Membership and Trainees:

Drs Jo Minay, Mary Short and Catherine Taggart recently became Fellows: Congratulations are sent to them by Chair Dr Gerry Lynch, on behalf of all Members.

4 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch attended both the College Council meeting and the Devolved Nation Chairs’ Meeting in Central College, London. RCPsych NI Manager Emma Allen also attended the latter. Gerry later reported: "The Council heard a useful presentation on the need for accurate data. The Devolved Nation Chairs’ meeting took as its main focus our devolution and the consequent work needed on Terms of Reference, Regulations etc - to facilitate our change of status as Devolved Nations.”
7 October: Both Emma Allen (RCPsych NI Manager) and Barry Flynn (RCPsych NI Co-ordinator) attended the Divisions’ and Devolved Nations’ Networking Day in Central College, London. (See attendees pictured above with Chief Executive Paul Rees.) Thomas McKeever (RCPsych NI Policy Officer) joined from Belfast by Skype for most of the day’s proceedings. The Agenda included welcome and introductions by Paul Rees (Chief Executive), highlights from the Divisions and Devolved Nations - presented by personnel from each office – with Emma Allen presenting on aspects of RCPsych NI’s recent work, discussion on use of Images and Branding Guidelines in the Divisions and Devolved Nations - led by Peter Markham (Head of Digital), discussion on the Choose Psychiatry new 2019 campaign and career activities led by Nikki Cochrane (Head of Training and Workforce), discussion on Health and Safety – Manual Handling guidelines – led by Lesley Cawthra (Head of Facilities), feedback from the recent Staff Focus Groups, a Brain Storming session on how we want the College to view the Devolved Nations and Divisions – and finally a meeting of the Professional Standards Department led by Sonia Walter (Director of Professional Standards) closed the day. The latter featured updates from eLearning and Business Development, CALC, Exams, Divisions and Devolved Nations (led by Elen Cook, Head of Devolved Nations and Divisions) and Training and Workforce. In addition, Manager Emma Allen was given a Professional Standards Team Member of the Month Award for her contribution to the successful organising of the Central CAMHS Annual Scientific Meeting, which was held in Belfast towards the end of September. The event was organised and co-ordinated by Elen Cook, Head of Devolved Nations and Divisions (pictured on extreme left of picture.)

16 October: Director of Strategic Comms, Kim Catcheside and Head of Policy and Campaigns, George Roycroft visited Belfast to work with Dr Gerry Lynch, Dr Michael Doherty and the NI staff team to develop a strategy and campaign plan for 2020. A really useful morning was spent reflecting on the current and recent landscape, our newly formed Mental Health Policy Group (NI) and its workplan in the time ahead, Communications and Media across all of our work and membership engagement in terms of events, CPD etc.

18 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch attended the College Trustee Board meeting in Central College, London. Gerry later commented: “A key item on the Agenda was a proposed change in the College Regulations with accompanying Explanatory Note to cater for our (and others’) new Devolved Nation Status. This was passed unopposed and provides clarity as to the degree of autonomy afforded to the Devolved Councils to make decisions and formulate policy within the overarching College structure. The next step will be to draw up terms of reference for our Devolved Council and begin to think about the structure that best meets our needs.”

19 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch, along with many other College Members, attended the evening organized in the Canada Room, Queen’s University, Belfast to mark the retirement from Belfast Trust of former Chair, Dr Philip McGarry. In a speech, Gerry paid particular tribute to Philip’s work for the College as Chair between 2009 and 2013, highlighting his then innovative emphasis on collaboration with the Media and with the Voluntary Sector, as well as his championing work on
Suicide prevention, increasing User and Carer involvement with the College, Alcohol pricing and Capacity legislation. Gerry added: “On behalf of all College members we wish Philip a long and healthy retirement and are pleased that he will continue his work associated with Interpersonal Therapy Training. We are very grateful for all he did to nurture the College here in Northern Ireland.”

