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Dear Daniel

MEMORANDUM OF REPLY: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your letter of 16 May 2025, following the Public Accounts Committee's consideration of the Department's updated response of 25 April 2025 to the second quarterly update on the Memorandum of Reply (MoR) to the PAC Report on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland. I appreciate the Committee's ongoing scrutiny and welcome the opportunity to provide further clarity on the areas raised.

Encompass and Service Mapping

As reported in the March update to the PAC, progress to embed the remaining 16 Mental Health Outcomes Framework measures and to operationalise those on the Encompass System for clinical use via MyCare has been delayed due to issues regarding licensing agreements and prioritisation of Encompass resource to ensure safe go-lives at the Southern and Western Trusts.

To address this, DoH officials have escalated these delays to the Encompass SRO and wider team, who have developed a plan setting out key actions and timescales for completing the outstanding work. The Encompass SRO has also allocated additional resource within their team to support delivery of this plan.

Implementation of the plan is being monitored on fortnightly basis and subject to continuing progress, it is anticipated that all remaining measures will be on the Encompass system by July 2025.

Mapping of Trust services to a common service template has been completed for all Trusts and has been built on to the Encompass system to coincide with Trust go-live timescales. Now that all Trusts are live with the new Encompass system, the initial mental health reports will focus on reporting performance data on waiting times for accessing adult and children's provision.

Data and Evaluation Recommendation 7: Commentary on failed CAMHS referrals

Across the five Trusts, 6,050 cases were audited. The evidence from the audit identified the biggest reason for a referral not being accepted is because it did not meet CAMHS criteria. In total, 53% or (3,167) of referrals triaged were signposted to more appropriate services elsewhere such as community and voluntary organisations or other statutory services within HSC Trusts.

A barrier and potential delay for children and young people accessing CAMHS is other professionals' understanding of CAMHS criteria and inadequate information being provided at point of referrals. A significant number of referrals provided no baseline mental state information to allow CAMHS to effectively triage referrals. Often this means children re-attending GPs/referrers for this to occur and a re-referral to be made, which then results in duplicate referrals at the same time.

Based on this audit, the Department will request that Trusts, through their referral co-ordinators, publicise the regionally agreed referral pathway 'Working Together: A Pathway for Children and Young People through CAMHS' with key stakeholders drawing particular attention and emphasis to referral thresholds.

Data and Evaluation Recommendation 9: Actions on Mental Health Waiting Times

SPPG will continue to meet with Trusts in June 2025 to discuss specific actions to address waiting times in mental health and psychological therapy services.

Suggested actions include targeted recruitment drives to address workforce shortages, enhanced service improvement plans to increase productivity, and work to develop interim reporting mechanisms to overcome Encompass-related data gaps. While funding constraints continue to limit the ability to make significant reductions in waiting lists, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust's Steps to Wellness programme has shown promising results, and similar initiatives are being explored for regional rollout, subject to budget availability. A progress report will be available by August 2025.

Data and Evaluation Recommendation 10: Pilot Scheme Evaluations

The position continues as set out in the March update, with some delay as neither evaluation has been available for Department of Health review by the target date, due to staff absence in one of the services concerned within NIAS and Hear and Treat.

Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Recommendation 8: Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework

The [Public Consultation on Children's and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework | Department of Health](#) was launched on 22 May 2025 and will run until 28 August 2025. The aims and direction of the Framework, moving towards a needs-based assessment pathway, has been supported through engagement with the Royal Colleges of Psychiatry and Paediatric Medicine. The Autism Reviewer has welcomed the Framework and has provided formal support for both the content and the direction of the Framework.

Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Recommendation 12

The Cawdery Task and Finish Group met on 28 April 2025 as part of its ongoing commitment to address the recommendations made by the Coroner at the inquest into the deaths of Mr and Mrs Cawdery. The meeting reviewed progress across three workstreams: the Rapid Review of the HSC Regional Level 3 Serious Adverse Incident Action Plan (Workstream 1); the review of Mental Health legislation and guidance (Workstream 2) and Training (Workstream 3).

A considerable amount of progress has been made on workstreams 1 and 2. Workstream 1 has produced a Rapid Review draft report which recommends a way forward to ensure that the learning identified and associated recommendations from the Cawdery case which are included in the Action Plan are implemented effectively and in a timely way across the HSC and ultimately reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of a similar tragic event. Workstream 2 has carried out a significant level of engagement with multi agency professional, legal and operational stakeholders as well as people with lived experience and carers to produce a revised draft Code of Practice which focuses on Articles 129 and 130 of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986. The intention is that the revised draft Code of Practice will go out to public consultation in late summer. Progress on Workstream 3 is very much dependent on the finalised outcomes of Workstream 2; however an assessment of existing Mental Health training provision across agencies is underway and the Public Health Agency has delivered Mental Health First Aid training to PSNI District Trainers so that the training can be rolled out across the PSNI.

At the next meeting in June 2025, the Cawdery Task and Finish Group members plan to discuss an appropriate timeframe for the Group to eventually stand down. It is anticipated that any

remaining work will be incorporated into the work of the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) implementation plans.

Right Care Right Person (RCRP)

The Strategic RCRP Group and the RCRP Silver Group both met in April 2025. The terms of reference for the Strategic Group are still under review and it is hoped that they will soon be finalised. As part of governance arrangements, the Strategic Group agreed that a National Partnership Agreement (NPA) should be developed which will be signed off by the key agencies involved in the roll out of the RCRP model. The development of the NPA is underway.

It is recognised that the Silver Group is the key driver for pushing this work forward at an operational level. A number of subgroups which report to the RCRP Silver Group have been established and include key stakeholders from across health and justice. Work continues to be progressed at subgroup level and progress updates will be provided to the Silver Group at its next meeting in June 2025.

Recommendation 13: Community & Voluntary Sector Report

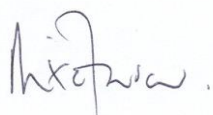
The draft report on the review of the Community & Voluntary (C&V) sector, covering Recommendations 13 and 14, was received by the Department at the end of March 2025. Since then, the draft report has been undergoing factual accuracy and quality assurance checks. While this process has taken longer than initially anticipated, it is expected that the report will be finalised imminently, at which point a copy will be shared with the Committee for consideration.

General Update

The Department will provide a comprehensive progress report on all remaining recommendations by 31 August 2025, as requested, addressing ongoing work and any emerging challenges.

I trust this response addresses the Committee's queries. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely



MIKE FARRAR