

SOUTH WESTERN AREA HEALTH BOARD

Report No. 1/2001

Special Board Meeting – 29th January 2001

Review of Service Visits by Board Members

1. Introduction

On the establishment of the Eastern Regional Health Authority it was agreed that each area health board would facilitate service visits in its geographic area for authority members. Soon after the establishment of the area boards, board members from the South Western Area Health Board requested that the service visits programme be reviewed at the end of the year. Therefore, it was decided to hold a board meeting, in committee, to discuss the programme, particularly in the context of how it will be conducted in the coming year.

2. Objective of Service Visits

The purpose of each visit is to:-

- assist members in their understanding of the nature and way the service is delivered;
- inform members about the provision of the service;
- allow members an opportunity to see the location and the different elements of the service;
- evaluate progress in the development of services in the context of our Board's Service Plans.

3. Impact on Service Delivery

Visits are organised in such a manner as to cause as little disruption to service delivery as possible. It is recognised that not all service locations can accommodate a service visit for Board Members due to limitations of space and lack of car parking facilities for visitors.

4. Statistical Information

ERHA Members visited a range of services during 2000. These can be divided as follows:-

South Western Area Health Board	23
Northern Area Health Board	23
East Coast Area Health Board	17

5. Reduction/Cancellation of Visits

Within the South Western Area Health Board a maximum of three visits per month are arranged. The number of visits may be reduced with the consent of the Protocol and Procedures Committee. This consent can be obtained following consultation with the Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Protocol and Procedures Committee. Visits may also be cancelled for unforeseen circumstances, usually following a request from the service location.

The South Western Area Health Board has cancelled one service visit in the ten month period. This was as a result of the industrial dispute with IMPACT Trade Union.

6. Procedures - South Western Area Health Board

6.1 Notification

Members are notified of the future monthly schedule for service visits at board meetings.

All authority members (55 members in total) are reminded of service visits in a letter issued one week in advance of the actual visit. This letter includes a brief synopsis of the service/facility being visited, date and time of the visit, details of refreshments/lunch being provided, appropriate directions and car parking arrangements.

6.2 Timing and Duration

South Western Area Health Board visits are held on Wednesdays and commence at 11.00 a.m. The duration of a service visit is a maximum of two hours and visits are followed by a light lunch. The provision of lunch is dependant on facilities in the service location.

6.3 Procedures Adopted

In order to minimise disruption to services, and due to the number of visits organised, visits are intended to be informal, with personnel relevant to the service providing a brief overview of the service and answering questions from members. In this regard, minutes

and agendas are not circulated and members of management team do not attend. There is no specific quorum for a Board visit. The physical facilities of the venue can also influence how the visit proceeds. An average of 18 authority members attended visits in the South Western Health Board area.

However, in an attempt to facilitate the orderly conduct of service visits, the Chairman of the Board chairs the discussion or, in his absence, discussions are chaired by the Vice-Chairman of the board or the Chairman/Vice Chairman's nominee.

Members sign an attendance sheet.

6.4 *Executive Attendance at Service Visits*

Visits to South Western Area Health Board services are facilitated by local management (normally General Manager or equivalent).

Organisational arrangements are made by the Chief Executive's Office and administrative support is provided on all visits from that office.

6.5 *Reports*

A brief summary note on the visit is submitted to the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executives with the responsibility for the two Standing Committees. This document includes details of location and type of service, officers of the board in attendance, number of members who attended and main issues discussed.

7. Conclusion

At service visits members have consistently expressed their appreciation of the opportunity that these visits afford them in achieving an understanding of the operation of the various services and of meeting the personnel who are directly involved in service delivery.

The follow-up of issues arising at service visits has been raised by members. It has been suggested that a mechanism be established which will facilitate the progression of these issues.

8. Recommendations

- (i) Review of Service Visits will be included as an agenda item for the Continuing Care Standing Committee monthly. This will allow members an opportunity to raise issues which were noted by them in the course of a service visit to a health board service area. Service visits will then be noted in the Progress Report of the Standing Committee which is brought to the Board for adoption.

- (ii) A brief report on service visits to non-health board facilities will be sent to the Eastern Regional Health Authority on a monthly basis for noting at their Standing Committees.
- (iii) The schedule of visits will continue to include visits to all service providers under the ERHA, located in our board's area.
- (iv) Service visits in the South Western Area Health Board to commence in future at 11.30 a.m.
- (v) Every effort will be made to run visits efficiently and effectively to achieve the maximum benefit for both staff and members.

Mr. Pat Donnelly
Chief Executive

29th January 2001