Chair’s Monthly Activity Log

December 2019

Consultations plus Sharing Best Practice and Quality Improvement:

2 December: We commented on a draft College Position Statement on Social Prescribing sent to us on behalf of the College’s Central Policy and Public Affairs Committee Editorial Board, who had already reviewed it and commented and was now providing us with the opportunity to raise any substantial issues before it went forward for final sign off and publication. Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and General Adult Faculty Chair Dr Rowan McClean gave feedback on behalf of NI Members.

9 December: We submitted today our response to the Public Health Agency Consultation on the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training Framework. The main authors of this response were Chair and Vice Chair respectively Drs Gerry Lynch and Michael Doherty.

13 December: We submitted today our response to the Department for Communities Consultation on Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland. The main author of this response was Addictions Faculty Chair Dr Billy Gregg.

16 December: We submitted today our Response to the Northern Ireland Office Consultation on A new legal framework for abortion services in Northern Ireland. A considerable number of Members contributed to the final content of this response.

19 December: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and Addictions Faculty Chair Dr Billy Gregg attended a meeting with one of the Coroners, Mr Patrick McGurgan, at his Laganside office, at his request. The purpose was to discuss any potential steps or recommendations which the Coroners might find viable to pursue in their role - in order to address in some way the multiple drug related deaths, suicides and deaths linked to prescription medicines as well, which currently come before them so often. Also present was Sister Alison Esler, Dual Diagnosis Co-ordinator for the Northern Trust. Afterwards Gerry reflected: “The Coroner has a ‘bird’s eye view’ of services throughout Northern Ireland and many of his concerns chimed with matters that we have been raising for the past number of years - for example: Why is there not a consistency of approach to service across the 5 Trusts? Where is the strategic direction and vision for mental health services? He was particularly concerned about vulnerable people with multiple needs having to navigate their way through a complex system, about multiple ‘hand-offs’ from team to team - and especially about the lack of a consistent and assertive approach to people with co-existing mental health and substance misuse problems. We were able to inform him about the recommendations of the Crisp Report (June 2016) and about our attempts to influence the Department of Health to begin the work of developing a mental health strategy. He was also very interested in the planned Dual Diagnosis
Conference. Overall, it is clear that issues such as dual diagnosis and complexities of models of service delivery are areas which will continue to concern the Coroners’ office and there will be further meetings arranged.”

Department of Health:

2 December: Vice Chair Dr Michael Doherty chaired a further meeting with DoH representative Davy Best in relation to assisting with the drafting of the Mental Health aspects of a Draft Regional Policy – Provision of HSC Staff Witness Statements to Coroner Service NI. This document forms part of the workload of the Preparation for Inquests and Litigation Working Sub Group (which flows from the Implementation of the Hyponatraemia Inquiry Report) – of which Policy Officer Thomas McKeever is a member. June Champion from HSC Leadership Centre is leading on the drafting of this document. Present were Drs Maria O’Kane, Peter Sloan and Ashling O’Hare – as well as Thomas, who later reflected: “This was a really useful exchange in which the practical experience of Clinicians versed with the Coroners’ Court was aired. A number of useful suggestions emerged which were noted by DoH. The duty to observe confidentiality beyond death was also discussed.”

9 December: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch met with Dr Ian McMaster from DoH to discuss matters currently of mutual interest to both the College and the Department.

External Affairs

3 December: As part of our newly formed Mental Health Policy Group (NI), we jointly hosted a mental health hustings event at Law Society House, Victoria Street, Belfast with our partners in that Group, namely Acton Mental Health, the British
Psychological Society (NI) and Inspire. Five parties attended – Alliance (Paula Bradshaw), DUP (Paula Bradley), SDLP (Paul McCusker), Green Party (Rachel Woods) and UUP (Robbie Butler). Chair Dr Gerry Lynch led our delegation, which also included Policy Officer Thomas McKeever and Co Ordinator Barry Flynn. Afterwards, Thomas reflected: “Party views on what is needed to address mental health here were aired during both initial presentations from each party present and a lengthy question and answer session. Valuable conversations were also had off line afterwards with the political representatives. The event further acted as a soft launch for our new collective Policy Group, an initiative welcomed in conversation with Paula Bradley MLA.”

