

South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) Strategic Development Group (SDG)

Held on 24th August 2023 in Boardroom SWAH and via Microsoft Teams

Present: Neil Guckian (Chief Executive, Western Trust), Judi McGaffin (Non-Executive Director, Western Trust Board), Jim Wilkinson (Department of Health, Deputy Secretary, Healthcare Policy Group), Tomas Adell (Department of Health – Director of Hospital Services), Cllr Thomas O’Reilly (Chair, FODC), Alison McCullagh (Chief Executive, FODC), Dr Brendan Lavery (Medical Director, Western Trust), Mark Gillespie (Director of Planned Care, with overall responsibility for SWAH and Omagh HPCC, Western Trust), Jenny Irvine (Independent Community Stakeholder), Teresa Molloy (Director of Performance & Service Improvement, Western Trust), Carol Reid (Asst Director of Nursing SWAH & Omagh H&PCC), Prof Monica Monaghan (Divisional Clinical Director of Medicine, Southern sector, Western Trust), Dr Mark Roberts (Clinical Consultant Lead Integrated Care Southern Sector, Primary Care and Older People’s Services, Western Trust), Chris Curran (Public Affairs/Relations, SPOC MLAs, MPs; lead on SWAH All Party Group, Western Trust), Marianne Walsh (Interim Head of Service Community Nursing, Primary Care & Older People’s Services – representing Donna Keenan), Prof Ronan O’Hare (Deputy Medical Director, Western Trust), Dinah Shortt (Service User Representative), Geraldine McKay (Director Unscheduled Care, Cancer, Diagnostics & Medicine, Western Trust), Oliver Kelly (Head of Communications, Western Trust), Elizabeth Campbell (Asst Director of Operations SWAH & Omagh H&PCC),

In Attendance: Michelle Gilmore (Business Support Officer/secretariat)

Apologies: Bernie McCrory (Independent Community Stakeholder), Prof Mark Taylor (Independent Expert Health Advisor), Donna Keenan (Director of Nursing & PCOPC, Western Trust), Joanne McClean (Independent Expert Health Advisor, Director of Public Health, PHA), Dr Laura McDonnell (Director, South West GP Federation)

Welcome

Mr Guckian, Co Chair, welcomed all present and apologies were noted. Mr Guckian wished to reflect on the ongoing commitment of staff to the Hospital and the organisation as a whole. He provided an overview of today’s agenda highlighting that the main body and largest element of today’s meeting would be Teresa Molloy’s delivery of the Consultation findings report on the Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital.

Terms of Reference, discussion and approval

Terms of Reference were discussed and key points addressed. Neil Guckian stated it was important we hold ourselves to account when drawing up a terms of reference and it is instrumental in getting people; stakeholders, service users and staff on board. Group were asked to provide any comments following preliminary meeting and now in position to approve the Terms of Reference.

Presentation on Consultation Findings Report in respect of the Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital

Neil Guckian addressed this item acknowledging at the outset that as a Trust and a service we are acutely aware of the very genuine concerns of the public and it is hoped that the Consultation Findings Report which has been widely shared and available online will go some way to alleviate many of these concerns. Teresa Molloy gave a sweeping and comprehensive overview of the Findings Report in relation to the Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital. Ms Molloy thoroughly addressed the process of the consultation and the findings; the preparation and conduct of the consultation and acknowledgement that this was an extensive piece of work with many contributors working together. Some of the key areas Mrs Molloy highlighted were recruitment and workforce; public concerns regarding legality of the temporary suspension; communication challenges in particular addressing the negative narratives but also communication with the public and with staff and also with Department of Health; concerns re patient safety and the much debated Golden Hour. Ms Molloy addressed the revised pathways and protocols, including how they were tested prior and how patient safety has remained paramount priority throughout; also the introduction and development of ambulatory service. The Findings report addressed the consultation response submissions including a substantial response provided regarding the Save Our Acute Services group petition highlighting their 5-point-plan.

Mark Gillespie summarised the Trusts position currently stating that there is daily scrutiny of the process; numbers and performance is closely monitored and reported on monthly; pathways will be reviewed regularly and as a Trust will strive to ensure public confidence in the provision at South West Acute Hospital Emergency Department and throughout remains high. As a service we continue to hold a monthly Project Team meeting and a monthly Programme Board meeting which feeds into and provides a full update to Trust Board. Mr Gillespie added that throughout the entire process, patient safety was fundamental but that also important at the outset was the patient journey and their families. South West Acute Hospital has a very stable Emergency Department; agreement it is vital that we maintain that and continue to develop that going forward. Mr Gillespie wished to acknowledge that Professor Monaghan has been instrumental in putting pathway and process in place so that palliative patients can remain in South West Acute Hospital without requiring transfer to Altnagelvin. Mr Gillespie also wished to advise that since the beginning of the year the Trust has been incrementally increasing theatre utilisation and is pleased to report that we have met that trajectory and on course to meet all other trajectories by end of the year. Mr Gillespie felt it was important to note also that Gynae services are back operating on site on a weekly basis, with Dental also utilising theatre sessions. Also now being carried out at South West Acute Hospital is Breast Surgery which is a new addition. Throughout, Hospital Management wish to commend staff noting that their commitment has been profound.

Some discussion followed in relation to the development of ICS in Western Trust and acknowledgement that as a Trust we are operating through huge pieces of work to achieve this with a pilot running in southern sector. ICS will require legislation. Mr Guckian wished to reassure group that services are working closely with Primary Care to move forward.

