

## **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 Thursday 22 May at 9.30am  
in the Board Room, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital**

### **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  
Mrs CM Dickson, Director of Primary Care & Older People  
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 Patient Experience.  
Mr K Donaghy, Non-Executive Director  
Mr K McMahan, Non-Executive Director  
Mrs S Henderson, Non-Executive Director

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Cathy Smith, Ward Sister, Surgery  
Mrs M McNally, Assistant Director, Risk Management & Governance  
Mr D Cairnduff, Assistant Director, People & Organisational Development  
Mrs E O'Neill, Assistant Director, People & Resourcing  
Mr M O'Toole, Assistant Director of Employee Relations  
Mrs R Monroe, Equality & HR Assistant, People & Organisational  
Development (Minutes)

### **OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **1.0 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were recorded from, Mrs L Preece, Director of Children Services & Executive Director of Social Work, Mr C Martyn, Medical Director, Mr M Neil, Director of Unscheduled Care, Medicine & Cancer, Mrs H Moore, Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics.

## **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 17 FEBRUARY 2025**

The minutes of the People and Culture Committee held on 17 February 2025, having been previously circulated.

## **4.0 MATTERS ARISING**

AOB – Chair asked members if anyone had Any Other Business to assist with keeping the meeting to time. Mr Donaghy highlighted previous discussion of Safeguarding training on 23 October 2024. Mr Donaghy acknowledged the increase in compliance, 58.57% for Children's; and 72% for Adults as reported at the People and Culture Committee meeting held on 17 February 2025. Mrs O'Neill stated on behalf of Mrs Preece that there is considerable work being done in her department regarding safeguarding mandatory training. Mrs Smyth also highlighted EMT are regularly updated on Mandatory Training compliance.

The Chair invited the committee to look at the Matters Arising from the People and Culture Committee on 17 February 2025, paper no. SET/PC/11/25. Agenda item 6.1 Attraction and Retention Strategy, this has been completed and Mrs O'Neill will give an update under agenda item 8.5 of today's meeting. Agenda item 7.3 Safeguarding Mandatory Training, this has been completed, and a correction has been made on the table and amended from last meeting.

Mr McMahon has asked is there a tipping point for the figures? Mrs Smyth responded stating there has been a focus on mandatory training, in particular Cyber Awareness and Information Governance due to the launch of Encompass. Fire was also a focus because of a recent audit. The new focus is Safeguarding, focusing on areas where compliance is low. Mrs Dickson stated this is a standing agenda item at directorate meetings.

## **5.0 Presentations**

### **5.1 Team Based Roster**

Cathy Smith, Ward Sister, has been invited to present to the Committee the Team Based Roster. The Chair welcomed Cathy and invited her to present.

Cathy provided the committee with an overview of Team Based Rostering in Ward 5a of the Ulster Hospital. She highlighted the benefits it has brought including work/life balance for staff, increased staff morale, filling of vacancies and reduction in short-term absence. 80-90% of staff get their off-duty when

requested. A year since implementation, four Surgical Wards have followed and training is currently being provided for Paediatrics.

The Chair asked the committee has anyone any questions. Discussion followed as to the clear benefits and outcomes from implementation of Team Based Roster. Mr McMahon asked about rules in the background, especially around Bank Holidays. Cathy explained that she will put them down for the unpopular shifts if required, but the staff do it themselves. Mrs O'Neill stated that its brilliant, really empowers staff. Ms Parks stated that sick leave, bank and agency usages are down which is fabulous. Mrs Dickson voiced that the friendship groups could cause little clicks and issues, but this has shown it isn't an issue. Cathy has expressed that the new Band 5s are part of the team and are training the student nurses. Mrs Smith said it's a great attraction and retention for staff. Mr McMahon has asked what the material impact of this is. Is it saving finance? Cathy is logging the figures on a QI project.

The Chair thanked Cathy for her presentation.

