

## **Speaking at the launch of 'Living with Long Term Conditions Health Minister Edwin Poots MLA said:**

I wish to thank you Heather for your welcome this morning. My thanks also to the Long Term Conditions Alliance for hosting and co-ordinating this event and to the MS Society for having us here today.

I am delighted to be able today to launch my Department's Policy Framework for adults living with long term conditions. This Policy Framework has been designed to be relevant across a wide range of long term conditions and for all care settings. It aims to help commissioners and providers in the statutory, independent, voluntary and community sectors plan and deliver more effective services to secure better outcomes for people with long term conditions and their carers.

The framework seeks to ensure that at a time of increasing pressures on our health and social care system, those resources that are in place are deployed as effectively and efficiently as possible to support good practice in long term condition management and provide good value for money. The policy framework will help drive the modernisation of services for adults living with long term conditions and their carers. It sets out clear principles and good practice for those who are planning and delivering those services.

The Framework focuses on 6 key development areas for improving services and supporting people living with long term conditions and their carers.

It recognises for example, the importance of working in partnership with people living with long term conditions and the unique experience and insight people can bring to the development of services that affect them.

It also recognises the need to ensure that people with long term conditions and their carers have the information and skills they need to help them manage their own conditions, whilst also being assured that where additional support may be needed, this is available.

I was delighted to hear that there has been positive feedback about the approach to the development of this policy framework. I wish to acknowledge all the hard work that has gone into this process. In particular, the role played by the Steering Group and members of the various sub groups.

I also wish to put on record the input that both the Long Term Conditions Alliance and the Patient and Client Council have made. The final document is all the better for your insight, passion and expertise and for the comments and feedback received during the public consultation.

We know that the number of people in Northern Ireland living with one or more long term condition will continue to increase. One of the main reasons for this is the changing demographics of our society. People are living longer, and as they get older they are more likely to develop one or more long term condition.

Of course, not everyone with a long term condition is an older person; some adults live with long term conditions from birth or childhood whilst others will acquire such a condition as adults. Unfortunately lifestyle factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, alcohol consumption or smoking can also contribute to the development of long term or chronic conditions.

The increasing prevalence of long term conditions brings with it challenges and pressures on our health and social care services. In the face of such challenges we cannot afford to stand still. Rather we need to look to opportunities presented by new models of care and new technologies that will support people to manage their own conditions.

Over recent years the HSC in Northern Ireland has developed and delivered many quality services for people with long term conditions both at a regional and local level.

Important too however, has been the contribution made by the voluntary and community sectors in developing programmes and initiatives to support people living with long term conditions.

Many of you in this room today will be involved in such initiatives and programmes; supporting people through patient education, peer support, the provision of information and other practical assistance such as transport or other services and therapies.

I am keen to build on the work that the voluntary and community sectors already have in place, for example in areas such as patient education, and to utilise the expertise both of people who live with long term conditions and the organisations which support them in order to develop better services for patient and clients.

I believe this policy framework provides an important opportunity to work together across care sectors and organisational boundaries to improve services.

As many of you will be aware, I have a clear vision for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. It is to drive up the quality of care for clients and patients, improve outcomes and enhance the patient experience. I want to see patients treated in the right place, at the right time and by the right people.

The recent review of the HSC set out in the “Transforming Your Care” Report, captures this vision and includes long term conditions as one of the key areas for health and social care.

That Report makes a number of proposals which will support a new model of care for people with long term conditions. Importantly these proposals are mirrored within the policy framework including the need for partnership working, personal care planning, self management and the use of technology to support people with long term conditions.

We are already making good progress. We have recently for example introduced Remote Telemonitoring which, when it has been rolled out in full, will allow 20,000 people to be monitored from home removing the need for unnecessary visits to health centres or hospitals.

In addition the Assembly’s Programme for Government (2011-2015) includes a commitment for improving access to patient education to support self management.

Ultimately I want to see people with long term conditions, and their carers more confident and equipped with the information and skills they need to self manage their conditions

I know that today we are going to hear more about the benefits of self management and also about the experience of living with a long term condition. I look forward to hearing those presentations.

After the launch today, the next step of course will be to take forward the implementation of the actions and good practice set out in the policy framework.

I am keen to ensure that the working relationships and co-operation that were so positive in the development of the framework will continue through to implementation. A Regional Implementation Steering Group will be set up shortly with a remit to develop an action plan to drive the modernisation and reform forward. The Long Term Conditions Alliance will have an active role to play in this.

As I have already said, we face many challenges in the provision of health and social care. Yet we also have many opportunities, through the work being taken forward on Transforming Your Care and in areas such as the development of telehealth.

I know this Long Term Conditions Policy Framework will be a driver for change and I look forward to seeing this happen.

Thank you.