Left to Right Drs Janine Lynch, Peter Sloan, Helen Toal, Jim Anderson, Philip McGarry, Maria O’Kane and Anne McDonnell

25 October: Further to the recent election notice for Financial Officer and ETC Representative, it was announced that the following had been duly elected without ballot: Financial Officer Dr Elizabeth Dawson; ETC Representative Dr Dearbhail Lewis. Both of them will take office at the College’s International Congress, 29th June – 2nd July 2020 in Edinburgh. There will be a ballot for the Chair position.

25 October: College Devolved Nation Policy Officers (Thomas McKeever – NI; Andrew Fraser – Scotland and Louis Mertens - Wales) held their first catch up meeting by phone to discuss matters of mutual interest across the 3 countries and share experience.
29 October: Staff took part by Skype in an all Staff Briefing led from Central College by Chief Executive Paul Rees.

30 October: Jillian Arthur-Palmer, Special Assistant – Special Projects, Chief Executives’ Office travelled over to Belfast from London and spent the day in Clifton House assisting with a number of IT and other administrative matters.

Media:

Dr Margaret du Feu shared a very instructive article co-written by her with Dr Tara Rudd and published in the Medical Independent during September - outlining the challenges facing deaf people in RoI obtaining equal access to healthcare. Dr Holly Greer, Chair of our Special Interest Group for Deaf Children and Adolescents commented: "I commend this article to fellow College members as there are many parallels with the experience of deaf people in Northern Ireland."

3 October: Chair of Perinatal Faculty Dr Julie Anderson was featured by the College in a Blog, reflecting on her life as a Psychiatrist and asking others to Choose Psychiatry.

7 October: Choose Psychiatry campaign was launched by the College with this Press Release:

Embargoed to 0001 Monday 7 October

Consultant psychiatrist posts in Northern Ireland remain unfilled, says UK-wide RCPsych survey

- **One in 13 consultant psychiatric posts in NI remain unfilled, RCPsych workforce census finds**
- **Northern Ireland currently has no mother and baby unit**
- **College calls on more junior doctors to Choose Psychiatry**

ONE in 13 consultant psychiatrist posts are unfilled in Northern Ireland, according to a recent census carried out across the UK.

That represents 10.5 whole time equivalent posts out a total of 140.5 which is 7.5%. Similar rates can be found across the UK. In Scotland that figure is 9.7%, England 9.9% and Wales 12.7%.
The situation in Northern Ireland is particularly serious for specialist services where patients can face waits of weeks or even months for treatment following an initial assessment.

The findings come at a time when perinatal services have been shown to be scarce and Northern Ireland still has no mother and baby unit.

Currently, thousands of women who need treatment for mental health problems during or following pregnancy are at risk of receiving inadequate support.

Perinatal mental health problems are among the most common complications that a woman can experience when having a baby – with one in five women affected during pregnancy and in the year after birth.

Problems include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic distress disorder, eating disorders and postpartum psychosis.

Lindsay Robinson’s anxiety and depression was not picked up until her son Reuben (now six), was two years old and she is now campaigning for greater awareness of perinatal mental health issues.

Lindsay, 37, from Belfast, said: “I was exceptionally detached from my baby and from the world around me. It really did grab hold of me. It was hard to see the difference between detachment and reality. I found it hard to believe I had given birth to a baby.”

Currently, Northern Ireland still has no mother and baby unit. It is something Lindsay feels passionate about and she has been working with RCPsych NI calling for a specialist unit and specialist perinatal community mental health teams.

Lindsay said: “A mother and baby unit has the potential to change lives, as does access to appropriate perinatal mental health team support. My story would’ve been very different if we’d had that available.

“I fully support the Choose Psychiatry campaign as psychiatrists can help give people their lives back. That’s something very important and worthwhile.”

Dr Gerry Lynch, chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists NI said: “It’s important that the national UK census recognises that many posts remain unfilled in Northern Ireland.

“We can’t recruit to permanent posts and are having to rely on temporary locum cover, which is expensive and risks continuity of care as well as gaps in services such as perinatal mental health.
“We’ve been campaigning for a mother and baby unit and for community perinatal services for a number of months now and without psychiatrists there would be no scope to boost much needed mental health services.

