

Proposed closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Consultation Document

Date of issue: 24 October 2022

Action required: Responses by 24 January 2023

Introduction

1. The Department of Health is considering the future role of Muckamore Abbey Hospital, and is proposing its closure as a regional specialist Learning Disability hospital. We would welcome your views on this proposal.

Background

2. Muckamore Abbey Hospital (MAH) is located just outside Antrim town and is managed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) to provide regional in-patient services for the learning disabled population of three Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts, the Belfast, South-Eastern and Northern Trusts. The Hospital provides inpatient, assessment and treatment facilities for people with severe learning disabilities and mental health needs, forensic needs or challenging behaviour.
3. There are presently six wards in the hospital, Ardmore for female patients, Cranfield 1 and 2 for male patients, Sixmile Assessment and Sixmile Treatment wards which are mainly forensic patients, and Erne ward for male and female patients with complex needs.
4. Historically MAH also provided assessment and treatment services for some Southern and Western HSC Trust patients with forensic needs, although this has significantly reduced since the major resettlement of long stay patients over the past number of years. Generally Southern and Western Trust patients are now admitted to Dorsy Ward at Bluestone Unit, Craigavon Area Hospital, and Lakeview Ward at Gransha Hospital respectively.
5. MAH has a lengthy history, opening in 1949, however, services provided by the hospital have undergone significant changes in focus over the years, reflecting evolving policy imperatives for people with a learning disability since its establishment. Previous services provided at the hospital included

provision of training, socialisation, occupation and recreation, supervised employment and long-term accommodation.

6. Since 1992 the overarching policy direction has been the resettlement of long-stay residential patients with learning disability from facilities such as MAH to community living facilities. In 1995, a decision was taken by the then Department of Health and Social Services to resettle all long-stay patients from the three learning disability hospitals in Northern Ireland to community accommodation.
7. The Bamford Review was initiated in 2002, and a key message emerging from the review was an emphasis on a shift from hospital to community – based services. *'Equal Lives'*, which was published in 2005, was the second report from the Bamford Review and set out the Review's vision for services for people with a learning disability. This included a target that all people with a learning disability living in a hospital should be resettled in the community by June 2011.
8. *Transforming Your Care* (2011) restated the commitment to closing long-stay institutions and completing the resettlement programme by 2015.
9. The long standing policy direction is therefore clear that no-one should be required to live in long-stay institutions, and people with learning disabilities should be adequately supported to live independently within a community setting, and provided with opportunities and support to enable them to maximise their potential to fully engage in their communities and wider society.

Service failures

10. This very clear policy imperative to move accommodation provision away from long stay institutions has been reinforced by a number of high-profile and well-documented service failures in institutional residential settings over recent years.
11. Nationally, these have included Winterbourne View Hospital near Bristol in 2011, which uncovered criminal abuse by staff of patients and resulted in the closure of Winterbourne and a police investigation which led to 11 criminal convictions.
12. More recently, similar issues were again identified in 2019 at Whorlton Hall, a high dependency facility for adults with learning disabilities and complex needs in Co. Durham.
13. Here in Northern Ireland as well, there have been allegations of abuse at residential facilities for people with learning disabilities. In addition to the recent allegations of abuse at MAH which are the subject of a criminal investigation and are also being considered by the MAH Public Inquiry, allegations of abuse also emerged in 2012 at Ralph's Close, a purpose-built residential care home for 16 adults with severe learning and/or challenging behaviour. A police investigation into these allegations concluded there was no evidence of wilful neglect.
14. Allegations of abuse of patients have also previously been made against staff at MAH on a number of occasions, which resulted in staff suspensions, and in one case prosecution. In addition, the PSNI carried out an investigation in 2007 into allegations of historic inappropriate behaviour between patients at MAH in the 1960s – 1980s, though no prosecutions arose from these allegations.

Proposal to close MAH

15. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the model of care provided at MAH would no longer appear to be the most appropriate or effective way to meet the needs of patients today. The hospital was opened at a time when attitudes to disability, particularly learning disability, were very different to what they are now. While efforts have been made over the years to adapt the services provided at the hospital, these have been somewhat hampered by its status as a hospital.

16. 'A Way to Go', the report of the Level 3 Serious Adverse Incident investigation into MAH which was published in 2018 noted, *'It (MAH) is based on an acute-care model that does not work for people with life-long support needs.'* The hospital's geographical location has also contributed to the perception of a place apart, where people were 'put away' and forgotten about.

17. We believe signalling a clear intention to close the hospital would serve to support and accelerate the direction of travel to deliver on the long standing policy aim set out above – the resettlement of long stay patients into appropriate community facilities and support.

18. It is important to be clear that any decision to close the hospital will involve a defined timescale for closure, and will be accompanied by a plan, co-produced with current hospital patients and their families, which will clearly set out how the services currently provided on the MAH site will be delivered in agreed alternative settings. Any closure will not take full effect until all the current patients have been successfully resettled to agreed alternative accommodation placements.

