

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT 2009

Good evening members of association, invited guests ladies and gentlemen - welcome to the 2010 AGM.

In the interests of technological advance we are developing a Robinson Hospital web site. Joe Gillan has put a lot of effort into the project and it is hoped eventually to be able to both join and pay your annual subscriptions on line. As you can see on the agenda there is a motion concerning subscriptions later but could I just take this opportunity to encourage those who have not done so to avail of Life Membership. It dramatically cuts down administrative work for our secretary.

A matter which has concerned us greatly over the year is the remedial work required on the Hospital and Health Centre exteriors especially the guttering and fascia boards. Our chairman has written to and lobbied NHSCT Board Members on every possible occasion. We are delighted to see that this work is now being undertaken and it will enhance the appearance of the hospital. During the year the general end of the hospital underwent a "deep clean" and during this time the Court Nursing home was used to accommodate patients.

The working party has met the steering group of the NHSCT on several occasions this year. The top of our agenda has been the provision of a new extension with eight en-suite rooms and the conversion of the existing wards in the general end to en-suite status. I think it is fair to say that despite our enthusiasm to build this unit out of existing A&E funds we are being stymied at every turn. It is obvious that as Norma Evans so honestly suggested at last years meeting there is absolutely no money in the Health Boards coffers, cuts are inevitable and the possibility of additional revenue costs for a project funded for them is a no-no. We will continue to champion this cause but the feedback is quite depressing. We had also mooted the idea of aiding the development of a new build Childrens Services Unit on the sites of 11 and 13 Newal Road properties that we own. This would need to be at least 8000sq ft. and is very much needed but is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future.

One of the biggest problems we have in our dealings with the Trust Board is the constant changing of personnel - this makes it difficult to build up a rapport and also means we have to spend time appraising new directors of our facilities

and our aims. Last year, as you know, we lost Norma Evans who was always sympathetic to our causes. Mr. Colm Donaghy is the acting CEO but understandably is not in a position to make any promises to us. Our Chairman

met with him in October to appraise him of our existence. We also saw Neil Guckian and Bronagh Scott move on to new pastures.

We have also seen changes in our own Board. During the year we reluctantly accepted the resignation of Mrs. Kay Dunlop. We would like to thank Kay for her work over the years she was on the Board, especially her endeavours to get the volunteer scheme up and running. It was certainly not her fault that the process stalled.

As I said in last years report the blame lies very firmly at the door of government and their obsession with legislation. It is my understanding that a policy is now in place and we can get back to recruiting the volunteers we lost during the whole debacle. Use them or lose them is a concept plainly not understood by administrators.

We have to record the death of Mr. Brendan Smyth who was a very faithful Board Member for years. Brendan rarely missed a Board meeting despite his obviously failing health in the last year. He was a good friend to and great advocate of the Robinson. Also during the year Mrs. Mary Pollock died. Mary had retired from the Board two years ago feeling that her loss of hearing made it difficult for her to contribute to the meetings, well she may have been hard of hearing but she was a very sightful member of Board and we missed her greatly.

Adams and Co., who manage our portfolio, have had changes as well. Our new Fund Manager is a very enthusiastic Andrew Herberts who gave a presentation at our October meeting. He seemed very clued in and personable so we hope to build up a long association with him.

After last years AGM our secretary Dorothy Eslor retired and we wish her well in her other endeavours. Dorothy has been replaced by Rosemary Lyttle who is trying her hardest to keep us in check - a thankless task I can assure you. We hope Rosemary enjoys her work with us and finds us amenable.

Northern Ireland Hospice has sent us a wish list for a Day Hospice which at the minute is situated in the conservatory. Money from the Taggart Fund was used to renovate that area but it is now considered too small for the purpose so that is another project we will be trying to promote and facilitate.

The in-patient unit of the hospital continues to be well utilised as a key patient pathway for those stepping down from local and regional acute hospital sites and for those whose GPs wish to admit from home for treatment and care.

In December 2009 Mrs. Mary O'Hara head of Intermediate Care and Rehabilitation Services passed away following a short illness (you may remember Mary spoke at last years AGM). She will be sadly missed both as a friend and colleague and we would like to recognise and record her enormous contribution to the work of the community hospitals including the Robinson Hospital Inpatient Unit. The unit is now managed by Mrs. Jackie Elliott.

The bed occupancy has altered little in the last five years with 82.7% for GP beds (this includes intermediate and palliative care-at any one time, 60% of these are for palliative care). There is a 91% occupancy for Home from Hospital orthopaedic rehabilitation scheme. The introduction of six new ultra low/low entry beds and two electric recliner chairs within the unit has made a contribution in assisting patients to achieve optimum levels of independence and rehabilitation. The education of staff, patients and family remains high profile in relation to hospital acquired infection, environmental cleanliness and hand hygiene. The unit was highly commended during a visit in January by Chief Nursing Officer Mr. Martin Bradley and Ms. Bronagh Scott, Executive Director of Nursing.

As previously mentioned the volunteer scheme is managed by Lorna Sharkey and hopefully will develop over the next year. The Palliative

Care Education Group continues to focus on the evolving education of staff to meet the needs of palliative care patients and their families. This year the unit has wished a number of nursing colleagues well in the progression of their careers within the NHSCT.

The Physiotherapy Department based at the Robinson continues to provide a wide range of services to the residents of Ballymoney and surrounding area. Demand for services continues to increase but funding has been minimal for this part of the service. The team still play a very active part in the General Ward and the majority of all in-patients are receiving rehabilitation. The team are delighted to announce the appointment of Joanne Culley, who is currently providing physiotherapy management to these patients.

The Womans Health Team have also welcomed the recent recruitment of an additional team member, Clare Doherty, whose post resulted from re-configuration of vacant musculo-skeletal hours. This facilitates the ever increasing demands for this specialty.