## **6.0 ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **6.1 Equality Annual Progress Report Newsletter**

The Chair invited Mr Cairnduff to give an update to the Committee on the Equality Annual Progress Report Newsletter, paper no. SET/PC/12/25. Mr Cairnduff explained that as Part of its Equality Scheme, the Trust is required to produce an Annual Progress Report which details our progress in fulfilling our statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties. The following documents have been produced to meet this requirement, an Annual Progress Report and an Annual Progress Report Newsletter. Mr Cairnduff provided a summary of key achievements across the year. Mr Cairnduff sought approval prior to approval by Trust Board in August.

The Chair asked who picks the topics for the Newsletter. Mr Cairnduff responded the topics are picked under Section 75 and consulting with staff. There is a team of three driving this. The Chair thanked the Equality Team.

Mrs Henderson asked Mr Cairnduff about the Domestic Abuse Champions, are they trained in Sexual Violence? Mr Cairnduff highlighted that there is a training element before becoming a Domestic Abuse Champion and their role is to signpost. Mrs Henderson also suggested alternative wording to violence due to the connotations for victims.

Mr Cairnduff agreed to review this wording. Mr Donaghy indicated that a number of decisions aren't going to EQIA stage. Could more information be brought to the next meeting? Mr Cairnduff said yes to bring more information to the next People and Culture Committee Meeting in August.

The Chair asked the committee where they happy to approve. Committee approved to bring to Trust Board in August.

## **6.2 People & Culture Committee Annual Report of Effectiveness**

This is the first annual People and Culture Committee Annual Report of Effectiveness, paper no. SET/PC/25/25. Trust Board has an established Committee known as the People & Culture Committee with 2024/25 being its first full financial year in operation. As part of the Committee's Annual Programme of Work, the Committee is required to review its Terms of Reference under which it operates as well as consider its overall effectiveness as a Committee. The Committee is also required to give due consideration to reviewing the operation of its Programme of Work. This Report brings together an overview of the outcome of the work of the committee as well as incorporating narrative on its achievements throughout the year. The Report was presented to the Committee in draft form for consideration and amendment before a final version is presented at Trust Board for information.

## **6.3 People & Culture Committee Programme of Work 25/26**

The Chair invited Mrs Smyth to give an overview of the People and Culture Committee Programme of Work 25/26, paper no. SET/PC/26/25. Mrs Smyth indicated you can see the programme of work for 25/26, there will be standing agenda items at each meeting, and this is the plan going forward on what we bring onto the agenda for this committee. Mrs Smyth has stated we are asking for approval going forward.

Mr Donaghy mentioned is there anywhere we are bringing the risk register to allow this committee to give assurance on people risks to Trust Board? Mrs McNally stated that HR risks on the risk register are discussed at Governance Assurance Committee. The 2024-2025 report will be coming to this committee and the committee will be reviewing the Directorate specific risk register. A discussion ensued as to this approach as there was concern there would not be opportunity for discussion of these risks at GAC. On the whole it was felt that the current approach was sufficient and should the need arise risks can be referred to People and Culture Committee for specific discussion.

## **7.0 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **7.1 People Report and Action Plan Update**

The Chair asked Mr Cairnduff to give an overview of the People Report and Action Plan Update, paper no. SET/PC/13/25. Mr Cairnduff highlighted the key focuses of the action plan and offered to take questions.

Mr McMahon asked what the Department of Health's target for absence is. There seems to be a range in figures throughout the papers. Mrs Smyth

indicated that figures will be confirmed following the meeting. Mrs Smyth also highlighting the importance to support issues raised about Corporate Risk by Mr Donaghy. A report provided to the DOH including vacancies and on trend information will be shared with the committee and provided as part of the people report going forward. Mr Donaghy stated the importance of reassuring Trust Board on workforce recruitment. The Chair thanked Mr Cairnduff.

