

**MEETING WITH DR KIERAN DEENEY ON THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY
2004 AT 10.30AM**

Present: Angela Smith MP
Kieran Deeney MLA
Paul Simpson - DHSSPS
Dean Sullivan - DHSSPS
Kevin Mulhern - DHSSPS

Introduction

The Minister welcomed Dr Deeney and apologised for the delay in arranging the meeting. The Minister explained that due to the judicial review she could not meet him at the outset but as he had indicated that there were other issues to discuss the meeting had been arranged.

Dr Deeney thanked the Minister for the opportunity to meet as he appreciated how busy her diary was. Dr Deeney handed Minister a paper and a letter from a member of staff.

Main points

Accessibility of acute services in Tyrone area

Dr Deeney advised the Minister that there was a major problem in Tyrone. He understood that they could not discuss the DBS decision but, with the closure of Dungannon, Tyrone County is needed more than ever. He continued that the 3 adjacent hospitals are losing their acute services which leaves 7700 patients more than 1hr away from a hospital as they will not travel to the Erne. He advised that maternity services were also important to the people in that area and these services should also be provided in Omagh. He advised that he has been told on numerous occasions whilst carrying out his GP home visits that there are no beds available for emergency admissions and yet Sperrin Lakeland Trust (SLT) management boast that they have no trolley waits.

The Minister advised Dr Deeney that DBS is about improving services and the Department could communicate better what services are being maintained and enhanced. Dr Deeney advised that it would be hard to convince his constituents. The Minister added the vast majority of people would be within 45 minutes and all within 1hr from a hospital. Dr Deeney advised that that is not the case for his patients or him. He continued that Craigavon is the closest and his patients plead with him not to be sent there as patients are treated like animals and do not get the treatment or care they needed.

The Minister accepted that Craigavon does have some problems with trolley waits but the Department was trying to address those problems with additional community care packages etc. Dr Deeney advised Minister that there were also serious concerns about the management team of the SLT as they are all from Fermanagh and are therefore prejudiced. Mr Simpson

advised Dr Deeney that was not the case for a number of members of the team, for example Bridget O'Rawe, Director of Corporate Affairs, is originally from Belfast. Dr Deeney advised that the healthcare staff and their families all support him and they believe that the decision on the location of the hospital was prejudiced by Trust management. Mr Simpson asked Dr Deeney if he was saying that because some of the Trust management staff live in Fermanagh they skewed the decision. Dr Deeney confirmed that was what he was saying. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that this was a very serious allegation and in fact would be a criminal offence and again would need evidence to support this allegation.

The Minister advised Dr Deeney that a programme of investment for sustaining services at Tyrone County Hospital was supported by the Department, the WHSSB and SLT, and gave examples of the investment such as:

- New diabetes centre opened early 2003
- Additional renal dialysis places secured
- CT scanning services to be introduced in April 2004
- Laboratory, x-ray and sterile services equipment replaced
- 48 additional nurses in the last 2 years with plans for a further 29

Dr Deeney argued that this was not the case in relation to the additional nurses and in fact the reverse is the case. He added that the equipment had been provided to fool people. Mr Sullivan advised Dr Deeney that the extra nurses were a fact and have been employed.

Dr Deeney continued that he believed the recent inquest into the death of Lucy Crawford at the Erne was a cover-up by the Trust. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that the CMO had been asked to look into the circumstances of this sad case. Dr Deeney advised that this was typical and there was a breakdown between healthcare professionals and management. He continued that Mr Leckey has confirmed that there was a cover-up and that he was not saying anything new as far as people from that area are concerned - everyone is aware that staff in the Trust have been lying for years. He advised that some nursing staff in Tyrone County are only being employed on temporary contracts and staff are not allowed to perform their jobs to the required standard. The Minister asked Dr Deeney who prevented the nurses from working to standard. He advised that it was the Trust, he was aware of a least one senior nurse who has left to return to a post in Musgrave Park. He continued that there are not enough nurses to staff the theatres. This will result in the plug being pulled on operations if safety is compromised as the duty of care and safety must be to the patient.

