

Regional Strategy Team
DHSSPS
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3SJ

7th April 2005

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing in response to the consultation document "A Healthier Future" a twenty year vision for health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2005-2025 and enclose a document on how the Trust is already contributing to these themes.

The Trust notes the comment on Page 62 Ref 5.52, which refers to the 9 acute hospitals, supported by seven local hospitals. Footnote 88 and 89 list the acute and local hospitals and reference is made that the Mater is "to continue to deliver a full range of acute services for a considerable period ahead."

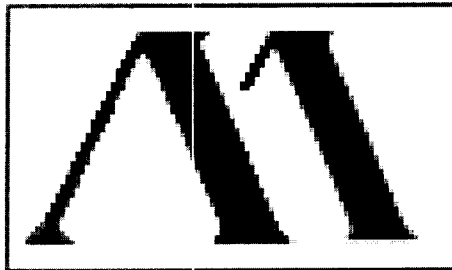
A variety of descriptions for the status of the Mater have been employed in documents issued by DHSSPS.

It is our view that a simple, consistent reference to the Mater, as one of ten hospitals constituting the Acute Hospitals Network for Northern Ireland would be most appropriate. This would be consistent with the language used by Des Brown in his speech under "The New Pattern of Hospital Services. "

The Mater looks forward to contributing to the achievement of this strategy and its objectives over the next 20 years.

Yours sincerely

Sean Donaghy
Chief Executive



MATER HOSPITAL

RE: A HEALTHIER FUTURE 2005 – 2025

We welcome the themes within the strategy and have made comments in the attached document re initiatives which are already in operation within the Trust as an illustration of support for the policies included within it.

However we would seek clarity on a number of issues which have not been referred to in the document:

- Affordability of the implementation of the strategy
- The need to align the Capital development strategy to support the delivery of the objectives stated.
- The need for a robust review mechanism which would review whether the objectives still remain attainable due to for example, the review of Public Administration and Neighbourhood renewal strategies.

Theme 1 : Investing for Health and Wellbeing

The Trust welcomes and supports the policy direction under this theme.

The Mater Hospital has an impact on health and well being not only through the provision of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services of high quality, but also through their impact on the local environment and the local economy through partnerships with the community. The DHSSPS "Investing for Health" (IFH) initiative (March 2002) clearly identifies how the determinants of poor health can be addressed. The hospital therefore has a role to play in improving the health and well being of the community it serves.

The Mater Hospital is uniquely placed in the centre of a community whose health and well-being needs are well documented;

- North Belfast has the highest rates of death from ischaemic heart disease, 23% above the N.I average.
- Death rates from lung cancer are almost twice the N.I average.
- The death rate from gastrointestinal cancer is higher than the N.I average.

The hospital is not only a setting for the treatment of patients, it is also a setting for those who work in it and visit it. In using this approach, the hospital is defined as not just a location for health promotion activities but as a social entity that needs to be changed in order to promote positive health.

The Trust will continue to promote health and well being through:

- The continued monitoring and implementation of the No Smoking Policy;

- The development of Mental Health Promotion throughout the hospital;
- The development and implementation of a Healthy Eating Policy;
- Training staff to enable them to contribute to health improvement;
- The continued promotion of Health and Well being through patient support groups such as the Heart of the Mater, Cardiac Rehabilitation, COPD and Stoma Support Groups;
- Continued development of the Health Promotion Partnership with the Royal Hospitals and North & West Belfast to raise awareness on key areas, such as breast feeding; accident prevention; cancer awareness and prevention; physical activity and men's health.
- Promote research in Public Health to maximise the health and well being of our population.
- Participate in and support the development of new pathways to employment initiatives for the long-term economically inactive or unemployed.
- Continue via the Redevelopment Strategy to the physical regeneration of the Crumlin and lower Antrim Roads.

Theme 2 : Involving people – building caring communities

The Trust welcomes and supports the policy direction under this theme.

The Trust fosters an environment of cooperation within the community that it serves. Representatives from the community, users and carers are consulted in the planning and delivery of all services within the Trust and their input is fundamental to maximisation and the quality of output.

The Trust supports any initiatives to improve the involvement of the community and users in the delivery of health and social services.

Theme 3 : Responsive integrated services

The Trust welcomes and supports the policy direction under this theme.

The Trust has developed networks and partnerships within the Community and clinical colleagues in other HSS Trusts. The Trust aims to develop these partnerships and networks further:

- To maximise local access to high quality services and help ensure that clinical services are provided to the highest standard.
- To streamline the patient journey through the health and social care system, ensuring safe, early discharge from the hospital by working with colleagues in community and primary care
- To prevent hospital admissions through the innovative management of chronic diseases through secondary prevention and health promotion.

The Trust's partnership with its community guides the Trust in both the design and delivery of its services. This partnership will be further developed with greater involvement of voluntary and community groups in the support of carers and family.

The Trust supports all initiatives which will help to deliver responsive integrated service to the benefit of all patients and their carers.

Theme 4: Teams that deliver

The Trust welcomes and supports the policy direction under this theme.

