



**EASTERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY**  
**Minutes of proceedings of Board Meeting**  
**held in the Boardroom, Dr Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8**  
**on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2002 at 18:00**

*Present*

Dr. Siobhan Barry	Ms. Noeleen Harvey
Cllr. Christy Burke	Ms. Maria Hoban
Cllr. Eric Byrne	Mr. Paul Ledwidge
Ald. Ivor Callely T.D.	Mr. Gerry McGuire
Cllr. Maria Corrigan	Cllr. Martin Miley
Mr. Martin Cowley	Ald. Mary Mooney
Cllr. Tommy Cullen	Dr. Bernard Murphy
Cllr. Anne Devitt	Cllr. Eamonn O'Brien
Cllr. Jane Dillon-Byrne	Cllr. Dr. William O'Connell
Mr. John Dolan	Cllr. Charles O'Connor
Cllr. Pat Doran	Mrs. Catherine Quinn
Ald. Sen. Joe Doyle	Cllr. James Reilly
Mr. Joe Fallon	
Cllr. Dr. Dermot Fitzpatrick	
Ms. Ann Harris	

*In the Chair*

Alderman I. Callely T.D.

*Apologies*

Dr James Reilly

*In Attendance*

Mr Donal O Shea, Mr Martin Devine, Mr Pat McLoughlin, Ms Angela Fitzgerald,  
Mr Liam Woods, Mr Jim Breslin, Ms Thora Burgess, Dr Marie Laffoy,  
Ms Carol Ivory, Ms Helen Stokes

## **The Chairman read the Opening Prayer**

**02/02/15**

### **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

#### **Committee Meetings**

The Chairman advised the members of the arrangements for the meetings of the Standing Committees as follows:-

- The Protocol Committee meeting will take place at 14:00 on Monday
- 11<sup>th</sup> February in the Boardroom, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.
- A joint Finance and Property and Protocol Committee will take place at 14:30 on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February in Boardroom, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.
- The Acute Hospital and Primary Care Committee meeting will take place at 18.00 on
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February in the Board Room, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.
- The Continuing Care and Social Services Committee meeting will take place at 11:00 on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> March in the Boardroom, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.
- The next meeting of the ERHA Board is scheduled for 6.00 p.m., Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March in the Boardroom, Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8.

**02/02/16 Minutes of the proceedings of meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2002.**

**Agenda Item No. 2**

The draft Minutes of the meetings held on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2002 (*copies appended to the official minute*), having being circulated, were proposed for adoption by Cllr. C. Burke, seconded by Mr G. McGuire and agreed.

**02/02/17 Questions to Chief Executive**

**Agenda Item No. 3**

Questions agreed to be put by the Board to the Chief Executive on the proposal of Cllr J. Dillon Byrne, seconded by Alderman Senator J. Doyle.

#### **3.1 Cllr D. Heney**

To ask the CEO to give details of the numbers of applications for foreign adoptions being processed and of:

- (i) staff resources involved

(ii) number of applications being processed, awaiting processing/assessment and completed in past year can be outlined.

(iii) if detailed process, normal number of interviews, meetings, with client can be given.

### **3.2 Cllr D. Heney**

To ask CEO to give details of the number of parents waiting completion of the assessment process for foreign adoptions and what early action including simplification of the process can be taken to work off the unacceptable delays.

#### **Reply**

*At the 31 December 2001, the current unit for Inter Country Adoption which is located in the SWAHB had:*

- 9.5 WTE social workers involved in assessments
- 538 applicants waiting to commence the assessment process; and
- 137 assessments and 141 post placement reports completed in the previous 12 months.

As of 1 February the current service was assessing up to and including application number 1390. This application was made on the 28 April 2000 and allocated for assessment on 5 December 2001. Currently, there are 64 applicants in the assessment process between the Preparation Stage and the Home Study.

The completion of 137 assessments by the SWAHB represents a significant increase when compared with the total number completed in 2000 (i.e. 85). This means that the number of completed assessments per social worker is approximately 15 representing a continuing improvement over previous years. This was achieved despite a high level of staff turnover throughout 2001. The national benchmark is 18 a target towards which the service will work throughout 2002.

