

SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the South Eastern HSC Trust

Finance & Performance Committee held on

Monday 24 June 2024 at 11.00am

in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital

Present:	Mrs H Minford Mr N Brady	Non-Executive Director (Chairman) Non-Executive Director
In Attendance:	Ms W Thompson Mrs J Dunlop Mrs E Hannaway Mrs L Preece Mr M Largey Miss C Hughes	Director of Finance & Estates Asst Dir Financial Management Asst Dir of Performance & Improvement (Item 5 only) Director of Children's Services (Item 5 only) Assistant Director Cared for Children (Item 5 only) Personal Assistant
Apologies:	Mr K Donaghy Mr N McKinley Mrs H Moore	Non-Executive Director Non-Executive Director Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics

1.	<u>Welcome</u>	Action
	Mrs Minford welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies had also been received from Ms R Coulter, Chief Executive, and Mr J Patton, Trust Chairman.	
2.	<u>Declaration of Conflict of Interest</u>	
	All present confirmed that they had no conflict of interest with any of the items on the agenda.	
3.	<u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 29 April 2024</u>	
	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 April 2024, which had been circulated with papers for the meeting, were approved.	
4.	<u>Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting</u>	
	There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.	

5. **Performance Presentation : Children’s Unallocated Cases** **Action**

Mrs Preece thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide some background and context to the Children’s Unallocated Cases performance information which would be presented at Trust Board on 26 June 2024.

Mrs Preece highlighted the presentation slide in respect of Targets and advised that the Commissioning Plan (2019/20) had indicated that, by March 2020, there should be a reduction in the number of unallocated family and children’s social care casers by 20%. It has not been possible to achieve this target. The Service Delivery Plan (2024/25) had indicated a 10% reduction in the number of unallocated family support cases by March 2025. This target is being reviewed and strategies established to achieve this improvement.

Mrs Preece commented that the term “Unallocated Cases” refers to children/families who have been reviewed, and assessed as requiring Social Worker intervention/or assistance, at a low/medium level. She noted that when referrals are received (from a variety of sources including Health Visitors; GPs; MTDs; Schools; Police; etc) they are assessed by a Social Worker and Team Leader at their regular supervision meetings. The term “Unallocated Cases” can be misleading as many people are not aware of the actual definition and discussions are ongoing with the Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG) to change this terminology. It is deemed more accurate to refer to these children/families as “waiting lists” as they are awaiting services. The change of terminology could also potentially open up the service to utilise waiting list funding. She stressed that no child/family requiring urgent intervention is included on the Unallocated Cases list – these are cases requiring low/medium family support. There are no safeguarding or children at risk in this category and everyone has access to the Duty Social Worker service. During discussion it was noted that the term “Unallocated Cases” is a historic name and a change to the name/definition is being discussed with SPPG and Department of Health. Regional agreement on the definition would also be beneficial to ensure all Trusts are including the same information. Mrs Preece commented that, if necessary, this issue will be escalated to the Executive Management Team (EMT) and Trust Board. In response to a request for the definition of “Unallocated Cases” to be added to the Trust Board report, Mrs Hannaway advised that this will be verbally noted at the meeting on 26 June 2024, and included in the papers for future meetings.

During review of the presentation slides on Unallocated Cases, Mrs Preece noted that a number of children/families on the list who are currently receiving assistance from other Health Service areas. Examples of this would include children with complex health needs are already receiving support from Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and Paediatric Services; and some cases are seeking assistance with Direct Payment administration which will be provided by administrative staff rather than Social Workers. In relation to those families requiring assistance with Direct Payments, it was noted that work is ongoing to recruit a Band 4 Administrative Assistant to assist with these tasks. Recruitment processes for Social Worker posts are also ongoing, with a focus on recruiting to the areas of Disability. Mrs Preece advised that the list will be reviewed and cleansed to take account of cases already being addressed. This will potentially reduce the number of Unallocated Cases significantly.

