

**SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

**Minutes of the People and Culture Committee of the  
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust Board  
held on Monday 17 February 2025 at 9:30am  
in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald**

**PRESENT:**

Mrs A Quirk, Non-Executive Director (Chair of Committee)  
Mrs C Smyth, Director of People & Organisational Development  
Mrs R Gibbs, Director of Adult Services and Healthcare in Prison  
Mr C Martyn, Medical Director  
Mrs CM Dickson, Director of Primary Care & Older People's Services  
Mr M Neil, Director of Unscheduled Care, Medicine & Cancer  
Ms W Thompson, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Estates  
Ms M Parks, Director of Surgery, Elective Care, Maternity & Paediatrics  
Dr R Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Director of Nursing,  
Midwifery & AHPs and Director of Support Services  
Mrs L Preece, Director of Director of Children Services & Executive Director of  
Social Work  
Mrs H Moore, Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics  
Mr K McMahon, Non-Executive Director  
Mrs S Henderson, Non-Executive Director

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs M McNally, Assistant Director, Risk Management & Governance  
Mr D Cairnduff, Assistant Director, People & Organisational Development  
Mrs S Flynn, Senior Manager People & Resourcing obo Mrs Elaine O'Neill  
Mr M O'Toole, Assistant Director of Employee Relations  
Ms M McDowell, Interim PA to Claire Smyth, Director of People &  
Organisational Development (Minutes)

**OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1.0 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were recorded from Mr Kieran Donaghy, Non-Executive Director;  
and Mrs Elaine O'Neill, Assistant Director, People & Resourcing

**2.0 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest made at this juncture or during the meeting.

### **3.0 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2024**

The minutes of the People and Culture Committee held on 23 October 2024, having been previously circulated, were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **4.0 MATTERS ARISING**

The matters arising were noted and any outstanding matters would be addressed during the meeting.

### **5.0 PRESENTATIONS**

#### **5.1 QI PEOPLE PRIORITY**

Mr Cairnduff provided the committee with a QI People Priority presentation.

Mr Cairnduff highlighted how this work connects with our People Plan & the Open, Just & Learning Culture Framework.

One of the biggest challenges will be embedding the culture in such a large, diverse organisation. The QI team are also supporting this work.

Mr Cairnduff asked 'How do we encourage staff to make the necessary changes.' A map was displayed of work already ongoing.

An operational working group has been set up to make this come to life now that the policy frameworks are in place. The DoH is running a consultation on the Being Open framework, which will remain open until the end of March. This framework will also support this priority work.

We are the first Trust to partner the Royal Free, London NHS Trust to gain better understanding of their QI work. Two pilot SET Teams have been identified and we are expecting feedback within the next couple of weeks.

### **6.0 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **6.1 PEOPLE PLAN UPDATE**

##### **Key actions**

Mr Cairnduff referred to Action Plan and updated as follows:

Progress Leadership programme, specific for SET has been completed by 12/13 staff with positive feedback received.

A new reporting process is being adopted for Appraisal recording, which will enable updated figures to be reported. Current appraisal figures were raised at Accountability meetings with the Chief Executive; liP feedback has indicated that appraisals are happening, but may not be recorded. The new system will capture more accurate data.

Our People Plan Action Plan runs up to March and will be reviewed by the Steering Group in terms of creation of a new action plan after this.

## **6.2 Absence Progress Report**

The Chair has asked Mr O'Toole to give an update to the committee. Mr O'Toole referred to the briefing paper provided.

Sick absence currently above DoH target, and new measures are being considered to lower absence rate.

It was asked 'what is being done to get staff on long term sick back to work'. Mr O'Toole advised that a recent audit highlighted need for focus on staff training and appropriate recording on the system. On line training is being created alongside face to face, which will enhance capacity for managers to attend and will support knowledge required of the policy and recording. Current focus is on individuals with numerous episodes of absence with provision of additional support for managers, i.e. clinics. Mr O'Toole explained that the figures provided are always 2 months in arrears due to salary closedown. January showed 8.5%, which included seasonal flu figures. It is hoped that the new equip system will help capture more accurate data, taking into account seasonal effects. System due to be implemented late 2026.

It was noted that the triggers are 3 episodes per year or anything over 20 days. These figures, along with reasons for absence are provided on Directorate reports and highlighted at all SMT meetings by relevant HR Business Partners.

Mrs Smyth noted that the majority of sickness absence is recorded against Mental Health and staff and managers are supported through OH and the Staff Psychology Team.

Mr O'Toole advised that the Trust has a clear Action Plan and a dedicated absence team who are working with Managers to help improve the situation and work towards meeting the DoH target.