The Standardised Framework for Inter Country Adoption sets out the method to be used for processing inter-country adoption applications, from the enquiry stage to the final decision. This process must be adhered to by all Health Boards to ensure 'best practice'. One of the key objectives of the Framework is to streamline assessment processes for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> assessments so that resources are used effectively and to provide a transparent system that can be understood by all the parties.

After an initial application is made the assessment process continues with a preparation stage that is followed by a Home Study. When the Home Study is completed, a report is prepared and forwarded to the placement committee.

The Preparation Stage is carried out in the format of group courses of 6 sessions each with 6 to 8 applicants involved. These sessions are normally one

morning/afternoon at two-week intervals. Applicants for 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment do not have to undertake preparation and proceed directly into the Home Study.

The Home Study is comprised of 6 to 7 interviews with the applicant, plus 1 interview with a referee. This process (preparation and home study for 1<sup>st</sup> assessments) currently takes 8-9 months for 1<sup>st</sup> assessments and 3-4 months for 2<sup>nd</sup> assessments.

A decision to decentralise this service to the NAHB and ECAHB has been taken. A restructuring proposal from the Area Health Boards is being considered. A decision on the exact structure will be finalised in the very near future.

Following the decision to re-structure this service in late 2001, a letter was issued to all applicants notifying them of the proposed changes to the current service, including their current place on the waiting list. This was aimed at giving maximum available information on the proposed changes while emphasising that existing arrangements would apply until further notice. The Area Health Boards have confirmed that a further letter will be issued as soon as it is appropriate.

In addition, the current service is appointing a dedicated customer services officer. This person will deal with all customer queries and follow them through. It is hoped that this will offer continuity to those seeking clarification on the inter country adoption process.

The recruitment of social workers for all childcare services, including inter country adoption, continues to be a challenge. Arising from a recent overseas recruitment campaign, the Area Health Boards have identified four social workers that have the potential to commence work in this service during or before June 2002. This, of course, depends on the provision of work permits, the location of the service and the possibility that successful candidates might decide not to relocate to Ireland even after being offered a position.

The ERHA is also in the process of recruiting a Regional Co-ordinator for Inter Country Adoption. This post was advertised on 27 January and it is hoped to carry out interviews in early March with a view to having this person in post to support and facilitate the re-structuring process and ensure service objectives are met.

In an attempt to reduce the waiting list, the Eastern Regional Health Authority has, through the Department of Health and Children, sought assistance from other Health Boards with carrying out assessments. Unfortunately none of the Health Boards were in a position to offer any assistance with assessments. Some Health Boards have indicated that they may be in a position to offer assistance with the organisation and delivery of preparation courses. This is being followed up by the SWAHB.

**3.3 Cllr E. Byrne**

To ask the CEO what steps he is taking to ensure that the required Speech Therapy Service's are available to school going children throughout the region and in particular schools servicing disadvantaged areas of Dublin and will he make a statement on the issue.

**Reply**

The Education Act 1998 puts the onus on the Department of Education and Science to provide speech and language therapy in a school-based setting. In this regard, section 7 (1) (a) states:

*Each of the following shall be a function of the Minister under this act: To ensure, subject to the provisions of this Act, that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability of who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person.*

Support Services are defined in Section 2, and include Speech Therapy within the definition.

The Area Health Boards are obliged to provide speech and language services within the community health context., and prioritise their services on the grounds of clinical need e.g., palate defects, victims of accident and injury, victims of stroke etc.

Speech therapists are among the professional groups who are in short supply at the moment in each of the three Area Boards.

Board	Complement	Posts filled	Vacancies
East Coast	51	35	16
Northern	36	15	21
South Western	44	18	26

The complex question of the recruitment and retention of scarce professional staff is a major issue for all health agencies in the region and will be the subject of a report at the March meeting of the Board.

The Area Boards also give a service to the schools, with priority given to schools in disadvantaged areas, but the service is curtailed by the need to respond to clinical need and the shortage of key staff.

**3.4 Dr. S. Barry**

Does the ERHA have plans in place for the involuntary treatment of 16-18 year olds under the Mental Treatment Act 2001, when this act becomes operational?