L to R: Green Party (Rachel Woods), SDLP (Paul McCusker), UUP (Robbie Butler), Alliance (Paula Bradshaw) and DUP (Paula Bradley)
Our new Mental Health Policy Group (NI) Banner

L to R: Rachel Woods, Paula Bradshaw, Robbie Butler, David Babington, Prof Nichola Rooney, Dr Gerry Lynch, Paula Bradley, Rowan White, Jenna Booth & Paul McCusker
4 December: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch on the invitation of the local BMA attended their Conference in Hilton Hotel, Belfast entitled ‘Better Culture, Better Care: Creating Trust, Learning and Accountability within Health and Social Care’ – at which some of the current leading speakers on cultural change and safety presented. BMA members and invited stakeholders were asked to look at the range of ways in which culture can be both recognised and utilised as a vehicle for improvements in care. Speakers and topics included: Dr Chris Turner, Consultant in Emergency Medicine on how ‘Civility Saves Lives’; Peter McBride, Chair of the Being Open Sub-group, Inquiry into Hyponatraemia Related Deaths (IHRD), Duty of Candour Workstream; Fiona Smith, Strategic Organisational Effectiveness Practitioner, Merseycare NHS Trust on ‘Implementing a just and learning Culture’; Dr Denise Chaffer, Director of Safety and Learning at NHS Resolution on ‘Being Fair: Supporting a just and learning culture for staff and patients following incidents in the NHS’; Professor Colin Melville, Medical Director and Director of Education and Standards, General Medical Council on ‘The role of the Regulator in supporting Doctors in a pressurised environment’; Dr Kevin Stewart, Medical Director of the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch for England on ‘The Role of Safe Spaces’; Tom Rapanakis, BMA Head of Wellbeing Support Services on ‘Doctor wellbeing and what the BMA can provide’. Later Gerry reflected: "This BMA event had several very interesting presentations, focusing on the importance of getting the culture of our working environments right as we strive to improve safety of services. There was an especially interesting presentation showing evidence that rudeness and incivility in the workplace were associated with impaired performance. We also heard from the GMC about their increasing (and welcome) focus on Doctors’ wellbeing. The proposal here in Northern Ireland to introduce an individual statutory duty of candour with criminal sanctions generated much discussion. We also heard about the complexities of ensuring learning, accountability and a just culture when things go wrong.”

Faculty and Committee Business:

3 December: Forensic Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Adrian East. Included within the busy agenda were Prison issues, Training and workforce planning, Low secure agenda, Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016, College Report 219 and recent Consultations completed by Adrian on behalf of the Faculty dealing with Smoke free prisons (DoJ) and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2020-2023.

4 December: Addictions Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Billy Gregg. Also in attendance for the first part of the meeting was a delegation from our Child and Adolescent Faculty led by their Chair Dr Richard Wilson who were present to discuss developing services relevant to both cohorts of Patients, following on from discussions between the respective Faculty Leads.
6 December: Chair of our Intellectual Disability Faculty, Dr Arun Subramanian introduced and hosted a packed programme of Speakers for the Intellectual Disability Seminar held today in the McCracken Suite, Clifton House. The event was over-subscribed and a huge success. Among those speaking was College Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Professor Roy McClelland, who provided an update on EEG – and joint working with other Faculties was a feature, with Chair of Forensic Faculty Dr Adrian East addressing Forensic Risk Assessment Tools and Chair of Old Age Faculty Dr Conor Barton addressing the difference between Dementia and Mild Cognitive Impairment.
6 December: Policy Lead Dr Peter Trimble, assisted by Policy Officer Thomas McKeever submitted the RCPsych NI Report (covering the period from July to December 2019) to Central College’s Policy and Public Affairs Committee for their forthcoming 11 December meeting.

11 December: Our Ad Hoc Policy Committee, chaired by Dr Gerry Lynch met in Clifton House to further consider our response to the NIO Consultation on A New Legal Framework for Abortion Services in Northern Ireland. Input had been sought from all Members in advance of the meeting in respect of the first proposed draft response – and we received several contributions which were each considered at and after this meeting. It was planned to circulate a second draft response to all Members before same is finalised and submitted by the 16 December deadline.

11 December: Our Devolved Council met chaired by Dr Gerry Lynch and it included a presentation to our Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Professor Roy McClelland and a talk on Encompass, the forthcoming digital integrated care record to be rolled out in Northern Ireland.
In respect of the former, Dr Lynch welcomed Professor Roy McClelland, and, on behalf of the members, paid tribute to him on his attainment of being handed the Award by the College last month. He then presented Professor McClelland with a framed photograph, which featured him being presented with the award - and which contained the citation of Professor Wendy Burn. Professor McClelland expressed his gratitude to the College and thanked fellow members and staff for all their help and assistance over the years: "My sincere thanks to you (Gerry), our long-suffering and ever-caring College staff and to Council Members, for the invitation to Wednesday's Council meeting and the presentation. I am deeply
honoured to have received such a prestigious accolade from my colleagues and especially from fellow psychiatrists and friends here in Northern Ireland.”

In respect of the latter, Dr Lynch welcomed Dr Matthew Costley, an Adept Trainee, who delivered a really useful presentation on the implementation of the Encompass Programme, as overseen by the Department of Health. He reported that the programme sought to provide a digital, integrated health and care record to Northern Ireland. He added that the system would enable Clinicians to access Patients’ health and care information in one digital record and would enable access to up-to-date information through interaction with the system. The Chair later thanked Dr Costley for his presentation and the helpful manner in which he had answered Members’ questions.

