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23rd March, 05

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

Dear Sir,

Re: Publication of a Healthier Future: a Twenty Year Strategy for Health & Wellbeing

I refer to the above consultation document and, as requested, enclose a response from the Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust which I trust you will find helpful.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. McCall'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

J. McCall
Chief Executive

Enc.

The Trust is a smoke free organisation



Awarded for Excellence

Child Health Directorate • Specialist Breast Care Service • Mental Health Out-Patient Centre
Intensive Care Unit • Learning Disability Services • Dakota Avenue Hostel • Continence
Service • Community Stroke Rehabilitation Scheme • X-ray Department • Community Dental
Service • Hospital Stroke Unit • Occupational Therapy Service (DHCE) • Special Care Baby
Unit • Colorectal Nursing Service



A Healthier Future

A Twenty Year Vision for Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2005 – 2025

A response from the Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust

March 2005



1. Introduction

The Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust is one of 19 Trusts in Northern Ireland and provides a broad range of health and personal social services to the local community. The acute hospital services, focused upon the Ulster Hospital site, care for the needs of people from East Belfast, Castlereagh, North Down and Ards and also the wider regional population by providing some specialist services.

Within the community of North Down and Ards there are two Community Hospitals linked to a network of Health Centres, Training Resource Centres, Day Centres and Residential Homes. This area extends from Portaferry in the south to Holywood in the North and from Donaghadee in the east to Ballygowan and Killinchy in the west.

The Trust has a budget of almost £200 million and approximately 5,500 members of staff endeavour to meet the needs of all sections of the community. The Trust also places importance on the development of preventative health and social care services and specifically on the promotion of health and well-being for our population.

2. General comments

In Northern Ireland there is little doubt that health and social services are to the fore in the public agenda. Whilst there are many positive aspects that receive media attention, on many occasions the interest is focused on the limitations and indeed the failings. In this context creating a long-term strategy for Health and Social Wellbeing may seem rather fanciful

whenever some may say that the emphasise should be on getting “it right today before being concerned about tomorrow”. However, the Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust firmly believes that the only way the Health and Social Care ‘system’ can truly deliver health and social well being to the standards that are required is by taking time to reflect, identify a vision and key objectives and chart a path for its delivery.

UCHT therefore considers that *A Healthier Future* provides the underpinning foundations upon which the Trust and other organisations can determine its priorities and build its services to ensure that we deliver the health and social care services that are fit for the next twenty years.

UCHT would wish to acknowledge the wide ranging and comprehensive consultation that the “Regional Strategy Team” undertook to develop *A Healthier Future* and pay tribute to the end product. The Trust was pleased to have the opportunity to be involved in the initial consultation through meetings and formal submission. The Trust is also pleased that *A Healthier Future* captures the regional initiatives, such as “Developing Better Services” and “Investing for Health” and avoids immediately adding to these. These and other policy initiatives are constructive and will make a positive contribution, though they require time, effort and resources to properly operationalise.

Regarding the layout of the actual document, recognition should be given to those who ‘put it together’. The language is generally simple and easy to understand, and the journey through a lifetime will assist those less familiar with the health and social care system to understand the huge range of services and some of the associated complexities. Perhaps a

greater use of graphics could have been employed to illustrate and highlight current and projected trends. Another point is that by placing "Making it Happen" in a separate chapter it creates an impression that it is a separate theme, thus it may help to simplify matters if "Making it Happen" is placed in the "Improving Quality" section. Furthermore, footnote #25 is not referenced against the relevant Key Population Health Outcome.

3. The Consultation Questions:

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

The vision, using the five major themes, clearly and simply states the position that it wishes to attain in 2025. The Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust considers this vision to be appropriate and in some respects to be inspirational; such as when it states that "the health and wellbeing of the people of Northern Ireland will be amongst the best in Europe", and "a system that ranks with the best in the world".

Reference is made to France as being ranked number 1 in the world in terms of overall performance and it would have been helpful if the document referenced some key performance indicators of 'the best' thus illustrating the gap and the journey we need to travel.

Finally the reference to smoking, binge and excessive drinking and illicit drug use should be more forthright, in that over a twenty year horizon the

goal needs to be more challenging and indeed specific rather than just, “at their lowest level ever”.

(ii) *A Healthier Future* focuses on five major themes: Investing for Health and Wellbeing; Involving People; Responsive Integrated Services; Teams which Deliver; Improving Quality; and Making it Happen. Do you agree that it is appropriate to focus on these themes and are there any others that should be addressed by the regional strategy?

The five major themes capture the totality of the issues for those who use the HPSS and those who work in them. An initial comment is that it is preferable to constrain the themes to the minimum and these five seem very appropriate. Having said that there are two points that UCHT would wish to make.

Firstly, delivering the vision will require a much increased emphasis on partnerships, at all levels and contexts. Whilst the strategy does acknowledge this, the importance of partnerships would have been given greater import if it was explicitly referenced in one of the themes, perhaps as; **Partnerships and Teams which deliver**. Allied to this theme the strategy could have identified explicit outcome measures that will require inter-agency partnerships to ensure delivery.

A second point concerns making it happen. There is little doubt that realizing a vision where, “the health and wellbeing of the people of Northern Ireland will be amongst the best in Europe”, will require

substantial additional investment in the HPSS. UCHT would acknowledge that in comparison to other areas of Great Britain there is a higher per capita spend on HSPSS in Northern Ireland. However, whilst there will always be room for organisations to work 'smarter', for the foreseeable future there will still be a requirement for high levels of investment to ensure we do deliver the best health and wellbeing in Europe.

