

From the Permanent Secretary and HSC Chief Executive



Letter to HSC Staff

Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ

Tel: 02890520559
Fax: 02890520573

Email: richard.pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: RP5343

Date: 9 June 2020

Dear Colleagues,

REBUILDING HSC SERVICES

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of decisions that Robin Swann MLA, Minister of Health, has taken to temporarily change the current governance and accountability arrangements in the Health and Social Care Framework Document (September 2011) and the publication of the 'Strategic Framework for Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services', which the Minister has launched today.

The details of the changes to the Framework Document are set out in the attached Memorandum which provides for the insertion of three new paragraphs in the Document. This involves making amendments to particular aspects of the Framework Document concerning the Department's current delegation of its statutory authority to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Trusts and the Business Services Organisation. The amendments are made under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009.

These changes will be effective from June 2020 for a period of up to 2 years. The amendments will be initially reviewed in January 2021 and thereafter kept under regular review by the Department. The two years period will be followed by a consultation on substantive and longer term changes to the Framework Document, reflecting both learning from this period, and the dissolution of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) which we anticipate to coincide with this timescale.

The Department believes that the changes to the current governance and accountability requirements are required to enable the HSC to effectively respond to the Covid-19 pandemic which has posed unprecedented challenges for the planning and delivery of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, compounded by the major strategic challenges faced by the HSC prior to Covid-19.

An assessment carried out by the Department indicates that the impact of the pandemic across HSC services, programmes and projects has been devastating, as resources have rightly been focused on the required emergency response. It is anticipated that it will take a number of years and significant investment to rebuild the service capacity which has been lost.

This impact assessment underpins the 'Strategic Framework for Rebuilding HSC Services' launched today by the Minister. The Strategic Framework will address the adverse impact on the downturn of normal service delivery arising from the emergency plans that were introduced in March 2020 by HSC Trusts to respond to the surge in Covid-19 patients. The Strategic Framework will provide a basis on which to stabilise and restore service delivery as quickly as possible by requiring the HSC to achieve the right balance between delivering Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 activity. The Department believes that it will take at least 2 years to achieve this, subject to the necessary investment being available and the effective management of Covid-19 during this period.

The proposed amendments to the Framework Document are therefore necessary to facilitate the optimum implementation of the Strategic Framework. In pursuance of this the Department re-commits to its statutory obligations for personal and public involvement and consultation while respecting the need for co-production with service users and the HSC workforce.

In the context of the Strategic Framework, the HSC's overarching mission will therefore be to incrementally increase HSC service capacity as quickly as possible across all programmes of care, within the prevailing Covid-19 conditions.

Achievement of this mission will require the direct decision making and authority of the Health Minister supported by his Department. This requires the Department to make significant changes to the current governance and accountability structures, which impacts on the responsibilities of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), the Public Health Agency (PHA), the HSC Trusts and the Business Services Organisation (BSO). This is to ensure that the planning and delivery of services are designed to deliver the maximum amount of local and regional resilience by ensuring that decision making is as agile and streamlined as possible.

A new 'Management Board for Rebuilding HSC Services' will be established in June 2020 for a period of two years. A copy of the terms of reference and membership of the Management Board is attached. The Management Board will report directly to the Minister and will provide oversight and direction on the implementation of the Minister's priorities as reflected in the Department's 'Strategic Framework for Rebuilding HSC Services'. The Management Board's role in relation to other vehicles, such as the Transformation Implementation Group (TIG), will be reviewed in due course.

The Management Board will not exercise any other authority in relation to the statutory duties, roles and responsibilities, as specified in the Framework Document which the Department has delegated to the HSCB, PHA, HSC Trusts, BSO and a number of other HSC bodies.

In the near future staff will have the opportunity to participate in a 12 week consultation process on the detail of these changes.

I conclude by taking this opportunity to thank all staff working across Health and Social Care and the Department of Health for your commitment and dedication to continuing to

provide health and social care services to our patients and clients during this difficult period. I look forward to working with you as we begin the enormous task of rebuilding HSC services while remaining in a state of readiness to respond to potential further outbreaks of the virus.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD PENGELLY