## **7.2 Absence Action Plan & Progress Report**

The Chair invited Mr O'Toole to give an update on the Absence Action Plan and Progress Report, paper no. SET/PC/14/25. Mr O'Toole highlighted some of the actions and targets from the Absence Management Team. At the end of March 2025, absence is sitting at 8.79%. Mr O'Toole indicated that the team are targeting long term absence and absences between three and five episodes, these staff are being contacted and 80% have responded in two weeks. Ill-health retirement, has impacted the numbers, but there is now a better collaboration with OH, with a dedicated team working with the key stakeholders, currently 70 cases a month. Absence Training, clinics starting in September, aiming to train 60 a day, the team are looking at using podcasts, pop-ups and reminders for managers. The table included shows the figures, there is still pockets of absence in areas and these areas will be targeted. Mr O'Toole also indicated that short term absence has increased, this is because managers are now recording absence. The Absence Team are now targeting Medical staff, offering support to Clinical Directors. Mr O'Toole has expressed reassurance that the team are targeting the key areas and hotspots throughout the Trust. A toolkit has been created, letters and prompts in relation to absence for managers.

Mrs Smyth stated that the figures on page 2 are monthly figures. Mr McMahon indicated that managers not recording absence was concerning. Mr Donaghy welcomed the approach on managing attendance in the Trust and queried the number attending training sessions? Mr O'Toole commented that uptake has been good however there are thousands of managers and the team are reviewing how to extend the reach of the training. Mrs Smyth stated we are looking at identifying hot spot areas, we can't manage them all, but looking at areas with high levels of absence is the priority. Mrs O'Neill explained that directorate reports go to the directorate's meetings.

Ms Thompson stated that the cost is a theoretical figure as not all absence is covered by additional staff. Mrs Henderson highlighted impact on staff morale if they are constantly covering absence. Mrs Smyth has indicated that there is no confirmed target for absence from the department for this year. Mrs Henderson queried if the figure will be lower this year? Mrs Smyth responded yes. The Chair thanked Mr O'Toole.

### **7.3 Policy Updates**

The Chair invited Mrs O'Neill to give an update on any Policy Updates. Mrs O'Neill give a verbal update, stating there was no policy updates to table. Mrs O'Neill highlighted on-going regional work on a Regional Adverse Weather Guidance. An update will be given at the next meeting. Mrs Dickson stated it will be great for being equitable. The Chair thanked Mrs O'Neill.

### **7.4 Raising Concerns**

The Chair invited Mr O'Toole to speak to the committee about Raising Concerns, paper no. SET/PC/16/25. Mr O'Toole indicated that as part of the people report, a figure would be giving on raising concerns to the committee. During 2024-25 financial year, the Trust received 15 concerns of which 12 were progressed to investigation under the policy. Once vetted between the Chief Executive Office and HR, the concern will go to the Director, briefing for Directors then investigations. The general themes highlighted were patient care, policy breach and recruitment. Fraud would be dealt with by BSO Fraud Team. 5 of the 12 cases progressed were open and closed within the recommended timeframe (12 weeks). The Chair asked about the 5 unsubstantiated, they were anonymous. Raising Concerns Advocate training took place on 10 March 2025 where 12 people attended. Advocates role is to advise, support and signpost staff as appropriate within the scope of the Raising Concerns in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) policy.

Mr Donaghy welcomes this and asked are there themes emerging that would necessitate a policy change? Mr O'Toole responded by saying no, there is hotspots. Ms Thompson has indicated there is growth and this has been seen through Audit Committee. The Chair thanked Mr O'Toole.