“Choose psychiatry is an important message. Being a psychiatrist is a fascinating career with the potential to help hundreds of people get better from mental ill-health.”

The College first launched its Choose Psychiatry campaign in 2017. Last year the number of junior doctors deciding to train in psychiatry rose by a third in the UK.

It takes 13 years to train as a consultant psychiatrist, including five years of medical school.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Case study interviews and photos available on request.
- The College’s 2019 biennial workforce census will be published in the coming weeks.
- A summary of its findings, including how the data was collected, the participants and how the data compares with the headline findings, is being emailed out with this press release and will be available on the College’s website.
- Case studies are available on request.
- While the rate of unfilled consultant psychiatrist vacancies in England between 2013 and 2019 are comparable, the actual number of unfilled posts in both years are not because of the difference in response rate and because mental health trusts’ boundaries are subject to change and new contracts have been taken on in the intervening period.
- Our census includes, for England, a regional breakdown of the data according to the College’s eight Divisions. These are broadly comparable to the standard English regions (South West, North East, etc.). Full details of which English counties are included in the College’s Divisions are available here: https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/members/england
- The most recent workforce data from NHS Digital showed that while the number of consultant psychiatrists increased by only 2.5% in the nine years between June 2010 and June 2019 (from 8,717 to 8,936 WTE), the number of consultants across all other Hospital and Community Health Services increased by 20% (from 85,821 to 102,924 WTE).
- WTE- Whole Time Equivalent

About the workforce census

- The RCPsych workforce census is a biennial survey of NHS mental health organisations and private and independent providers who employ psychiatrists in the UK. The census focuses on the psychiatrists in non-training grade posts, namely consultants and specialty and associate specialist (SAS) doctors. Organisations and health boards in Scotland were included in the census for the first time in 2017. This year, 89% of NHS organisations responded.

About the College’s Choose Psychiatry campaign
• Launched in 2017, the College’s #ChoosePsychiatry social media campaign aims to promote the specialty to medical students and junior doctors. The campaign has challenged the perception that psychiatrists’ patients don’t get better and shown that the speciality is unique in requiring doctors to understand a patient’s brain, body and background.
• For more information on the campaign, go to https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/become-a-psychiatrist/choose-psychiatry

This led to massive local and national coverage. Locally, this included:

**Belfast Telegraph**

**ITV News Northern Ireland**

**Newsletter**

**BBC Radio Ulster** Good Morning Ulster interview with Chair, Dr Gerry Lynch at 40-45 minutes

**BBC Radio Foyle** News at One interview with Chair, Dr Gerry Lynch at 20-25 minutes

**9 October:** Our Perinatal Faculty Chair Dr Julie Anderson *(pictured below right)* spoke on BBC Radio Ulster Talkback as part of a Panel - about Perinatal Mental Health Care – at 1h 06 mins to 1h 30mins. Afterwards Julie tweeted: "My first experience of live radio and it was actually fun! Thanks to William Crawley and the Talkback team on BBC Radio Ulster for letting the three of us talk about Perinatal Mental Health and highlight again the urgent need for specialist Perinatal Services in Northern Ireland.”
10 October: We issued the following Press Release to mark World Mental Health Day:

PRESS RELEASE

TEACHERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO RECEIVE A CRASH COURSE IN MENTAL HEALTH

Embargoed: Until 00:01 Thursday 10 October

TEACHERS and school staff across Northern Ireland are to be offered a crash course in mental health to help them support pupils in the classroom.

The news comes on World Mental Health Day 2019.

Following a successful pilot of 19 schools, run by the Royal College of Psychiatrists NI and the Northern Trust, the programme will be rolled out to interested primary and secondary schools across the country.

A consultant psychiatrist in child and adolescent mental health; trainee psychiatrist and other professionals from Children’s Early Intervention Services will be on hand to talk about mental health, how Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) teams are structured and how referrals to these services work.

Currently, around 20 per cent of teenagers may experience mental health problems in any one year with 50 per cent of conditions being established by age 14.

Now school staff will be educated on conditions such as OCD, autism, eating disorders, depression and self-harm and how to spot early warning signs in the classroom.

