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Regional Strategy Team
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings
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Dear Minister

CONSULTATION RESPONSE: A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Sperrin Lakeland Health and Social Care Trust would wish to take the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the twenty year vision, 'A Healthier Future' and put forward the following comments in relation to the consultation questions.

Does the vision adequately describe the health and social services that will meet our future needs and aspirations?

The vision clearly acknowledges that there are a number of key and interlinked issues and enablers that need to be taken forward collaboratively if we are to achieve the delivery of an effective and efficient health and social care system that supports the improved health and well being of our population to match the best in Europe. The vision recognizes that the service responses to those issues are diverse but have common features including prevention and early intervention, personal and community engagement and ownership of health and well being and collaborative networks of people and facilities enabled through technology.

The vision creates a framework that embraces other existing policies and initiatives that are driving towards the delivery of modern health and social care services. The creation of such a framework within which all other developments and plans converge to, is helpful in both creating links between initiatives and opportunities for joint efforts focused towards a common agenda. The 20 Year Vision will provide a useful mechanism to engage with the public and cross

organizational boundaries, simplifying communication about initiatives and developments within the context of achieving a healthier future. It will also be important, as the vision describes, to measure our progress towards that vision so that the public and the HPSS and its partners can gauge results.

Do you agree with the themes put forward and are there any others that should be addressed by the regional strategy?

The key challenges for the realization of the vision will be: the involvement of the public in taking ownership of positive health and well being initiatives that work for individuals and local communities; effective partnerships; workforce retention, recruitment and development; and the support and development of the community, voluntary and independent sector in all its forms in contributing to this shared agenda.

The Trust welcome the proposal to create a regional Public Involvement Steering Group to drive a co-ordinated programme of engagement, and training to develop skills and capacity for effective citizen advocacy. We need also to build our skills and capacity for effective partnership working, and whilst much has been achieved in this field, much more has to be done particularly between statutory providers, including housing, education, health and social care. Whilst good examples are in place we will need to adopt such approaches must more readily and naturally if we are to achieve common goals.

The Trust also welcomes commitment to HPSS employers becoming 'employers of choice' in order to retain, attract and develop our workforce so we have the capacity and environment to deliver modern services. Our own recent work in this field identifies many factors that contribute to a positive working environment that allows individuals to feel valued, supported, rewarded and motivated impacting on high levels of attendance at work, productivity and effective outcomes. As the vision recognises, future service delivery will depend on networks and Teams, and retention and recruitment initiatives must provide for the collaborative needs of the HPSS. There is also a need to reflect each individual organizations requirements to respond to local needs and particularly those serving rural communities.

There is a need to develop responses to the roles of homecare staff, particularly for rural areas, to ensure the role is an attractive career choice for people, including young people, and this needs to reflect the rural/travel issue as well as working hours and support networks for people often working alone. Strategies to enable 'employer of choice' will need to take cognizance of these issues, prevalent specifically in rural areas.

Do you believe these Policy Directions set out are right to achieve the vision set out in the document?

Yes, there are significant policy directions set out and these are in keeping with current drivers and initiatives taking forward the modernization and reform agenda.

Policy Direction 16 acknowledges the need to develop relationships with the private, community and voluntary sectors, residential and nursing home provision being one example of such mixed economy of provision. Whilst we are working towards increasing the number of people, supported at home and in home settings, there is a continued need for residential services. The provision of the wider social care infrastructure, including residential and nursing home beds (not just for long term care but to support respite, rehabilitation and step down services) is a key component to achieve the delivery of Developing Better Services, if hospitals are to be efficient in delivery of acute services and enable community and social care partners to meet care needs outside hospital. It would be a concern that we may assume the sustainability of the existing infrastructure for the provision of residential and nursing home provision. Some of this provision is provided by small independent providers who, given the current economic climate, may not be in a position/prepared to invest in capital infrastructure to maintain and develop facilities to meet new standards of care. It is important that this vulnerability is acknowledged and consider mechanisms to assure both the sustainability and development of this sector.

Do you believe the key actions and outcomes to achieve the vision are set out in the document?

The actions and outcomes are a good start to taking forward the realization of the vision. No doubt these will be added to and refined as implementation commences and through regular evaluation.

A Healthier Future identifies the need to reduce smoking as a key element in improving the health of the people of NI and sets out 3 options: 5a, 5b and 5c for a restriction or a ban on smoking in public places and workplaces.

The Trust strongly support option 5c, to see legislation introduced to ban smoking in all enclosed public places and workplaces. This is clearly the only way to protect employees equally and make a significant impact on the health of the population now and into the future. Smoking is directly linked to many poor health outcomes including cancer but also other forms of lung and heart disease, amongst many others. It is imperative that a ban on smoking in enclosed public places and work places is put in place with some urgency so that we might realize the positive benefits, at an individual and collective level, at the earliest opportunity.

Are the proposals to take forward the strategy adequate?

The proposals to move to three year area plans will give some continuity to efforts over a longer period and a modest opportunity on a local, area, and regional basis, to chart progress towards our targets, acknowledging that the 5 year intervals will provide a quarterly comprehensive report across N Ireland.

Are the equality issues adequately addressed?

Consideration has been given to the impact of the strategy and given it's nature, is unlikely to adversely impact on any of the equality categories.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the development of the 20 Year Vision for a healthier future.

Yours sincerely,



HUGH MILLS
Chief Executive

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