



Western Health and Social Care Trust

Press Release
27 March 2008

Madeline O'Neill Independent Inquiry Report

The Western Health and Social Care Trust (Western Trust) apologized to the O'Neill and Gormley families today following the publication of the independent inquiry report into the deaths of Madeline and Lauren O'Neill. The Western Trust fully accepts the recommendations of the report and has already implemented a number of their recommendations.

The independent inquiry report was jointly commissioned by the Western and Eastern Health and Social Services Boards. It was made public by both Boards today at the Western Board's Monthly Board meeting in St Columb's Park House, L'Derry.

Chief Executives of the Belfast and Western Trusts addressed the meeting.

Speaking at the meeting the Western Trust's Chief Executive, Mrs Elaine Way, said: "I offer my sincerest apologies and those of my Chairman and Board to Mr O'Neill and Mr and Mrs Gormley and their families. We are extremely sorry for the untimely and very sad deaths of Mrs Madeleine O'Neill and Lauren.

I accept unreservedly the failures identified in the report of the independent inquiry panel in respect of the mental health services in the former Foyle Health and Social Services Trust.

I deeply regret these failures and give my assurance that the Western Health and Social Care Trust has learned from this tragedy and has acted to prevent such failings happening again.”

She continued: “The deaths of Mrs O’Neill and Lauren shocked everyone involved in Mrs O’Neill’s care and as a consequence the Foyle Health and Social Services Trust acted immediately to examine the care provided to Mrs O’Neill and developed a detailed report recommending improvements to its Mental Health Services. In addition, the new Western Health and Social Care Trust has been working progressively to fully implement the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry Panel Report.”

The Western Trust has worked closely with colleagues in other Trusts, the Western Health and Social Services Board and the Department of Health to ensure the independent inquiry report recommendations are taken forward.

The Western Trust established a Senior Management Review Group to consider each professional’s input into Mrs O’Neill’s care against what would be expected as best practice. As part of this, the Trust’s professional leads in Nursing, Medicine and Social Work carried out reviews which examined individual staff roles.

The Western Trust’s Chief Executive, Mrs Elaine Way, said: “I am satisfied that a robust investigation was carried out appropriately in line with our procedures and the Framework for Handling Concerns about doctors in the health and personal social services. This included an independent review of medical practice by the same consultant psychiatrist used by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. In the context of this work a decision was made not to refer any individual to their regulatory body.”

Mrs Way went on to offer the Western Trust's firm assurances that much work was being done to address the system failures that were identified through the internal investigations saying: "I can assure you that there is much detailed work underway to address the failures identified. An 'Improving Mental Health Services Project' has been set up to provide the necessary structures to ensure full implementation of the work that is needed. It will be central to achieving safe service provision."

The Western Trust has implemented a range of actions across the four areas identified by the independent inquiry report (see notes to the editor section). An implementation officer has been appointed by the Western Trust to drive forward this important work throughout the Western area.

Ends....

Notes to the Editor:

Work being undertaken across the key areas identified in the report.

(1) Transfer of Patients and their records:

- Regional CREST Guidelines regarding the Interhospital transfer of patients and their records have now been distributed to every ward, facility and team as an interim measure until the Trust finalises its own protocol.
- A new 'Integrated Admission and Discharge Policy' is currently out for consultation. This policy is designed to ensure that the Independent Inquiry report recommendations are fully met and that a designated individual will seek patient notes if they do not arrive.
- **All** mental health policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines are being revised to include learning from this tragedy.

(2) Engaging Families:

- The Integrated Admission and Discharge Policy also specifically highlights that staff must consider a service user's dependent children, their caring relatives and wider family in the admission and discharge process.
- Trust staff are committed to service users and carer involvement. The 'Improving Mental Health Service Project' will engage user and carer

groups to ensure that service improvements have as their paramount concern the needs of service users and carers.

(3) Child Protection:

- One of the most important pieces of learning from this has been the need to make sure that staff who work in mental health fully understand and act upon child protection concerns.
- Therefore we have commenced a rolling training programme in Child Protection Awareness for all mental health staff.
- We have made sure that mental health professionals have joined the Western Area Child Protection Committee.
- Every Ward and Team now holds a copy of the Regional Policy on Child Protection and a named staff member has been identified with specific responsibility to provide guidance on child protection procedures.
- Child Protection Awareness is now a core element of induction for all new mental health staff.
- We have now established a multidisciplinary group to strengthen working between Child Care and Mental Health services.

(4) Bereaved family support:

- The Trust has established a Support Group for People Bereaved by Suicide.
- Two Suicide Prevention Coordinators have been appointed, who act as family liaison and intervention officers for those bereaved by suicide.

For further information please contact:

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