There will also be discussions on hot topics, such as the rise of social media and its effects on a young person’s mental health.

Teachers will also benefit from information on how to handle their own stresses thanks to an additional Mood Matters programme run in conjunction with Aware NI – the national depression charity for Northern Ireland.

‘The Crash Course in Mental Health for Schools – What Teachers and Staff Need to Know’ is being led by Dr Maggie McGurgan, as part of her role as chair of the public engagement committee at RCPsych NI and supported by her employer, Northern Health and Social Care Trust.
The course was Maggie’s idea and she ran the training on the pilot alongside a number of trainees and Northern Trust colleagues. She is proud of the success so far.

She said: “We know from our pilot that teachers found the course boosted their confidence when dealing with mental health issues in the classroom.

“The course is also important as it give teachers the tools to build personal resilience and manage their own stress.

“The crash course is vital training for teachers at a time when children and young people’s mental health services are over-stretched.”

The RCPsych also has mental health packs for schools and colleges which teachers and lecturers can order here: https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/order-mental-health-packs-for-schools

ENDS

11 October: Irish News covered the story on the Crash Course in Mental Health.
15 October: NIJobFinder Blog covered the story on the Crash Course in Mental Health.
28 October: We issued the following Press Release to mark the success of some of our Belfast Trust Members:

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

HEALTH TRUST FIRST-EVER IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS ACCREDITATION FOR DEMENTIA CARE

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) is the first in Northern Ireland to receive a prestigious accreditation for dementia care from the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych).
The Older People’s Dementia and Mental Health Service based at Knockbracken Healthcare Park in Belfast, was awarded for completing the Memory Services Accreditation Programme (MSNAP), for its service provision to people and carers living with the condition.

**Christine Wilkinson, service improvement lead, for BHSCT said:** “As a service we are very focused on providing high quality, person centred care. This achievement was made possible through a whole team approach and commitment to quality improvement. We are delighted to be the first Trust to receive this accreditation evidencing best practice service provision.”

The highly regarded accreditation aims to improve a patient’s experience of assessment, diagnosis and on-going support. It’s awarded following a rigorous process and supports the NICE Quality Standard for Dementia.

Many of the award’s objectives, including equal access to services, provision of evidence-based treatments, monitoring and follow-up care are also outlined in the Northern Ireland Regional Dementia Strategy.

**Dr Gerry Lynch, Chair of the RCPsych in Northern Ireland said:** “It’s fantastic news that the Trust has picked up the first-ever MSNAP accreditation for Northern Ireland. As we face an aging population, dementia care has never been so important.

“After 18 months of hard work, the staff commitment and achievements for people accessing this service have been fully recognised. Well done to all involved.”

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

Faculty and Committee Business:

1 October: Forensic Faculty met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Adrian East. The agenda included Prison issues, Training and workforce planning, Low secure agenda, Mental Capacity Act Update and Forensic Faculty Annual Meeting.

3 October: Informatics Committee met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Stephen Moore. Items discussed included Encompass, Physical Health Monitoring, Proposals for cascading information to the wider Division, Trust developments, Pending Innovations, as well as Privacy and Patient Security.
11 October: Psychiatrists in Private Practice Special Interest Group (PIPSIG) met in Clifton House chaired by Dr John Sharkey. Part of the meeting included a visit from Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) Chief Executive Tonya McCormac and their Assistant Director Judicial Appointments Andrew Millar. John commented: “A lively discussion took place and Mr Millar clarified for the Group that in essence, Consultant Psychiatrists need to be registered with the GMC to do this work, but they do not require a licence to practice. Other agenda items included the use of technology and indemnity for same, as well as developments in treatments for depression.”

15 October: The ECT group met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Stephen Moore and they agreed to develop a local training day around ECT next year, building on the successful event in 2016.