(iii) *A Healthier Future* identifies 16 future Policy Directions. Do you believe these are the right Policy Directions to achieve the vision set out in the document?

The 16 future Policy Directions are the correct policy directions and UCHT would not be recommending any amendments.

(iv) *A Healthier Future* identifies a number of key actions and outcomes. Do you believe that these are the right actions and outcomes to achieve the vision set out in the document?

(a) Key Actions

The Key Actions are helpful in that they identify the particular measures that will be implemented over the 'life' of the strategy.

One particular Key Action is to develop a family and parenting strategy (5.92). A reference is also made to developing a family support strategy (5.94). Whilst these may well make a positive contribution, caution is urged regarding the development of too

many strategies, as *A Healthier Future* makes reference to circa twenty different strategies, some of which are still in the process of being developed.

(b) Outcomes

As noted elsewhere UCHT endorses the emphasis on outcomes and where a specific target is stated it is helpful that the current position is noted. However there are a number of outcomes for which no baseline is referenced and the revised strategy should ensure that robust measures are included thus ensuring one can be more certain with regards to whether or not progress is being achieved.

(v) *A Healthier Future* identifies the need to reduce smoking as a key element in improving the health of people in Northern Ireland and sets out three main options.

a. Should restrictions on smoking in public places and in workplaces be a matter for self-regulation and should Government simply act to encourage and support smoking cessation? or

b. Should smoking generally be prohibited in most enclosed public places and workplaces, but allowed in certain settings such as pubs that do not prepare and serve food and in private clubs where the members decide to permit smoking? or

c. Should legislation be introduced to ban smoking in all enclosed public places and workplaces?

The Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust considers that smoking and smoking related illnesses is one of the key public health issues for our community. It is disappointing that whilst there is an overall reduction in the levels of smoking there are still many, particularly the young, who continue to take up and maintain the smoking habit. As a response the Trust has taken a very proactive position and declared all Trust property and buildings to be non-smoking.

With regards to the particular options the Trust is of the view that public organisations concerned with health and wellbeing should provide leadership and adopt a clear position that leaves no room for ambiguity on the part of the public. Consequently the Trust wholeheartedly endorses Option 3 and looks forward to following the example of our neighbouring European Union countries who are already enjoying the benefits of an approach such as option 3.

(vi) Are the proposals for taking the strategy forward adequate?

The strategy sets out "A New Planning Process", identifying:

- Five year reviews of the strategy;
- Medium term objectives presented in future implementation plans (at regional level), with five year horizons and three year reviews;
- Area three year plans (at Board level), replacing HWIPS and TDPs, and reviewed on an annual basis;
- Yearly performance reports detailing progress towards meeting the objectives of the current implementation plan.

In considering this planning process the first comment is that the process may be more quickly and easily understood if it was presented diagrammatically, alongside the existing planning arrangements. In this way those within and without the Health and Personal Social Services could compare current arrangements with proposed arrangements and thus determine if the latter are fit for purpose.

Secondly, taking the strategy forward will require a sophisticated response on the part of the many organisations and agencies that have a responsibility to deliver health and social care. Specifically there will be a critical requirement for leadership, at all levels, and leadership with the capacity to create and drive alliances and partnerships across traditional and emerging organisational forms. It is pleasing to note the frequency that leadership is referred to within the strategy, though perhaps it should also reference the need for the concept of entrepreneurialism, thereby contributing to the development of a solution orientated culture that can create and extend opportunities and solutions, rather than relying on them to be handed down from the centre.

The Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust believes that an effective management structure is required to deliver this challenging agenda and any plans to reorganize health and social services should not undermine future management capacity and capability.

Thirdly, the strategy correctly highlights the need to challenge the concept of a 'black hole' and how efficiency savings are generally

not as easily obtained as some commentators may suggest. Indeed, whilst the Review of Public Administration may streamline the public sector there is little doubt that macro organisational change does incur costs not least in terms of reducing the capacity and focus on the business of delivering services. Having said this UCHT will always reflect and explore more efficient ways of working and the Trust looks forward to the outcome of the Review of Public Administration and the "Appleby Review", and how they may assist the delivery of health and social care.

A final point and one that the Trust would support is the increased emphasis on outcomes. For too long performance management in the HPSS has focused on the inputs and outputs, which tells us little as to whether or not the health and wellbeing of our community is improving. UCHT, along with its partners and the community it serves, wishes to demonstrate that the available resources for health and social care do make a positive contribution and "add life to years and years to life".

(vii) Are the equality issues adequately addressed?

The Trust supports the efforts taken to date to meet the Equality Legislation. By applying the Integrated Impact Assessment tool, the DHSSPS has taken steps to address the Equality Impact of the strategy in addition to other possible impacts as listed.

It is noted that the strategy has been written to address a range of health and social care related issues and provide a vision for

development over a twenty-year horizon. Therefore the Trust would agree with the provisional conclusions that the strategy will have a range of benefits in terms of Equality of Opportunity and does not immediately indicate any potential adverse impacts.

The Trust welcomes the broad and inclusive range of consultation already carried out and looks forward to a continued pro-active approach to gathering views on the development and implementation of the strategy.

4. Conclusions

A Healthier Future captures a positive image of health and social care in 2025. Quite rightly it presents a future where health and social wellbeing is much improved to that of today. Delivering to the vision will undoubtedly be a challenge and it is incumbent upon all of us to work together to ensure that the vision is more than just fine words, and indeed becomes a reality.