The new regional absence policy is awaiting final approval and is to be issued shortly.

## **6.3 Policy Updates**

The Chair has asked for an update to the committee about Policy Updates.

Mrs Flynn advised that there were no updates at present.

Mrs Smyth advised that the Partial Retirement policy has recently been agreed and it is anticipated the regional Management of Attendance policy should be ready in time for the next meeting.

#### **6.4 Raising Concerns**

The Chair has asked Mr O'Toole to give an update to the committee. Mr O'Toole referred to the briefing paper provided.

Mr O'Toole advised that there were 12 concerns raised from April to December 24, which have progressed to formal investigations. 30% of these have been raised by the same individual.

No patient safety issues have been identified.

Mrs Smyth advised that whilst an update is provided every quarter, the yearly report will be presented at the next meeting, scheduled for May. A New Regional policy has been released and people can raise concerns in a number of ways. Once a concern is received, it is considered by 2 Directors who will determine if an investigation is required. Following investigation the Trust offers the complainant an opportunity to attend a meeting for feedback.

Mr O'Toole advised the Trust now have advocates to support managers, and that new training will be available to them, planned to take place on 10 March.

Mrs Quirk asked what percentage of issues raised are unfounded. Mr O'Toole responded advising that often the Trust is already aware of the issues and problems arise when staff are not content with how the issue is being dealt with. Better communication between parties is required.

Mr McMahon asked what percentage is fictitious, Mr O'Toole explained it was difficult to prove an issue raised is fictitious.

The New Raising Concerns policy, means that staff can now be raised externally as well as internally. It is important to have a good recording system to identify staff raising multiple cases or potentially fictitious ones.

#### **6.5 Attraction and Retention Strategy**

Mrs Flynn advised that the Trust have set up an Attraction & Retention focus group to assist with drafting a new policy. Mrs Flynn advised that a Careers Fair is planned for the 1 March to take place in the Innovation Centre at the Ulster Hospital, with over 40 professions represented.

QR Codes will be used to advertise posts. Videos will play in the background re 'Great place to Work.' Information on benefits of working for HSC will be provided; the aim is to advertise available posts and allow attendees to apply for posts on the day. Also using social media, networking with school career teachers and colleges to promote.

**Action: Mrs Parks/Mr Robinson asked for information to be provided so that they may share through their contacts and help to promote through various channels that they have access to.**

**Action: Update to be provided at next meeting.**

## **7.0 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

### **7.1 People and Culture related Internal Audit Reports & Related Risks**

Mrs Flynn advised that following on from the recent internal Audit report on recruitment, the Trust is implementing a number of recommendations including face-2-face and on-line training over all areas. Mrs Flynn explained there are limitations with the current system however it is essential for Teams to discuss outcomes of audits and agree and implement action plans. Mrs Thompson confirmed internal audits would be discussed at Audit Committee.

### **7.2 Being Open Framework**

Mr Cairnduff advised that the Being Open Framework is currently out for consultation by DoH, which will run until 21 March 2025. DoH is running virtual information sessions to include Trust Staff to gather feedback as Framework will have an impact on all.

### **7.3 Safeguarding Mandatory Training**

Mrs Preece advised that concern was raised at last meeting re percentage of training completed against figures taken from the August 2024 report, which showed a 38% compliance. Work has been undertaken in terms of accurate recording and increased focus on training. Current figures reflect compliance of 58.57% for Children's; and 72% for Adults.

This has been placed on agenda for both Adults and Children's safeguarding meetings and there is an expected increase in compliance from January 2025. This will be reported at the next meeting, scheduled for May 2025.

Mrs Quirk asked what is preventing staff undertaking the training. Mrs Preece advised there can be a number of reasons including service pressures, time, and lack of understanding as to what level is required. SET is considering provision of freeze weeks/days to address mandatory training compliance.

**Action: Appendix 1 Table to be amended with Children/Adults swapped.**

### **7.4 Cultural Competency Framework**

Mr Cairnduff advised of the release of the framework, developed by collaboration with regional Equality Teams. This Framework provides advice on how to approach incidents as they arise.

SET/PC/10/25

A Regional Equality group will work on raising awareness and promotion of Framework. Shared with HRPB's and TU's for onward distribution.

The Little Book of Cultural Competence was distributed to Members at the meeting.

#### **8.0 SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no items escalated from the Sub-Committee.

#### **9.0 ESCALATION TO TRUST BOARD**

None.

#### **10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

#### **11.0 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair confirmed the date and venue of the next meeting would be **Thursday 22 May 2025** at **9:30am** in Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald (room tbc).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.