

Draft Western Health and Social Care Trust Corporate Plan 2017-2021
[WHSCT]
Draft Consultation Response from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Brief Background to the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area

The District Council area is home to 114,992 people, approximately 52,500 jobs and 7,175 businesses. The District Council area is Northern Ireland's largest region in terms of land mass - approximately 3,000km² (or 20% of NI) - and is the smallest in terms of population. As a result, the population density of approximately 41 people per km² is the sparsest in Northern Ireland. This is a key feature of the district but presents challenges in terms of accessibility and service delivery.

Consultation Response

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Western Health and Social Care Trust's (WHSCT) public consultation on the Draft Corporate Plan.

The Council recognises that the WHSCT Draft Corporate Plan is a strategic and 'high level' document, which will be supported by annual business plans, and essentially sets the direction and priorities for the Trust over the course of the next four years.

The WHSCT is a key Statutory Partner in the council's Community Planning process, and alongside the Council and other agencies, will play a key role in the process over the next number of years.

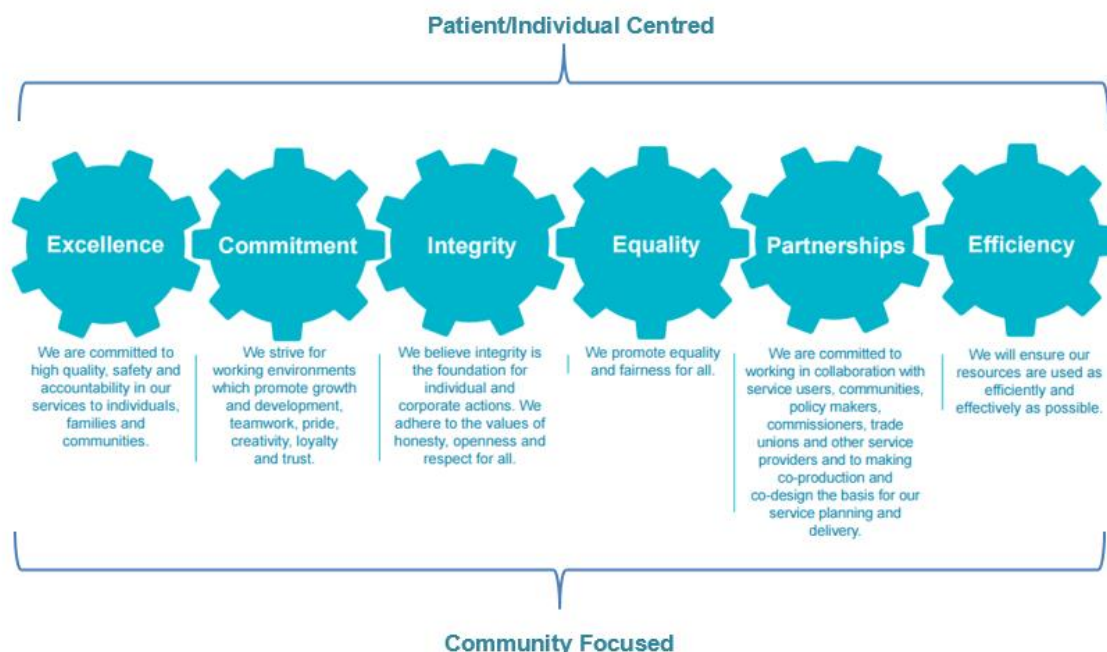
The Council supports the WHSCT commitment to 'deliver the best care and outcomes for people who use our services'. The WHSCT provides an invaluable service to individuals within the locality and as such should continue to provide an 'individual-centred' approach.

WHSCT Corporate Aim

The Council agrees in principle with this Corporate Aim, namely: 'To provide high quality, people-centred services through highly valued and engaged staff'. The Council believes that it is vital that this WHSCT Corporate Aim also references sustainability – not only for current service delivery/provision, but also to ensure long-term service delivery.

Values

The Council recommends that within these values a specific reference should be made to 'person-centred approach' as well as 'community focus'. As they can be applied to each of the stated values, they can be inserted into the diagram as 'cross-functional', as shown below:



Outcome: Engaged Workforce with High Morale

Whilst the Council is supportive of this outcome, within the district there have been, and still are, a number of concerns into the adequate staffing of local HSC services. Through the Council's Community Planning consultation process, a number of concerns were raised in terms of the number of G.P.'s and other HSC Professionals.

Within the Fermanagh and Omagh District, there are serious concerns in relation to HSC workforce availability, recruitment and training. In the report "General Practice in Crisis – a report on Primary Care in Northern Ireland" Dr Tom Black Chair, Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee, stated "We have concerns that the majority of practices in rural areas are at risk of closure, and this risk is greatest in County Fermanagh where three out of four practices are now at risk of closure due to workforce and workload issues." It is imperative that the WHSCT commits to actions to address these concerns as a matter of urgency.

It is vital that the WHSCT attract and retain staff to relevant areas of the Council District, including to the South West Acute Hospital, the Tyrone County Hospital as well as the new Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex which is currently under construction.

Outcome: Person Centred Health and Wellbeing

The Council welcomes the aim to "Facilitate smooth transitions between services appropriate to people' need". Professor Rafael Bengoa and Dr Alan Stout specifically referenced the District as 'having problems' – linking this problem to 'referral rates, hospital admissions and emergency department attendances'. It is important that the hospital consultants and G.Ps jointly participate in the planned delivery of care for

patients, informed by an enhanced information exchange over and above routine discharge and referral letters.

Outcome – Valuing Every Person

Rural communities face different challenges to urban communities. Access, rural isolation and transport difficulties (as well as other associated challenges) are often felt by rural communities more so than their urban equivalents, however it often seems these challenges are 'overlooked' when discussing sustainability and efficiencies. It is therefore vital that the needs of rural communities are taken on board, when assessing future sustainability of Health Care Services in Northern Ireland.

To highlight some of the current issues faced by rural communities at present, within the District, there are a number of issues with access to various Health and Social Care services within rural areas. For example, within isolated rural communities there are many older people, persons with disabilities and people on low-level incomes who do not have access to their own vehicles and as such are heavily reliant on public transport to attend appointments, treatments and so forth.

For some of these individuals, an appointment in the South West Acute Hospital (Enniskillen) may mean having to avail of public transport before 8.00am and not returning home until after 4.00pm. Taxis, or other forms of transport, may not be cost effective as some appointment venues could be 20-25 miles each way. The Council feels that this could be addressed by the WHSCT within their corporate plan, or at least within its strategic departmental action plans.

Conclusion

The Council agrees, in principal, to the contents of the Corporate Plan, but recommends that the WHSCT take note of the various issues raised within this response document, particularly those posed by being a predominantly rural District in the most westerly part of the Western Trust area.

The WHSCT is a key partner within the Council's Community Planning process and the Council looks forward to working closely to deliver improvements for the District as a whole.