Medical Workforce

Brendan Lavery led some discussion regarding medical workforce, sharing that NIMDTA is responsible for training and for the education of medical trainee doctors. It was acknowledged that the Belfast area has much greater trainee provision than the West; notable possible factors being population, geography, need etc. however no justifiable reason why trainees are distributed as they are. Of a total 14 trainees last year, Western Trust had 2. Concerns around the process, which is complex and administered by NIMDTA,

have been raised. Allocation doesn't currently represent what is actually needed and NIMDTA have sole responsibility for allocating trainee doctors. Process for Speciality Doctors differs slightly. It was acknowledged that while South West Acute Hospital struggles with these allocation issues and medical recruitment in general, that every medical team in every Hospital in Northern Ireland has vacancies. It was further acknowledged that this is a common theme with many gaps also across UK. Neil Guckian shared that the Western Trust are doing a baseline assessment of doctors; taking in where they are; what is the workload and what are the gaps. Mr Guckian concluded stating the Trust are committed to increasing our rotas in the hopes of attracting more doctors. Mr Guckian proposed that Medical Workforce remain a standing item on agenda going forward and revisited at each meeting, reviewing various areas as this work will be pivotal in the development and moving forward of South West Acute Hospital and the Trust. Mr Gillespie

Hospital Blueprint Titles

Neil Guckian shared that at a recent meeting a number were tasked with identifying what goes into a 'big hospital', a smaller local hospital, acute hospital etc; what the hospital titles should be and what hospitals can be categorised into said groups. Definitions will differ and criteria will differ. Mr Guckian advised discussions were between potentially two titles; Acute local Hospital and Area Hospital. The titles Local Hospital and District General Hospital were not favoured. Jim Wilkinson expressed it was a complex task getting the blue print right. He voiced these were the core services that will always be there with rest of the services added on. Agreement it is important to get it right. Neil Guckian advised Southwest would remain 'Southwest'. He concluded stating there has been much debate on the blueprint and titles of hospitals however emphasised how discussions were bringing a really rich debate re what Acute is and what it includes. Mr Guckian concluded stating it will be a useful document when agreed and finalised and will need Ministerial approval.

Staff Engagement Forum

Professor Monica Monaghan confirmed there was an initial meeting of this Forum planned for the following week. Professor Monaghan also advised that this group would work with and be engaging closely with workforce planning. The Staff Engagement Forum will meet regularly and will feed into this Strategic Development Group in similar fashion to the All Party Group.

Fermanagh and Omagh Council Health and Social Care Sub-Committee and SWAH All Party Group

Neil Guckian referred to the now established SWAH All Party Group. He voiced it was important to be able to utilise the all political party influence and engagement. Mr Guckian added he believed that this engagement has helped to provide a greater understanding of issues and challenges and helped reduce inaccuracies and negative narrative within our community. The Group continues to meet collectively with transparent discussions and very open dialog. He highlighted that the new FODC Health and Social Care Sub Committee had now been formed post-election and looked forward also to this engagement at the first upcoming meeting and moving forward.

Alison McCullagh asked regarding the provision and publishing of minutes of the SWAH Strategic Development Group Meetings and it was agreed that these would be published, following approval at each subsequent SDG Meeting, on the Trust Website page for the group, in addition to sending to other relevant groups, including FODC Health & Social Care Sub Committee and SWAH APG.

GP/Primary Care update

Neil Guckian emphasised that the Trust continue to work on this. Discussion followed regarding Dromore/Trillick practices and recent support measures. It was confirmed that all GP sessions are currently covered in all practices and meetings are taking place with SPPG on a fortnightly basis; stating an exciting and challenging time ahead.

Neil Guckian expressed that the Trust would continue to step in to help and facilitate GP practices however added we must be mindful that this may become more difficult and potentially may be at the detriment of other community services. However added that we would continue to constantly look to improve and learn from each experience.

Mr Guckian underlined that our priority in relation to the GP practices were to, if we can, go in and stabilise the practice. In terms of a longevity plan, it was accepted it was much easier to find someone to take on a stable population/provision that otherwise. It was also agreed that longterm we must embrace the number of GPs and the rates paid etc.

Communications/PR Update

Oliver Kelly briefed the group regarding the continued challenges in relation to negativity, the negative messaging and perceptions in the local community. Mr Kelly assured that the Trust were constantly and consistently, proactively tackling this agenda and highlighting and pushing forward the positive narrative.

Neil Guckian reflected on the local newspapers in terms of the differing positions of both support and opposition; some of which is not deemed balanced or appropriate journalism. Mr Kelly was eager to emphasise that the Trust continue to have strategies to counteract this.

Carol Reid brought group up to date regarding instances of staff being targeted or contacted with negative messaging and reassured the Trust continue to counteract this with positive messaging.

Chris Curran confirmed there would be communication and PR in relation to the launch of this Strategic Development Group, including a group photo. In referring to the Trust website and dedicated page it was reiterated how beneficial and how positive it was going to be going forward to be able to refer people and the public in general, to a consistent message and point of information.

Tomas Adell queried if there was more we could do and lended thought to speaking to teams and speaking to community to reinforce messages. Discussion focused on engagement in area of foster care with agreement that the work in childcare underpins everything.

Any other business

No other business tabled at today's meeting.

Details of Next meeting

The next meeting of Strategic Development Group is scheduled to be held on **Thursday 26th October 2023 2-4pm, Boardroom, South West Acute Hospital (virtual option MS Teams)**. In addition to a further meeting scheduled for December a series of dates have also been planned for 2024 and will be shared with members in due course.