

Excerpt of Minutes of the Health and Social Care Board Meeting held at 10.00am on Thursday 13 February 2014 in the Boardroom, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS

Full Minutes of this Board Meeting are available in the Board Meeting section of our website.

24/13 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION SERVICES FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Chair welcomed Ms Anne Hillis, Senior Commissioning Manager, to the meeting. He reminded members that the Board, at its meeting on 8 August 2013, had approved that a public consultation should be undertaken in relation to the review's findings. This consultation commenced on 16 September and ran until 13 December 2013.

Ms Hillis explained that, in January 2012, the Board had initiated a review of the provision of language interpreting and written translation services for health and social care in Northern Ireland. She said that this review then concluded in June 2013 with

recommendations being discussed at the August Board meeting as referred to by the Chair.

Ms Hillis advised that a total of 44 responses had been received to the consultation and added that the majority of responses had indicated broad agreement with the nine recommendations. She also pointed out that there did not appear to be any major impact in relation to Section 75 groups.

Continuing, Ms Hillis described the specific issues raised by consultees which were included in the cover paper available to members.

Mr McKeever referred to the feedback received during the consultation period and said that there was a strong preference for face to face interpreting as opposed to telephone. Responding, Ms Hillis explained that the Board did accept that there was a preference for face to face interpreting.

The Chief Executive believed that it would be important to recognise that, while face to face contact was important, where possible, non-face to face could be used in appropriate circumstances. He believed that the strategy should indicate that a consequence to this would be to attempt to maintain a strong face to face engagement but, where appropriate, there should be a move to modern technology.

Ms Hillis pointed out that the recommendation in relation to face to face interpreting referred to the 'appropriate use of the various forms of interpreting' and believed that key to this recommendation would be the development of guidelines for the various uses of interpreting. She said that stakeholder feedback had supported this.

Ms Hillis indicated that the guidelines would ensure that non-face to face interpreting would only be used where appropriate. She said that the advisory group to be established would have membership from medical, GPs, health and social care stakeholders, service users, carers and the PCC to define what would be appropriate in terms of usage.

The Chair asked whether a timescale had been identified for implementation and whether review dates had been identified.

Responding, Ms Hillis described the next steps should the Board approve the recommendations today. She said that steps would be taken to establish the multi-disciplinary advisory group immediately and explained that this group would also oversee the implementation of the recommendations and monitor the performance.

Mr Gilmore pointed out that the Review anticipated that the estimated costs of providing the service would be similar to the current levels and asked who would be responsible for meeting this cost. Ms Hillis confirmed that the Board paid for the service which was very much demand-led and added that there had been a significant increase in face to face contacts to a level of over 84,000 for the 2013/14 year to date.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the interpreting services remained a pressure within the system and emphasised that the service would be available to an individual when it was required.

Mr Leach referred to the recommendation that interpreting and written translation services should be delivered on the basis of a regional shared service by the BSO. He asked if there was potential for this to be included in a future Internal Audit programme.

Responding, Mr Harkin said that, taking the normal Internal Audit procedures into account, there was every possibility that this could be included in a future programme if this area was identified as an area of risk to the Board.

Following this discussion, members considered the analysis of consultation responses and **APPROVED** the implementation of the recommendations of the Review of Future Arrangements for Language Interpreting and Translation Services for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

The Chair thanked Ms Hillis for her attendance and she withdrew from the meeting.