

Health Minister Edwin Poots: Speech to Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Leadership Programme participants - La Mon Hotel, 19 November 2013.

“Good evening everyone. I am glad to be able to join you this evening. May I begin by apologising for not being able to attend the launch event on 20 September. I trust that you found it inspiring and that it whetted your appetite for the work ahead.

“As most of you will know, in June 2011 I announced that a Review of the Provision of Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland would be undertaken. A key part of the Review was to bring forward recommendations for the future shape of services within the HSC in Northern Ireland. The review was conducted by an independent panel led by John Compton and, in total, brought forward 99 proposals for transformation of our health and social care services.

“It recognised that whilst there is much excellent work carried out throughout health and social care the current approach is not going to work well in the future. We know our system is already under pressure and that this is likely to increase dramatically over the next few years. To tackle these pressures we have to make choices now and these choices must be centred around what is best for our patients and service users. Perhaps one of the most critical proposals in TYC is the creation of Integrated Care Partnerships across Northern Ireland – partnerships which put joined up working and our patients at their heart.

“Of course, since 1973 we have had an integrated care system in Northern Ireland but the experience of many of our health and social care professionals - and of our patients – is that integration is often more evident in theory than in practice. There are of course pockets of excellent innovation and integration which have been taking place for a number of years – I am thinking of Primary Care Partnerships, Managed Clinical Networks, NiCaN and the current work being taken forward under the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership to name but a few. However, despite this good practice, in too many ways, silo working rather than true integration has continued to characterise our work.

“One of the 12 key outcomes for Transforming Your Care is that doctors, nurses, social workers and everyone providing care will work together in partnership to keep people healthy and prevent them from going to hospital when that is not necessary. This is more than just a worthy goal. It is an absolute necessity.

“A few weeks ago I launched the ‘Choose Well’ campaign at the Grove Wellbeing Centre in Belfast. That campaign aims to help people gain a better understanding of the choices available and allow them to get access to the right services quickly. It is essential that people across Northern Ireland do ‘choose well’ as the alternative is that our acute services will be stretched beyond capacity. But a crucial part of encouraging people to choose well is to make sure that they have confidence that better alternatives do exist.

“I believe that ICPs have a key role to play in this process by enabling frail older people and those with certain long term conditions to benefit from better joined up care and to experience active, cross-sectoral care management. I believe that as a result of this work patients will have the confidence to make ‘home as the hub of care’ a reality. And it is patient care – making that care as excellent as possible and people’s experience of receiving that care as smooth as possible – which must be at the front and centre of our work on ICPs.

“I know, of course, that there are many challenges in making ICPs a reality on the ground. It is all very well to talk about joined up care and working together but not everyone is starting from the same point. I know that sometimes relationships become frayed at the edges or the pressures of workload and dealing with immediate issues may feel like barriers which are difficult to overcome. But overcome them we must – and it is the people sitting in this room this evening who will be able to play a major role in making this happen. Your leadership and commitment will be a significant factor in whether ICPs are able to make a real and lasting difference to patients and service users across Northern Ireland.

“I have been keeping in touch with ICPs’ progress on a regular basis. It is good to know that one of the key elements which you have been working hard to achieve is the full involvement of both the voluntary and community sector and service users. I believe that this is critical – it is so important that ICPs are truly cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary and also that they place the individual patient or service user in the centre of all of their planning and work. I know ensuring engagement is fully comprehensive is testing but I applaud your efforts to ensure that this is the case and I hope that, as ICPs gain momentum, this joined up collaborative approach will be a core value for their work going forward.

“Of course, whilst talking together, sharing ideas, developing best practice and building positive relationships is excellent and something which I whole heartedly encourage, we are all aware of the need to translate talk into action on the ground. This is where the implementation of care pathways will be so vital. Only you and your colleagues will have an in-depth knowledge of the particular local circumstances affecting your service users and patients.

“It is essential that ICPs take the opportunity to put this knowledge to use by identifying potential bottlenecks in the system and identifying opportunities to deploy resources more effectively – particularly in the critical upstream elements of the care pathway in preventative work, screening and early intervention that prevent unnecessary escalation and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions. I trust that by channeling your communal knowledge across disciplines and sectors that you will be able to make patients’ journeys smoother and more effective.

“Likewise, the work which you will be doing on risk stratification will, I believe, be vital in targeting your efforts for maximum positive results for your patients. We all know of people with long term conditions who could benefit from receiving appropriate interventions to stop their health deteriorating. Many of you will already be involved in this work in your daily jobs. ICPs present a real opportunity to maximize the effectiveness of this approach, ensuring that those who are identified as being ‘at risk’ are able to access the most appropriate services in a timely way.

“A key concept of ‘Transforming Your Care’ is that people are able to receive the right care, at the right time and from the right people and I believe that ICPs can go a long way to ensuring this is possible in for those with diabetes, stroke and respiratory conditions and for our frail older people.

“But rather than just hearing from me this evening, I hope to also be able to hear from each of you and to learn about how you are experiencing these initial stages of ICP implementation. I understand that you have already had a number of meetings of the ICP partnership committees and that the ICP Business and Clinical and Support Teams have been hard at work on the ground advocating for ICPs and getting this vital project off the ground.

“I would very much welcome your insights into this initial process and to hear how ICPs are taking shape within your local areas. I am keen to hear which methods you are finding particularly effective in getting ICPs up and running – and equally to learn from each other about how to overcome any potential barriers which you may be experiencing.

“I am committed to ICPs as an essential aspect of our transformation process and as a key part of making sure that we have services which are fit for the future and which ensure that our service users are treated in the right place, at the right time and by the right people. At the most basic level it makes sense that enhanced collaborative working and supporting patients to manage their long term conditions more effectively will have a positive impact across all of our health and social care system. I hope that you will use this opportunity this evening to articulate some of the early successes you have identified and also those areas where additional work will be required to enable ICPs to work as effectively as possible in promoting enhanced patient care.

“Each of you in this room has a real opportunity to make a difference to patients on the ground by your leadership and commitment to making ICPs work. I hope that our discussion this evening will be a great opportunity to listen to each other, to be inspired and to make change a reality.”

ENDS