Brief discussion took place regarding the vacancy levels within some Children's Services areas and Mr Largey noted that within small teams any vacancies are magnified. In such instances work can be redirected to ensure that high priority issues are covered eg children on the risk register; complex need, etc. Mrs Preece added that an additional factor is the current industrial action – NIPSA are undertaking "Action Short of Strike" (2 June 2024 - 2 September 2024) and a full strike is scheduled for 3 – 5 July 2024.

Mrs Minford thanked Mrs Hannaway, Mrs Preece and Mr Largey for their informative and helpful presentation and they left the meeting.

6. **Outline Business Case : Refurbishment of Paediatric Theatres, Ulster Hospital**

A Briefing Paper and Outline Business Case in respect of the Refurbishment of Paediatric Theatres, Ulster Hospital, had been circulated with papers for the meeting. Ms Thompson apologised for the late notification of this item and that it is out of sync with the normal procedure as it is going to the Executive Management Team (EMT) tomorrow.

Mrs Thompson advised that this business case is one of the top priorities for South Eastern Trust and is included in the Department of Health (DoH) 10 Year Capital Plan. DoH funding for this project is sought as, whilst it would be within the Trust's delegated limit, this amount would utilise the full general capital allocation.

During discussion Ms Thompson noted that the issues within Paediatric Theatres have been ongoing for some time. The risks are being managed by restricting the type of procedures which can be carried out in these Theatres. The procedures viewed as high risk for the current Paediatric Theatres are carried out in the Adult Theatres, Ulster Hospital, or referred to Belfast Trust. In response to a query Ms Thompson indicated that the revenue consequences associated with this business case will be relatively low.

Mrs Minford sought, and received, Committee approval for this Outline Business Case, subject to any amendments made at EMT.

7. Annual Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25

The Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25 report had been circulated with papers for the meeting. Ms Thompson advised that this paper will also be presented at Trust Board on 26 June 2024.

Ms Thompson advised that the Annual Revenue and Capital Budget are presented each year for formal approval. To date only an indicative allocation has been received and it is not expected that there will be any significant changes to this funding. It is widely acknowledged that the funding is insufficient for the region to breakeven and that expenditure levels currently exceed the budget allocation.

During detailed discussion of the report, Ms Thompson noted that the allocation represents a 7% growth from last year's opening allocation. However, a significant amount of this will be utilised to fund the 2023/24 pay award. In previous years the initial allocation would be increased with non-recurrent funding but it is unclear at this stage if any additional/slippage funding will be allocated. However it is expected that any additional allocations will be insufficient to address the deficit position and any pay award 2024/25.

In relation to the savings plans, Ms Thompson outlined the position regarding the medium plans which SPPG have now rated as high due to Ministerial priorities. There is an expectation that all low/medium savings plans will be achieved. Discussions regarding plans and monitoring of performance will take place at Finance Focus Groups with Directorate staff. There is also very little funding for new pressures and therefore attempts will be made to manage these as they arise. Mrs Minford and Mr Brady gave a brief update on their discussion with the Independent Support for HSC Financial Recovery (Critical Friends) Suzanne Tracey.

Ms Thompson highlighted the opening capital allocation (page 7 of the report) and noted that EMT had approved the capital priorities for 2024/25, which include the Urgent Care Centre; Resurfacing the Multi-Storey Car Park and other contractual commitments for projects commenced in previous years. There also a number of projects which will commence in 2024/25 including works at Thompson House, Lisburn, to develop a short term/respite intervention unit. If there is an over-commitment of capital funding, with no additional funding received, it is possible to slow down progress on new projects/delay purchase of some equipment.

In conclusion, Ms Thompson noted that the Trust is forecasting a deficit position in 2024/25 and has provided SPPG/DoH with contingency plans to address this deficit. At this stage the Trust has not been instructed to progress with any high/catastrophic measures. Mrs Minford thanked Ms Thompson for the clarity provided on the financial position.

8. Review of Terms of Reference for the Finance & Performance Committee

The draft Terms of Reference had been circulated with papers for the meeting. Following brief discussion the draft Terms of Reference were approved subject to one minor amendment.

9. Any Other Business

No additional issues were raised.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital.