

Exploring the Potential for Cross Border Hospital Services in the Irish Border Region – Progress Report

December 2009

Advisory Group

The first Advisory Group met on 22 October. Since then, Dr Ambrose McLoughlin, Registrar and CEO of the Irish Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland; Mr Tom Daly from the HSE; and Mr Colm Donaghy, CEO of the Southern Health & Social Care Trust have joined.

Development of a prototype modelling tool for hospital planning on a border region and all-island basis (the Modelling Strand)

Consultants Horwath Bastow Charleton have been engaged to undertake the Modelling Strand. The contract has been signed and HBC have submitted the Project Inception Report. HBC have agreed to a shortened timeframe for the work, with the final report now due in February 2011. We have also agreed that there will be two (rather than one) Stakeholders' Conferences: the first will consider the interim findings (Sept 2010) and the second will consider the draft modeling tool (Dec 2010/Jan 2011). Ruth and Andy have had some very constructive discussions with HBC. The consultants will be liaising with us to ensure that there is complementarity between the two strands of this project. HBC will also be assisting in arranging access with statutory bodies for the consultation process in the "Participation" strand of the project.

The role of community involvement in planning hospital services (the Participation Strand)

Work is ongoing on desk research, that has provided the basis for development of a Research Plan, adapting and operationalising the original proposal by Patricia Clarke. Arising from the desk research, work is proceeding on two preliminary chapters of the report, outlining the structural and policy changes in respect of health and social care services, over the past decade and the approach to Personal and Public Involvement / Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in both jurisdictions.

Primary data collection has also commenced with a round of initial interviews (The Wheel, CORI (now Social Justice Ireland), Combat Poverty, Belfast HSC Trust). All political parties on the island have been contacted for information about their positions and any interventions they have made on the reconfiguration of hospital services etc. A postal/email questionnaire has been sent to 40 health advocacy and voluntary groups working at regional or national level. This was targeted specifically on groups that could be expected to engage with health policy consultations.

A series of focus groups is now being organised to take place in a number of venues across the border region in Jan/early Feb. These will be held in community venues and will be primarily targeted towards representatives of community organizations and other activists. Most of these will also be advertised through various community networks and newsletters, although there will be focus groups in Dungannon specifically for people with disabilities and carers and for ethnic minority translators working in hospitals. A number of interviews with health care professionals will also take place – mainly in January/February. The emerging findings will be presented at a study day in March 2010, and the final report complete in April.