
Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Removal of Individual from a Non-executive Director Post at the Health and Social Care Board and as Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Published on Thursday 19 July, 2012

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make a statement to the Assembly to advise of my intention to remove an individual who holds a post as a non executive director on the board of the Health and Social Care Board and the Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

It has recently come to my attention that Mrs Lily Kerr emailed documents to third parties outside the HSC that were, at that time, for the sole consideration of the Health and Social Care Board. It was made clear that a number of these documents were being shared strictly in confidence and were not for wider circulation. This is a very serious matter, which undermines the public standing of the HSC Board and breeds suspicion and mistrust.

Public service values must be at the heart of Health and Social Care. Non executive members, whom I appoint to boards of HSC bodies, are in positions of responsibility, and as such must demonstrate the highest standards of corporate and personal conduct based on a recognition that patients and clients come first.

Three crucial public service values must underpin the work of the HSC, and I am quoting directly from the Code of Conduct which is issued to non-executives upon appointment:

Accountability – everything done by those who work in the HSC must be able to stand the test of Assembly scrutiny, public judgements on propriety and professional codes of conduct.

Probity – there should be an absolute standard of honesty in dealing with the assets of the HSC: integrity should be hallmark of all personal conduct in decisions affecting patients, staff and suppliers, and in the use of information acquired in the course of HPSS duties.

Openness – there should be sufficient transparency about HSC activities to promote confidence between the HPSS body and its staff, patients, clients and the public.

I regret that the actions of Mrs Kerr on this occasion, and for whatever reasons she had, fell short of the standards expected by those holding public office. I must acknowledge that Mrs Kerr has been both an effective board member and chair, but it is my responsibility to do my utmost to maintain the integrity of our public services and the confidence of this Assembly, patients, clients and the wider public. It is for that reason that I have decided that her appointment as non executive director of the Health and Social Care Board and Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will be terminated with immediate effect.

My Department will now move to fill the vacancies.