13 December: Child and Adolescent Faculty met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Richard Wilson. The Agenda included Conference Update, CAMHS Staffing, Beds,
Mental Capacity Act, Looked After Children and Regional Trauma Network Ireland. Christmas was suitably marked with a post business meeting tour of Clifton House for Faculty members, seasonal eats and drinks, together with seasonal music from Dr Lizzy Donaghy on cello, the sound of which perfectly fitted the acoustics of Clifton House.

**Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016:**

*Introduction by Chair Dr Gerry Lynch*

**5 December:** We held a very well attended Training Day in The Mac, Belfast which gave focus to Mental Health Legislation, both new and old, the newly named Review Tribunal - and included simulation Tribunal training. It was very well received and really worthwhile for Members who attend Tribunals. We were supported in this by DoH, NIJAC, RQIA, QUB Drama and the Directorate of Legal Services. Topics addressed included the RQIA Part II Status Audit, operational implications of the implementation of DoLS under the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016 (MCA) and Report Writing. The day was introduced by Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and chaired by Dr Dearbhail Lewis who afterwards said: "It was a pleasure to chair this event. We heard from colleagues with huge levels of expertise in scrutiny of Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 forms, in the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016 and its implementation and in report writing for the Review Tribunal. The fantastic flow of the morning led to the afternoon session, which began with a pioneering Simulation session, followed by an overview of Review Tribunals and an update from NIJAC. My special thanks to the Drama department from QUB for their time and
expertise. The day provided much food for thought and will help our members consider how to move forward, whilst we are still working with both pieces of legislation.”

L to R: Dr Gerry Lynch, Ted Finnegan, Lourda Geoghegan, Lynn Long, Drs Stuart Brown & John Simpson

Dr Dearbhail Lewis (left) organising attendees for the simulation Tribunal
Media:

16 December: Issued today, on the initiative of the local BMA and with our participation, was the following Joint Collective Press Statement from medical and nursing organisations in Northern Ireland:

**Medical and nursing leaders call for restoration of Stormont institutions to address the deepening crisis in healthcare**

In the lead up to renewed political talks, senior health leaders, representing doctors and nurses in Northern Ireland, have issued a statement outlining serious concerns about the unacceptable situation in the health and social care system and are calling on politicians to get the devolved institutions up and running again.

The British Medical Association, Royal College of Emergency Medicine, Royal College of Surgeons of England, Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Psychiatrists NI which collectively represent thousands of medical and nursing professionals in Northern Ireland, said they were taking the unusual step of issuing a joint statement due to the severity of the situation.

"We are all constituent parts of the one health care system and we need to put patients back at the heart of it. We need decisive action and political leadership to end the current gridlock” the collective statement reads.

"Problems in our health care system have been building for many years. Despite successive reports recommending major change or face collapse, the situation has not changed for the better quickly enough. To reform our health service we need political leadership and sustainable long-term planning with decisions being made by locally elected politicians operating from Stormont.

"We need this now – patients cannot be forced to wait any longer for the healthcare they need. Crucially, we must have additional sustained investment in health to help address waiting lists and other escalating pressures, along with a full and frank debate on budgetary priorities across our public services.

"Events over recent weeks have highlighted just how precarious the situation is across our health system. Staff throughout the service are working above and beyond on a regular basis to ensure patients are being treated and cared for safely and appropriately but they feel they are at breaking point.

"Political inactivity over the last three years has contributed to this crisis. Although it is not the sole cause, the lack of an accountable health minister has resulted in decisions being deferred, blame passed around and sustainable transformation put on the back foot.

"As organisations representing the medical and nursing community here in Northern Ireland we see the reality of this fractured system every day and watch patients suffer. As a society we must do better.
"We urge political parties across Northern Ireland to put patients first; break the stalemate, restore our government and transform our health service without further delay."

ENDS

**16 December:** The Joint Press State received much local Media attention from [BBC NI](https://www.bbcni.com), [Belfast Telegraph](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk), [Irish News](https://www.irishnews.com), [Newsletter](https://www.newsletter.co.uk) and others as Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and other Medical Leaders called for an end to the deadlock at Stormont. Gerry went on to give an [interview](https://www.bbc.co.uk/ni/articles/05727303a87a-112e-06ba-000000000000) to BBC Radio Ulster Evening Extra (1:18).

**NI Assembly:**
There is nothing to report this month, with Devolution not yet restored.

**Membership and Trainees:**

**18 December:** Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and Staff of RCPsych NI enjoyed a Christmas Lunch, followed by attendance at the Clifton House Drinks Reception for those associated with Clifton House.

**19 December:** The now Annual Trainees’ Christmas Quiz was held in Clifton House with Festive eats and music - and Congratulations go to the 2019 Winners of the Pavlov Trophy who were:

![Image of winners](image1)

L to R: Drs Darran Carson, Kathy Hadden, Michael Doris, Kathryn Mitchell & Michael McMorran

Thanks must go the organisers who were Drs Michael Doris and Darran Carson – with the event also attended and very much supported by Drs Stephen Moore and Julie Anderson.