21 October: Intellectual Disability Faculty met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Arun Subramanian. The Agenda included the Mental Capacity Act, Workforce, Financial Capacity Assessments, co-working with the College of Psychiatrists Ireland, Intellectual Disability strategic development, physical health care, Mental Health action plan, Academic Intellectual Disability Psychiatry, as well as Trainees’ feedback. The meeting also included presentations on the topics of Strategic Review of the Intellectual Disability workforce by Dr Judy Curran and of NICE Guidelines on Epilepsy by Dr Simon Patterson. Arun welcomed the establishment of the Learning Disability Professional Forum for Northern Ireland chaired by Dr Edel O’Neill – with Dr Matt McMurray in the role of Vice Chair.

23 October: Perinatal Faculty members, including its Chair Dr Julie Anderson, met with Manager Emma Allen and Co-ordinator Barry Flynn to reflect on last week’s Training Days and plan ahead. Also contributing by tele-conference was Devolved Nations’ Press Officer Laura Varney.

25 October: Deaf Children and Adolescents’ Special Interest Group met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Holly Greer. Included within the Agenda items were Terms of Reference for the Group, Reports on caseloads/referrals from the Trusts, as well as ongoing work on developing a service via National Deaf Children’s Society Networking Day, Child and Adolescent Faculty Conference etc.

Sharing Best Practice and Quality Improvement:

1 October: Vice Chair Dr Michael Doherty held a tele conference call with Treasa Fox, Head of Student Counselling Service, Athlone Institute of Technology, Athlone, County Westmeath to discuss the process of the development of the Student Mental Health Service in Belfast – and the learning gained from same.

2 October: The Research, Audit and Quality Improvement annual event was held in Clifton House and attracted a large attendance as usual. Presenters in the
Research section were Drs Ruth Carville, Claire Potter, Joe Kane and Michael Doris – in the Audit/Quality Improvement section were Drs Chris Sharkey, Stephanie Redpath, Vivian Sing and Laura Somerville – with Guest Speaker Dr Stuart Currie, Du Boulay Professor of Neuroradiology on ‘Imaging of Acute and Chronic Traumatic Brain Injury through Rocky Balboa.’

L to R: Professor Ciaran Mulholland introducing, some of the large audience who attended, Drs Joe Kane and Laura Somerville receiving their Awards
2 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch and Thomas McKeever (RCPsych NI Policy Officer) met with Terry Amorese, who hails from near Naples and is currently on a placement with Action Mental Health conducting research on which voice would be the best to use for a Mental Health related synthesised voice app. It was agreed that the College would assist Terry with this work and a further meeting to conduct the research was planned for November.

4 October: Chair of our Informatics Committee Dr Stephen Moore attended the You in Mind Regional Oversight Group held at HSCB/PHA Headquarters, Linenhall Street, Belfast on behalf of the College. Afterwards, Stephen commented: "You In Mind continues to develop, with movements towards standardisation of documentation which are likely to mesh well with Encompass when it is delivered, but which continue to challenge us in the meantime."

8 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch, Forensic Faculty Chair Dr Adrian East, Forensic Faculty member Dr Ian McMaster and Policy Officer Thomas McKeever met in Clifton House with Bria Mongan (SE Trust Director of Adult Services and Prison Healthcare), Rachel Gibbs (SE Trust Assistant Director of Prison Healthcare) and Tracey Heasley (SE Trust Prison Healthcare) to discuss the College Report CR219 on Prison Mental Health in Northern Ireland.

9 October: The Physical Healthcare Group met in Clifton House chaired by Dr Michael Doherty. Included in the Agenda were Funding, Sharing Good Practice, the planned College/RCGP NI Protocol (as regards blood tests and interventions carried out by Mental Health services – which it is now hoped will be worked on by the College along with RCGP NI – and then proceed to a pilot of same involving 4 Belfast Federations and Belfast Trust), Regional approaches and Informatics.

14 October: We provided comments to the College Policy and Public Affairs Editorial Board in relation to their draft College Position Statement on Loneliness (developed jointly with the British Geriatrics Society), prior to its final sign off and publication. The feedback was provided by the Chair and Vice Chair of our Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry, Drs Conor Barton and Kevina Nix respectively.
17-18 October: We delivered a 2 day Perinatal training event with the Public Health Agency. Over 55 delegates attended and training was led by our Perinatal Chair Dr Julie Anderson and Vice Chair, Dr Janine Lynch.