The Paediatric Team received the resignation of Christine Dunlop who has worked in the Trust as a Senior Clinician for 28 years and she will be sadly missed. She is now working as a team leader in West Belfast and we wish her every success.

Once again this year, regarding performance targets set by the Minister of Health, the unit is pleased to announce that the Musculo-skeletal, Paediatric and Hydrotherapy services have been successful in meeting the target of nine weeks up to date for which we must acknowledge the dedicated and committed work of the team members. Placements for students of the university of Ulster are still provided and staff continue to further their education enabling them to provide a quality service at the Robinson for the community.

2009/2010 as usual has been a very busy year for the Child Development Service and from April 2009 to March 2010 a total of 1,452 children (an increase of 47%) have been seen by the professionals involved in our service.

We have seen 564 new patients accessing our services, which is a three-fold increase. Approximately 517 children (an increase of 10%) within the Causeway Locality Area have been kept under review by our medical staff. We still continue as a Department to be heavily involved in the implementation of the Department of Health “Integrated Elective Access Protocol”.

The Multi-Disciplinary Clinic still remains a very central part of the work of our service and 10 new patients have been assessed during this period (an increase of 14%). Children are normally kept under review, either seen on a six monthly or annual basis and at present 40 children are being kept under review. Dr Deirdre Walsh, Lead Consultant, has given parent(s) the opportunity to become more involved in the discussion group and this has been very successful for both parents and professionals alike.

We continue to work on dual sites, with our clinical base being in the Robinson Hospital complex, and our office facilities in the nearby Acorn Centre, Ballymoney. We have now been in the Acorn for over 3 years and although the transition of working on dual sites can be problematic we do have the benefit of very good office accommodation. This has also enabled us to free up more clinical space in the Robinson in order to see more children. Ideally it would be more acceptable for all professionals to be based together and we would be keen to work towards this with NHSCT staff and the Robinson Trust Board.

Our Centre is currently being used by a number of professionals including Medical Staff, Speech & Language Therapists, Paediatric Dietetics, Paediatric Occupational Therapists and Paediatric Physiotherapists. We continue to work to improve the Centre. Our waiting room and some of our larger clinical/therapy rooms are also being used for group sessions.

We work alongside our colleagues in CRUSE in order to provide some space for evening sessions for children who experience bereavement over the coming months. We would still like to be able to work more collaboratively with colleagues such as CAMHS, (Child & Adolescent Mental Health) but this type of multi-disciplinary work does require some capacity which we still do not have at present.

Our Multi-Disciplinary Autism Diagnostic Services continues to grow at an increasing capacity. During this period approximately 47 children were assessed. We anticipate considerable increase in referrals to this service with the roll out of the 24 month assessment from the health visiting service. An Autism Co-ordinator has recently been recruited and it is anticipated that there will be new developments in relationship to Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome.

We have been involved in working alongside our colleagues in the Child Development Centre, Antrim and our medical staff continue to attend staff meetings with their counterparts. It is hoped that this linked up working will become more prevalent as the merger progresses and that all professionals involved in our service here will have the opportunity to input into a more collaborative service between the two sites.

From an administrative viewpoint, we currently have 7 Secretarial staff (one of which is directly funded by Paediatric OT) and 1 clerical officer. The Administrative staff are currently split over two sites, with one member of the team based as the main point of contact for children and parents attending the Robinson site. In development terms, Dr Walsh and a number of professional staff will be involved over the coming months as Senior Managers and Professionals within the Women and Children’s Directorate look at the services provided within the two Child Development Centres and look at how services can be standardised and improved for our patients/clients.

Much of the work of the Child Development Centre is very dependent on the team working and expertise of all professionals involved. Unfortunately due to financial constraints within the Trust our administrative support continues to be under threat, but we continue to strive to provide a high quality service even during this difficult time.

The team based in Acorn and Robinson sites work very closely together to provide a comprehensive service to all children in the Causeway locality area. Children and families are very happy with the service they receive and the facilities in the Robinson create a very ‘family friendly’ environment in which children and parents can feel at ease during assessments. Indeed, Contact A Family, who are a voluntary agency who

support families of disabled children, recently featured the work of our multi-disciplinary team.

Another year has passed in the history of Ballymoney Health Centre. As always it has been very busy for everybody who works there. We continue to strive to bring a high standard of health care provision to the community of the Ballymoney area. We have made some changes to the appointment system in order to try and accommodate the ever increasing demand on the services. Management of illnesses has become much more complex, this means that consultations are more intense – the ten minute consultation is nearly becoming too short. It is difficult to see how we could move to longer consultations without reducing the overall number of appointments which would be unacceptable.

We have just had the retirement of Mrs Edwina Milliken as Health Centre Manager. Edwina has worked in the Health Centre since the day it opened over forty years ago – a truly remarkable thought. She has seen many changes in every aspect of the day-to-day goings on in the Health Centre. The staff, the patients, the structure of the building and the working of primary care have all changed beyond recognition from that day in January 1970. Through all those changes Edwina has been at the centre of things. She has a huge knowledge of “how the whole place works”. Edwina dedicated herself to her work in a way that few people do, she will be missed by us all especially her team of receptionists. We had a retirement party in the Health Centre in early June. It was an emotional night but greatly enjoyed by everyone.

The treatment room is busy as ever. Sister Helen Cochrane leads a very hard working team of nurses who have to put up with GPs who are always looking for help with just another wee blood sample or another wee minor operation that will not take long!
Could I take this opportunity to thank all the people who contribute to the smooth running of the Health Centre and for the support that we receive from the Board of the Robinson Hospital.

Ladies and gentlemen can I commend this report for your adoption.

*Mrs. Margaret Allison
Honorary Secretary*