### **Reply**

No implementation date has yet been set for the Mental Health Act 2001.

The Mental Health Commission which is being established at present will have responsibility for drawing up a schedule of implementation dates.

The Department of Health & Children has established a working group on child and adolescent psychiatry which has produced a document dealing with the development of these services.

A sub-group of this working group was established in late 2001 to deal specifically with services for the 16-18 year olds. They have had three meetings to date and intend to complete their work within four months and report back to the main working group.

Within the Authority we have established an advisory group on child and adolescent psychiatry which is representative of all the providing agencies in this field. It will identify issues relating to 16-18 year olds in their region.

A meeting last month of this group was attended by Dr. P. McCarthy who is both advisor to the Department of Health & Children on child and adolescent psychiatry and chair of the sub-group on 16-18 year olds mentioned above. He was assured that we would continue to advise him on all matters arising from the deliberations of our regional group.

### **02/02/18 Matters for Mention**

#### ***Agenda Item No 4***

Ms Noeleen Harvey raised the revocation of the 1996 Pharmacy Regulations and expressed her concerns in this regard. It was agreed that this matter would be taken with the Chief Executive's Report.

### **02/02/19 Report on the work of the Regional Accident and Emergency Committee - Report 04/02**

#### ***Agenda Item No. 5***

Mr. Jim Breslin, Senior Commissioner presented Report 04/02 – Report on the work of the Regional Accident and Emergency Committee (*copy appended to the official minute*).

There followed a lengthy discussion to which the following contributed:-  
Dr S Barry, Cllr C Burke, Dr D Fitzpatrick, Cllr J Dillon Byrne, Mr M Cowley, Ms A Harris, Ms M Hoban, Dr B Murphy and Cllr J Reilly.

The members raised matters relating to services for the homeless, discharge planning, patient liaison, consultant appointments and the membership of the Committee. Mr Jim Breslin clarified the position in respect of each of these items raised and on the proposal of Cllr C Burke, seconded by Mr M Cowley, the report was noted and agreed.

**02/02/20 Acute Hospital Bed Capacity – Report of the Department of Health and Children.**

*Agenda Item No. 6*

On the proposal of Cllr C Burke, seconded by Dr S Barry, it was agreed that the Report be referred for the consideration of the Acute Hospital and Primary Care Committee.

**02/02/21 Treatment Purchase Fund – Report No. 05/02**

*Agenda Item No. 7*

On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Ald Sen J Doyle, the report as circulated (*copy appended to the official minute*) was agreed and noted.

**02/02/22 Motion**

*Agenda Item No. 8*

It was agreed to defer the item to the next meeting.

**02/02/23 Chief Executive's Report**

*Agenda Item No. 9*

The Chief Executive's Report (*copy appended to the official minute*) was circulated. The report dealt with the following items:-

- Case Management Review
- Eastern Regional Primary Immunisation Committee
- Service Plan: Approval and Pressures
- Provider Plan Roll Out
- Arrangements for the Board in dealing with Service Plan
- Revocation of 1996 Pharmacy Regulations
- Report of National Cancer Registry
- Peamount Hospital
- ERHA Complaints Seminar
- Recent publications

There was a discussion on the Report to which the following members contributed:- Ms N Harvey, Mr M Cowley, Alderman Senator J Doyle and the Chairman.


The Chief Executive undertook to provide a report on the implications of the revocation of Pharmacy Regulations to the next meeting of the Board. It was also agreed to ask the Director of Human Resources, Ms Sile Fleming, to look specifically at the recruitment of community pharmacists in the Region. On the proposal of Cllr C Burke, seconded by Cllr J Dillon Byrne, the Chief Executive's Report, as circulated, was noted.

**02/02/24 Date & Time of Next Meeting**  
*Agenda Item No. 9*

The date and time for the next meeting was agreed for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002 at 18:00 in the Board Room, Dr. Steevens' Hospital.

The meeting concluded at 19:40.

**CORRECT**  
**Donal O Shea**  
**Chief Executive**

  
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**ALDERMAN IVOR CALLEY TD**  
**Chairman**

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**DATE**