Dr Billy Gregg gives a fascinating insight into addictions complications in perinatal health care.
22 October: The local Royal Colleges’ Interface Meeting took place at the offices of RCGPNI, Cromac Place, Belfast and was attended by both Chair and Vice Chair Drs Gerry Lynch and Michael Doherty respectively. It was chaired by incoming RCGPNI Chair Dr Laurence Dorman. The Agenda comprised a Presentation and Q+A with Gary Loughran, DoH NI Encompass on the Digital Transformation Programme, as well as a lot of discussion around the agreed Interface Principles and their promotion with NIMDTA, QUB and others. The meeting also heard a detailed update from Michael on a joint initiative between the College and RCGPNI, which was supported by the other Royal Colleges. Michael advised: "It is hoped that RCGPNI
and RCPsych NI will be able to develop an agreed "Good Practice Guideline" about interventions on abnormal physical health assessments and blood tests carried out by mental health services, as part of physical health monitoring for patients with a severe mental illness. In particular these would be patients on High dose antipsychotic medication and those starting and changing antipsychotic medication.” In terms of the overall meeting, Gerry commented: “There was support for the development of the Group into a more formal structure - a Northern Ireland Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. This could be a very useful way of ensuring that a unified professional voice could be heard when appropriate.”

25 October: Professor Ciaran Mulholland hosted the NI Clinical Mental Health Network Group in Clifton House.

28 October: Our Addictions Faculty Chair Dr Billy Gregg provided a supportive view from Northern Ireland on the College’s draft Position Statement on medicinal cannabis.

31 October: We submitted today our response to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Consultation on their Corporate Plan 2020-2023. The main author of this response was our Forensic Faculty Chair Dr Adrian East, who sought increased engagement with our Forensic Faculty by the Probation Board.

External Affairs:

10 October: RCPsych NI Manager Emma Allen attended the Participation and the Practice of Rights Mental Health Congress at Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road, Belfast where UN Special Rapporteur Dainius Puras was the Guest Speaker.

22 October: Child and Adolescent Faculty Chair Dr Richard Wilson and Dr Lizzy Donaghy attended an event at Malone Lodge Hotel, Eglantine Avenue, Belfast entitled ‘Hope for Every Child’ which was organised by the Northern Ireland Healthcare Leadership Forum (which is a Student led Group based at Queen’s University). This was the Group’s first conference of the 2019-2020 academic year - the idea being to discuss how a multi-agency approach to support every child in Northern Ireland would assist the best start to life. In advance, the organisers had stated: “Longitudinal studies show that good health and wellbeing of children relies heavily on providing good education, community services and housing at the start of life. Those who are our children now make up Northern Ireland’s communities of the future. If health begins with hope, how can we provide every child in Northern Ireland with hope? Let us have a conversation about how we can continue our journey of working closer together across public services to improve health and wellbeing for the children in NI.” Richard later reflected: "Lizzy and I were pleased
to represent the College at this huge evening event organised by Health and Social Care Students. There were strong contributions from leaders at all levels of society, including Education. Many challenges, opportunities and some successes were discussed across all levels of the caring system. Perhaps the most novel and potent contribution of all came from Mr Pedro Delgado (International Health Care Improvement) who, placing our challenges in a global context, told us about his experiences in Latin America. In Chile for instance the national healthcare budget (which does not include anything like our concept of Social Care) has been halved, yet the grassroots there are still able to deliver the Goodstart Programme (funded by local communities who have ownership) - which aims to break the intergenerational poverty cycle....food for thought for us perhaps?”

**Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016:**
There is nothing to report this Month.

**Department of Health:**

**15 October:** Vice Chair Dr Michael Doherty attended the Regional Launch of the Primary Care Multi-Disciplinary Team Programme at the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, County Down. Speaking at the launch, the Department of Health Permanent Secretary, Richard Pengelly, said: “The ongoing roll-out of multi-disciplinary teams will help to radically reform the way services are delivered. They enable patients to receive the support they need more quickly, enabling them a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. In time this will reduce the need for referrals and pressure on our secondary care services. They will also release GPs to treat those patients who most urgently require their care. This is a vital part of our commitment to transform services. It is widely accepted that without transformation our health and social care system will become increasingly outdated and unsustainable.” Michael later commented: “This was a very interesting and stimulating afternoon looking at the inaugural Multi-Disciplinary Teams. We look forward to the evaluation of the project and in particular its impact on secondary care mental health services.”

