

FROM THE DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER
Dr Ian Carson



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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To: Chief Executives of HSS Boards and Trusts
Directors of Public Health of HSS Boards
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts
Directors of Nursing HSS Boards and Trusts
Directors of Social Services HSS Boards and Trusts

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HN2-4-06
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Dear Colleague

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING,
INVESTIGATING PATIENT/CLIENT SAFETY INCIDENTS (UNEXPECTED DEATH OR
SERIOUS UNTOWARD HARM): PROMOTING LIAISON AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
BETWEEN THE HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES, POLICE SERVICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND, CORONERS SERVICE AND THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.**

Background

Patient and client safety incidents involving unexpected death or serious untoward harm and requiring joint or simultaneous investigation by the police, coroners and/or the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) are rare.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been developed to improve appropriate information sharing and co-ordination when joint or simultaneous investigations are required into a serious incident. A draft version of this MoU was issued for consultation on 6 October 2005. Comments received have been taken into consideration in this final version.

A similar MoU in England and Wales between the NHS, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Health and Safety Executive has also been issued today. These two MoUs share common themes, while reflecting different organisational agreements in England and Wales.

Implementing the Memorandum of Understanding

The purpose of the MoU is to promote effective working relationships between the organisations. The MoU will take effect in circumstances of unexpected death or serious untoward harm to patients or clients requiring investigations by the police, coroners or HSENI. In cases where more than one organisation may have an involvement in investigating a particular incident it is the responsibility of the HSS organisation to report to each of these as appropriate.

The principles of this MoU are clearly intended to improve communication and co-ordination of investigations into serious incidents. The MoU is an electronic document. A copy is attached with this e-mail. Openness in reporting and investigating safety incidents will ensure that lessons are learnt for the future. The guidance will be reviewed using feedback from organisations that have need to implement the MoU.

The MoU can also be found on the DHSSPS website and the DHSSPS extranet.

Impact of Memorandum of Understanding on Other Agreements and Protocols for Joint Working

In some areas of the Health and Social Services protocols have already been developed with other agencies including the police, for example protocols for joint investigation of alleged and suspected cases of abuse of children or vulnerable adults. Organisations should consider how the over-arching aims of the MoU can best work alongside these protocols.

Yours sincerely



DR IAN CARSON
Deputy Chief Medical Officer

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This letter is available at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and also on the DHSSPS Extranet which can be accessed directly at <http://extranet.dhsspsni.gov.uk> or by going through the HPSS Web at <http://www.n-i.nhs.uk> and clicking on DHSSPS.