### **7.5 Medical Revalidation and Appraisal Report**

The Chair has asked Mrs Smyth to give an overview of the Medical Revalidation and Appraisal Report, paper no. SET/PC/16/25 as Mr Martyn is an apology for today's meeting. Mrs Smyth states this report is looking at 2022 and 2023, indicating the report is there for you to review. Medics have to have their appraisal to be revalidated. Mrs Smyth indicated the completed appraisal rates for 2022, out of 402 doctors with a prescribed connection to the Trust, 399 completed their appraisal, representing a completion rate of 99.3%. The 3 missed appraisals were due exclusively to long-term sick leave or maternity leave, and not as a result of non-engagement. In 2023, of 430 doctors, 422 completed their appraisals, yielding a completion rate of 98.1%. Again, the 8 incomplete appraisals were attributed to valid absence reasons, such as sick leave or maternity leave, and not due to lack of compliance. Mrs Smyth indicates that the Trust has consistently maintained high revalidation

rates, ranging from 85-100% annually. There is huge support around this, GMC asks that we would bring this report to this committee.

The Chair has indicated its very comforting around the governance and acted on when needed. Mr McMahon has stated it's a very positive report, what are the consequences if a doctor doesn't gain revalidation in time? Mrs Smyth responded by saying we would work with GMC around revalidation. Mr Donaghy queried the job planning process. Mrs Smyth responded stating they were streamlined with job planning, during an Audit last year. Ms Parks stepped in to mention that the Audit asked for an updated job plans for every doctor yearly. Ms Thompson stated that job planning is not part of the revalidation, they could be uploading an out of date document. It's a regional system with separate monitoring in place. The Chair thanked Mrs Smyth.

## **8.0 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

### **8.1 NME Assurance Report**

The Chair invited Dr Robinson to speak to the committee about the NME Assurance Report, paper no. SET/PC/17/25. Dr Robinson explains the purpose of the report is to provide an overview and analysis of the Trust's Nursing and Midwifery assurance reports and identify areas of good practice and areas that require focus. The report is submitted to Trust Board on a quarterly basis and emailed to all nursing and midwifery staff.

Mrs Henderson enquired, does the Belfast Trust provide this? Dr Robinson explained that other Trusts do provide this. The Chair thanked Dr Robinson.

### **8.2 Flexible Working Report**

The Chair invited Mrs O'Neill to give an overview on the Flexible Working Report, paper no. SET/PC/18/25. Mrs O'Neill explained that flexible working requests increased significantly in 2024/25 (341 requests) compared to 2023/24 (204 requests) across nearly all directorates within the South Eastern Trust. This trend may be linked with the launch of retirement flexibilities in December 2024. The Trust promotes a Trust-wide flexible working culture with 41% of staff currently working part time. Flexible working is promoted at all the staff forums i.e. Multi-Cultural/ Staff with disabilities and carer forum to highlight flexible working practices. As part of directorate senior management team meeting, HRBPs discuss the specific directorate report, part of which explicitly which focuses on flexible working. Mrs O'Neill stated that home working is not shown in the figures.

Mr McMahon asked is the Trust doing itself a disservice due to the rejections on flexible working requests. Mrs Henderson questioned was there a minimal

period to have worked before making a request. Mrs O'Neill responded, flexible working can be requested from day one in post. Mrs Dickson stated it's to help keep the staff, accept the request because if we don't the staff will go elsewhere. Mrs O'Neill indicated it's to balance and support their lifestyles. Mr Cairnduff highlighted the impact on flexible working of the upcoming Good Jobs Bill. Mrs O'Neill further explained that the Good Jobs Bill may provide the right to disconnect. The Chair thanked Mrs O'Neill.

### **8.3 People & Culture related Internal Audit Reports**

The Chair enquired about the People & Culture related Internal Audit Reports. Mrs Smyth indicated there is no additional updates.

### **8.4 Management of Violence and Aggression**

The Chair invited Mr Cairnduff to give an overview of the Management of Violence and Aggression MOVA Framework, paper no. SET/PC/19/25. Mr Cairnduff explained that The Department of Health issued draft framework on management of violence and aggression in December 2023. The Trust has established a MOVA Oversight Group. This multi-disciplinary group continues to work to implement the framework and assess the key elements of risk assessment, training, incident reporting and response to protect our staff. There is a focus on identifying areas reporting high number of incidents and ensuring appropriate support is provided. The Health Committee have recently requested data in relation to MOVA and it is anticipated there will be a requirement for this on a regular basis. Mr Cairnduff indicated there has been a campaign of awareness including sessions to highlight the steps we can take to protect and support our staff and promotional materials to include access to support and help post-incident.