**18 October:** Chair Dr Gerry Lynch received an invitation from Chief Medical Officer Dr Michael McBride inviting him to become a member of the Protect Life 2 Steering Group, which Gerry gladly accepted on behalf of members. Dr McBride said: “The Protect Life 2 Strategy for Preventing Suicide and Self Harm in Northern Ireland 2019 -2024 was launched last month. The strategy is underpinned by new robust governance and monitoring arrangements. The group will be comprised of a range of statutory and community and voluntary organisations. Your participation in the group will very much assist in driving forward the implementation of the strategy.”
23 October: Chair and Vice Chair Drs Gerry Lynch and Michael Doherty attended the All-Party Group (APG) on Suicide Prevention at Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Stormont. Included on the Agenda were a Presentation on the Training Framework Consultation by the Public Health Agency, an Update on the Protect Life 2 Commissioning Plan from the Public Health Agency and a Presentation from the Participation and Practice of Rights Project re their 123GP campaign. Later Gerry commented: “There was much discussion, when Protect Life 2 was being presented, about the Plan’s target of a 10% reduction in the suicide rate, with many expressing the view that this was not ambitious enough. The Chair and Vice Chair of the APG were interested in our views concerning the commitment in Protect Life 2 for all Trusts to develop comprehensive 24-hour mental health liaison. The APG Chair agreed to seek clarification that recurrent funding for this has been made available to the Trusts - and that all Trusts have clear plans to develop such services. There was also a strong presentation from the 123GP campaign, who are campaigning for a doubling of funding for GP counselling services.”

24 October: Chair Dr Gerry Lynch hosted a meeting in Clifton House to draft our response to the DoH Draft Mental Health Action Plan. Present also were Vice Chair Dr Michael Doherty, as well as Faculty Chairs Drs Richard Wilson and Julie Anderson, together with Drs Paddy Moynihan, Daniel Gboloo-Teye and Janine Lynch. Written thoughts in advance were provided by Faculty Chairs Drs Billy Gregg and Conor Barton. The purpose of this informal Consultation with us and other professional groupings was spelled out by DoH as follows: “The Mental Health and Capacity Unit are currently carrying out workshops with the Community and Voluntary Sector and Service Users and Carers. It has been decided to consult with the professional bodies and academics via a paper consultation as we understand you are all extremely busy. You or some of your colleagues will have been involved in the workshop in November 2018 and the themed workshops in Feb/March 2019 and I am happy for you to share the document with your colleagues for comment on the understanding that it is still draft and we are only seeking input. The Draft Mental Health Action Plan’s actions have been identified following the previous large workshop in November 2018 and the more focused themed workshops which took place in Feb/March 2019. You will be aware that a meeting of the Project Board in June 2019, which was attended by professionals as well, assisted in the identification of actions for inclusion in the plan. The Mental Health and Capacity Unit is currently hosting a number of workshops, facilitated by ourselves for HSC Staff and facilitated by Inspire, Action Mental Health and the Patient Client Council - for the Community and Voluntary Sector, Service Users and Carers during October 2019 to consult on the actions in the draft plan. We are looking to see if there are any missing actions, how they should be prioritised and how to measure the outcomes. We are not seeking input on the text at this moment in time as it still needs some work, just the actions in the table at the end. We have included both actions which can be taken forward and some which are dependent on funding or approval by Minister. The plan is very much still in draft form and we will be revisiting the text after the workshops and your input.”
30 October: Vice Chair Dr Michael Doherty, Policy Lead Dr Peter Trimble and Policy Officer Thomas McKeever held a further meeting in Clifton House to work towards a final version of our response to the DoH Draft Mental Health Action Plan.