; and
- the increase in the number of referrals under the Regional Safeguarding Policy for vulnerable adults and the timescales for investigation and implementation of protection plans.

Members were pleased to note the range of training provided in the Trust to support the social care workforce and that this was further
supported by partnership arrangements with other Trusts, disciplines, agencies and University programmes.

Information in relation to untoward events had also been included in the report and the close working and contact with the Police Service, as required, was noted.

Members approved this report which would now be forwarded to DHSSPS.

TB95/09 Complaints/Adult Protection/Governance

Following a presentation to Trust Board on 25 November 2008, Mr P Graham was in attendance to provide an update to members on complaints, adult protection and governance in independent sector nursing and residential homes.

Mr Graham advised that the Trust currently funded 2990 placements in the independent sector in 250 homes across the province. From 2006 to 2008 the number of adult protection referrals had increased from 117 to 313 and within the directorate covering older peoples services there had been a total of 141 new cases reported within a one year period. It was still expected that there was under reporting of cases but Mr Graham advised that the increase was evidence of the high profile that this matter was attracting in the Trust.

Members noted the progress which had been made since November 2008 which included:

- the appointment made to strengthen adult protection arrangements and improve links within the independent sector;
- strengthened links across programmes and directorates to respond to allegations;
- systemic reviews of cases in homes where concerns were raised;
- improved links with Public Protection Units of PSNI and improved working with RQIA;
- improved data collection and use of available information to study trends; and
- greater awareness in the independent sector of the role and responsibilities of Trust staff.

In highlighting the challenges ahead, Mr Graham referred to the continuing upward trend of referrals, the review process being compromised by the need to respond to adult protection cases and the need for better collection and analysis of information to move to a preventative mode. In also noting the difficulty of resourcing front line staff, Mr Graham was hopeful that funding from DHSSPS may be received in the future.
Dr Ackah referred to the discussions which had taken place on adult protection at the User Feedback and Involvement Committee and said that she had been reassured by the information provided that this area was being appropriately addressed.

**Visit to Dhu Varren Children’s Homes**

Copies of a report on a visit to Dhu Varren by Mr Forsythe and Mr Donnelly on 28 May 2009 were noted.

Members were pleased to note that the issues raised by staff at a previous visit had been actioned and that the home had presented as being well run with caring and professional staff and good relations existing between the staff and children.

**Communications**

The communications report, which provided an update on media, public affairs and event activity, was noted by members.

**Property matters**

Members noted that a lease was currently being negotiated for the Community Mental Health Team to be accommodated at Moyle Medical Centre and approval was given for this lease to be sealed when completed.

**Public Questions**

Mr Worthington clarified information contained in the Corporate Parenting Report and it was also confirmed that a Ministerial decision on the Trust’s CRS proposals, with the exception of the proposals on statutory residential homes, was still awaited.

**Date of next meeting**

It was noted that next meeting would be held at 2.00pm on Thursday 27 August 2009 at Trust Headquarters.