Mr Sullivan advised Dr Deeney that the scope for Trust staff to influence the DBS decision was not as great as he thought compared to the influence of the Minister, the Department and the WHSSB. He continued that the WHSSB has detailed a clear framework of services and commissioned them from wherever necessary. He advised that their main problem is working with key

stakeholders and engaging with them and the Department looks to people like Dr Deeney to advise them. Dr Deeney told Mr Sullivan that he is talking of children in that area dying. The Minister asked Dr Deeney if he was saying that the Trust and the Board do not want to provide the necessary services. Dr Deeney confirmed he was and that the services are now going to be located in the area that the Trust management live in. Mr Simpson advised Dr Deeney that, in response to the DBS consultation document SLT did not express a view on the location of the new hospital. Mr Sullivan added that the Hayes Review and DBS both reached the same decision on the location. Dr Deeney commented that the Downpatrick enhanced hospital model would be ideal for Enniskillen, and the new acute hospital should be in Omagh.

Dr Deeney said that the Hayes Review was a good report apart from the hospital decision but there had not been any consultation with the people in his area. Mr Sullivan told Dr Deeney that that was not true, there had been extensive consultation comprising public meetings in Omagh and Enniskillen. Dr Deeney advised that healthcare professionals were not consulted as he was not consulted. The Minister asked Dr Deeney if he was aware that consultation was taking place. He replied that he did not. Mr Sullivan advised that the consultation, in which he personally had been heavily involved, was comprehensive and included all healthcare professions. Dr Deeney advised that he would be investigating this issue. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that the Department would be happy to provide him with any information on both the Hayes Review and DBS.

Dr Deeney advised that he also wanted information on the recruitment of international nurses as he believed there was a deliberate policy by the Trust to recruit Filippino nurses so when the hospital closes these nurses will move and not protest over the closure. Mr Sullivan told Dr Deeney that there is no policy to close the hospital, and the Minister added that there is also no intention to withdraw services from the hospital. Dr Deeney said that he was not suggesting that the Department will close Tyrone County, he was depending on the Department to ensure the continued provision of emergency healthcare because the people could not rely on the Trust and again safety is the main concern and the anaesthetists will pull the plug. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that if the consultants were concerned about safety they would speak up. Dr Deeney asked the Minister if the consultants did want to talk to her would she listen. The Minister confirmed that she would talk to them. Dr Deeney added that the lack of ICU nurses is also a problem. Mr Sullivan advised Dr Deeney that the Trust recognises this and is addressing it. Dr Deeney advised that there were 19 adverts in one week for grade D nurses and none of them were permanent. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that the grading issuing is being discussed with the RCN. Mr Simpson added that there were also Junior Doctor posts advertised, and Mr Sullivan added that 5 nurses were also recruited recently for the mobile coronary care unit.



Conclusion

Dr Deeney thanked the Minister for the meeting and added that the reason he wanted to meet the Minister was to ensure the maintenance of decent healthcare in his area. The Minister advised Dr Deeney that the Department's aim was to provide high quality healthcare for all people across NI. She continued that it was obvious that Dr Deeney had a strong grievance against the Trust and where evidence is available the Department would need it to investigate his allegations. Dr Deeney asked the Minister if he could get the staff to talk to her would she listen to them. The Minister confirmed that she would.

The Minister asked Dr Deeney if she could be open with Dr Deeney about the issue of assuring people of the services being maintained and enhanced. She asked that where services are being provided due recognition be given instead of falling back on the issue of the location of the new hospital. If people are getting the services why should they be frightened of what they are not getting. Dr Deeney said that it was a morale problem.

The Minister advised that the Department would write to him to communicate the investment programme including the details of the services being maintained and enhanced.

Action point: Write to Dr Deeney with details of the planned investments and the services being maintained and enhanced.

Sharon Lindsay