The Chair indicated the responsibility of the Trust that we are protecting people within the Organisation. The Chair voiced she attended a Safeguarding event at La Mon which focused on a Trauma informed Lense, and asked what are we doing as a Trust? Mr Cairnduff responded by stating conversations are at an early stage, there is a Health and Wellbeing Workshop happening on Monday. The Chair stated it's a big piece of work, looking at the trauma surrounding this incidents. Mr Cairnduff stated it's not just patient facing staff it's also our admin and clerical staff.

Mr McMahon raised a question about the use of body wear cameras for staff within the Trust. Dr Robinson indicated that our Security staff working in Support Services do not wear body cameras and there is no plans to introduce. Mrs Dickson expressed that Mrs Gibbs did bring a paper to EMT regarding staff in Prisons wearing body wear cameras. Mr Donaghy indicated that the policy was launched last year regarding abuse, is there any update on how successful this has been? Mr Cairnduff to bring an update to the next

meeting. Mrs Dickson give an example of an accident in a Care Home and the wrap around support offered by the Trust, great feedback. The Chair thanked Mr Cairnduff.

### **8.5 Careers Day Update**

The Chair invited Mrs O'Neill to give an update to the committee on the Careers Day, paper no. SET/PC/20/25. Mrs O'Neill stated as part of the Trust's Attraction and Retention strategy group, a Trust-wide careers and jobs fair was successfully held on Saturday, 1st March 2025 at the Trust QIIC, Ulster Hospital. The aim was to enhance recruitment across the Trust by showcasing career opportunities, providing insights into career pathways, and increasing the visibility of roles and career development within various service areas.

Mrs O'Neill explained some key outcomes achieved, there was over 1200 attendees, and all areas of the Trust were showcased. There was a great energy and buzz within the room. Attendees were able to apply on the day, with a total of 49 individuals submitting completed applications. Mrs O'Neill also indicated there was some learning, like better signage regarding parking, bigger venue to allow for additional tables and space and also the event to be held in alternative Trust locations.

The Chair indicated that it sounded like a great success and it was great that people had to option to apply on the day. Also an event like this shows great culture and shows the Trust as an employer. Mrs Smyth stated there was great comments when people where leaving.

The Chair wishes to extend her thanks to everyone involved in making the Careers Fair a success.

## **9.0 SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **9.1 End of Year Review**

The Chair invited Mr Cairnduff to inform the committee of work being completed by the People and Culture Steering Group. Mr Cairnduff give an overview to the committee on the End of Year Review, paper no. SET/PC/21-24/25. The Steering Group meets on a quarterly basis and wide range of representatives from across the Trust.

Mr Donaghy brought up coaching, doesn't appear to be mentioned. Mr Cairnduff stated that coaching will come under Team Coaching which is being introduced as a Pilot with 8 Teams in 2025/26.

Mrs Henderson stated that the attendance isn't very good, are there too many people involved? Is there reassurance for this? Mr Cairnduff indicated this is the first year the steering group has worked in this format, it's difficult for people to attend with busy schedules. Mr Cairnduff stated that the IIP Champions are to become members, this will allow direction from IIP. This is a proposal to the steering group.

The Chair thanked Mr Cairnduff.

#### **10.0 ITEMS FOR ESCALATION**

During the committee meeting there was no items raised for escalation

#### **11.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised during the committee meeting. Mr Donaghy's query was covered at the start of today's meeting.

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

The Chair confirmed the date and venue of the next meeting would be **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August at 2pm** in the Board Room, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald.

The Chair give reference to this being Mrs Dickson's last committee meeting, thanking her for all the input giving to the committee. Mrs Dickson stated thanks and that her replacement will be starting post on Tuesday.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.