19. As a first step to expediting the resettlement of patients who are currently in the hospital, a Regional Resettlement Oversight Board has been established and this is being led by Dr Patricia Donnelly. The aim of the Oversight Board is to bring the learning disability resettlement programme to a successful conclusion for individuals and their families. The Oversight Board is developing specific resettlement plans for each remaining patient in MAH and Trusts are engaging with families and carers as these plans are progressed.
20. Equally, it is important to state that any decision to close the hospital will not affect either of the investigative processes currently underway into events at MAH, and both the criminal investigation and the MAH Public Inquiry will continue according to their planned schedules.
21. We recognise that any decision to close MAH may be distressing for current and prospective patients at the hospital, and for their families and carers. The HSC system as a whole is working to develop a service that will respond effectively to the continuing need for assessment and treatment through small in-patient units, and modelling a safe community based service that extends home treatment, peripatetic and crisis response. This work will be done in partnership with service users and their carers, as well as local communities. The new Service Model for Learning Disability services will be key to successful delivery of this, and work is continuing to finalise this.

Impact assessments

22. A number of impact assessment screenings have been completed, and the outcome of these is available in **Annex A** to this document. The full screening documents are also available as part of the suite of consultation documents.

How to Respond

23. We are seeking your views on the proposed closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital as a regional specialist learning disability hospital, and invite written responses by no later than **24 January 2023**.
24. You can respond online by accessing the consultation documents on the Northern Ireland Government Citizen Space website and completing the online survey there using the link below:
<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/doh-1/public-consultation-on-proposed-closure-of-mah>
25. We would prefer responses using Citizen Space, however, if you wish to send an email or hard copy of your response please send it to:
Department of Health
Muckamore Abbey Review Team
Room D2:17
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ
MAHpublicconsultation@health-ni.gov.uk
26. The full set of consultation questions are provided in **Annex B** to this consultation document.
27. When you reply, it would be very useful if you could confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation. If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please include:
- your name;
 - your position (if applicable);

- the name of your organisation;
- an address (including postcode); and
- an e-mail address.

28. If you have any queries, please contact the Department using the email address below to make your request:

MAHpublicconsultation@health-ni.gov.uk

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

29. We will publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents, but will include the names of organisations responding.

30. For further information on how we will process data and your rights, see the Future of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Consultation Privacy Notice at Annex C.

What Happens Next

31. Following the close of the consultation on **24 January 2023**, all responses and feedback will be collated for review by the Department of Health, and a consultation report will be produced.

Annex A: Impact Screening Outcomes

Full impact assessment screening documents are available as part of the full suite of consultation documents, and can be accessed via the following link:

[Public consultation on future of Muckamore Abbey Hospital | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

A summary of the outcome of each is provided in the table below:

Impact Assessment Screening	Outcome
Equality/Human Rights	Screened out
Regulatory	Screened out
Rural	Screened out

Annex B: Consultation Questions

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital?

Question 2: Do you agree that the proposed closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital is consistent with the overall policy aim of improving services for people with a Learning Disability in Northern Ireland?

Question 3: Do you have any further comments you would like to add?



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Future of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Privacy Notice

Data Controller Name:	Department of Health
Address:	Muckamore Abbey Review Team Room D2.17 Castle Buildings Stormont BELFAST BT4 3SL
Telephone:	028 9052 0500
Email:	MAHpublicconsultation@health-ni.gov.uk
Data Protection Officer Name:	Department of Health Data Protection Officer
Telephone:	028 9052 2353
Email:	DPO@health-ni.gov.uk

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how we may use personal data is a key element of the [Data Protection Act \(DPA\)](#) and the [EU General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#). The Department of Health (DoH) is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy.

Purpose for processing

The Department of Health and the Department of Justice have developed a public consultation on the closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital. We are encouraging organisations and institutions to respond but also people with lived experience and their families. We will process personal data provided in response to consultations for the purpose of informing the strategy. We will publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents, but will include the names of organisations responding.

Lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity as a Government Department.

We will only process any special category personal data you provide, which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious belief, health or sexual life/orientation when it is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest under Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR, in the exercise of the function of the department, and to monitor equality.

How will your information be used and shared

We process the information internally for the above stated purpose. We don't intend to share your personal data with any third party. Any specific requests from a third party for us to share your personal data with them will be dealt with in accordance the provisions of the data protection laws.

How long will we keep your information

We will retain consultation response information until our work on the subject matter of the consultation is complete, and in line with the Department's approved Retention and Disposal Schedule [Good Management, Good Records](#) (GMGR).

What are your rights?

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being [processed, and access to your personal data](#)
- You are entitled to have personal data [rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete](#)
- You have a right to have personal data [erased and to prevent processing](#), in specific circumstances
- You have the right [to 'block' or suppress processing](#) of personal data, in specific circumstances
- You have the right to [data portability](#), in specific circumstances
- **You have the right to [object to the processing](#)**, in specific circumstances
- **You have rights in relation to [automated decision making and profiling](#).**

How to complain if you are not happy with how we process your personal information

If you wish to request access, object or raise a complaint about how we have handled your data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
casework@ico.org.uk