Integral to the success of the Mater Hospital in achieving its strategic vision is ensuring the continuing commitment and development of its staff in order to meet the many challenges ahead, including: -

- becoming an “employer of choice”
- ensuring a responsive service
- meeting the changes posed by increasing legislation and regulation
- ensuring continuing improvement in service provision

These challenges require the development of a comprehensive and forward looking local Human Resources Strategy. Work has commenced in partnership with managers and staff representatives to identify the key workforce agenda over the years 2004/05 – 2009/10 that will be required to secure the success of the Trust in realising its vision and strategic objectives.

A number of key areas for the strategy have been identified including:-

- Continued improvement in Recruitment, Retention and Return to Work;
- Improving working lives;
- Education, training and continued professional development;
- Equality and fairness;
- Employee relations;
- New ways of working;
- Performance management and development;
- Capacity, capability and resources;
- Leadership and direction.

The Trust will consult widely on the development of its local Human Resources Strategy which it considers to be a key outcome in Year 1 of its Strategic plan.

The Mater Hospital values all its staff and is committed to developing staff across all grades and staff groups. The Trust has a robust training and development strategy which supports this aim.

Training & Development

The Mater Trust supports the education, training and development of all its staff and provides a full range of in-house multi disciplinary skills training and development programmes for all staff provided by an experienced and enthusiastic team of tutors, trainers and facilitators.

Theme 5 : Improving quality

The Trust welcomes and supports the policy direction under this theme.

The Trust has in place an integrated Governance Framework which incorporates clinical & and social care, corporate (organisational) and financial governance to provide assurance on the functioning and effectiveness of internal control mechanisms and reports on issues of significant risk.

Corporate Governance

The Trust's Framework for Corporate Governance has been developed following widespread consultation with the multi-disciplinary team.

Key elements of the Framework include;

Effective and efficient corporate governance and internal control arrangements in place, as detailed in the Risk Management Strategy, to meet the necessary standards of accountability, probity and openness

An internal control framework to manage, direct and control risk.

The development, implementation and continual review of strategy, policy and processes for Risk Management and Adverse Incident Reporting.

The implementation of the guidance from the Department relating to DHSS Controls Assurance Standards and achievement of designated compliance levels.

The further development and implementation of a Corporate Risk Register process within the Trust.

Clinical and Social Care

The Trust Framework for Clinical and Social Care (C&S) Governance has been developed following widespread consultation with the multidisciplinary team.

Key elements of the strategy include:

Clinical and Social Care Effectiveness – helping ensure that where new or developing clinical or care standards are published there is a mechanism whereby these can be considered and action taken to ensure their implementation.

Patient, User and Community Involvement – Ensuring the comprehensive involvement of patients, their carers and the community in the design, development and delivery of services.

Audit - Promotion of audit as a mechanism by which we can ensure that clinical practice is scrutinised.

Clinical and Social Care Risk - Strengthening the role of the Directorates to maximise timely, effective action in relation to risk.

Performance Management

Effective management of performance is a key success criterion for the Trust. Better clinical outcomes, service delivery and efficiency depend on it. This is supported within the Trust by Strategic plan and corporate objectives, Management and Directorate plans with the measurement of key indicators for reporting performance.

Reform and Modernisation

The Trust supports the reform and modernisation of health and social care services and already has good examples of services within the Trust. These services were developed to foster the following principles, a new way of dealing with review appointments by telephone to free up spaces for more new appointments, the development of nurse led initiatives, prevention of admissions to the hospital, delivering services within a community setting, freeing up medical posts by the development of Medical Emergency assistants and facilitating earlier discharge from the hospital.

Information Technology

The Mater Hospital has a reputation for early implementation of new technology. System developments such as "Order Communications", where requests for investigations and services are made, tracked and reported electronically, are not to be found in many hospitals, and is an important asset for the health professionals in the Trust. The last five years have seen exponential growth in the access to technology for all service areas. Such growth demonstrates the dependency of services on technology platforms which support the delivery of patient services. The Trust will continue to develop its internal infrastructure to support new initiatives in e-health.

The Trust strategic vision is for a modern information and communications technology environment, supporting the concept of an Electronic Patient Record (EPR). This will be achieved through:

- Electronic care records – supporting delivery of care and new models of care by enabling hospital care professionals to access electronic care data whenever and wherever they need it;
- Electronic care communication – improving services by using electronic methods to communicate about care;
- Electronic information – making it possible for care professionals and the public to access relevant information about health and social care using electronic information services.

Within the Trust we will define and develop an EPR through our existing systems and the addition of new systems. Access will be provided to all staff for the information relevant to their role in the Trust, whilst ensuring that security and confidentiality standards are developed and sustained. Opportunities will be explored to provide electronic education through e-learning and web-based solutions to assist in meeting the training needs of all staff. The Trust will also continue to modernise its business systems so as to enable efficiency and productivity gains throughout the Trust.

Externally, technology needs to be harnessed to provide support for the strategies designed to achieve the vision of the Trust. The pace of such development is to a large extent dictated by the Directorate of Information Systems within the DHSSPS. Regional initiatives such as GP links to acute sites will support our primary care links. We will seek to develop communication links to support outreach activities in the future and to sustain clinical networks.

During 2005/06 the Trust will bring forward an Information Strategy setting out the framework for provision of high quality information for planning and decision-making. This will be supported by an Information and Communication Technology Strategy which will provide the platforms upon which future service developments will be provided.