



Public Health Agency

Office of the Chief Executive
Public Health Agency
4th Floor South
12-22 Linenhall Street
BELFAST
BT2 8BS

Via e-mail

Mr Martin Dillon
Chief Executive
Belfast HSC Trust
Belfast City Hospital
51 Lisburn Road
BELFAST
BT9 7AB

Tel: [REDACTED]

Website: www.publichealth.hscni.net

14 December 2018

Dear Martin

RRCANI and BHSCT: PHA Contract

I am writing to you in respect of the recent issues between RRCANI and the Trust.

As you may be aware, RRCANI protested outside the PHA on 16 November 2018 and subsequently sought a meeting with PHA officials to discuss their concerns surrounding PHA commissioned service delivered by Belfast Trust. Subsequently, two senior PHA staff met with RRCANI board members and executive staff on 27 November 2018.

In advance of meeting with RRCANI, PHA officers met with the Trust Health Improvement Director, Community Development Manager and contract lead, so as to ensure we were both fully briefed and able to explore potential ways forward as appropriate. The PHA appreciates fully the challenges that Belfast Trust and particularly the service staff involved, have experienced during this process.

At the meeting between RRCANI and PHA officials, the community organisation [REDACTED]

Given that these allegations relate to matters to do with service delivery and Trust staff actions, the PHA regard this as a matter for the Trust to address in the first instance. Given their seriousness I consider it

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important that you are aware of them and consider what further action may be appropriate whether or not a formal complaint is made. I can confirm PHA officers advised RRCANI representatives of the formal complaints process operated by the Trust and requested them to make available through this process any information which might be relevant to substantiating their allegations.

I have attached, for your information, a copy of the PHA officers' note from the meeting.

In particular, I would refer you to section 2.2, but the issues raised by RRCANI were, inter alia, around concerns about what RRCANI described as an 'orchestrated campaign' by both Belfast Trust and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Further examples of the 'orchestrated campaign' cited included:

- [REDACTED]
- concerns that Belfast Trust had contacted the Modern Slavery and Economic Fraud Unit regarding allegations that RRCANI was involved in human trafficking; and

○ [REDACTED]

It was the view of RRCANI at the meeting with PHA staff that the relationship at this point with the Trust has broken down completely, [REDACTED] and they claim they are no longer willing to encourage Roma families to use the service that is currently located at Mornington Enterprise Centre. I should also say that PHA staff took the opportunity to remind RRCANI of the policy of "zero

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tolerance" of intimidation against healthcare staff / within services which will be maintained at all times.

Beyond this, the PHA would welcome the Trust's proposals for how best to meet the service needs of Roma families in the short term within the context of developing a broader multi-cultural service. The Trust's proposals should take account of [REDACTED] and the engagement of current and potential service users.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course and if you would wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive

cc:

[REDACTED]

Notes of Meeting with Romanian Roma Community Association Northern Ireland (RRCANI)

- **Date:** Tuesday 27th November 2018
- **Venue:** RRCANI Premises, 133 University Street, Belfast
- **Attending:** [REDACTED] (PHA) with [REDACTED] attending as Romanian Translator
- **RRCANI:** [REDACTED] Chairperson, [REDACTED] Roma Project Worker, [REDACTED] Locus Consulting, 3 Board Members and [REDACTED].

1.0 Context:

The Request for a meeting with PHA to discuss concerns on Belfast Trust Roma support Service. PHA Commission Belfast Trust to provide early years and family support for Roma families, primarily focussed on South Belfast based families.

A protest and petition had been organised on Friday 16th November outside PHA Headquarters in Linenhall Street based on concerns by RRCANI.

The meeting began with a clarification that the RRCANI were meeting with PHA to outline and explain their concerns and expectation was the PHA attendees would listen and respond to those concerns at a later stage. In clarification RRCANI indicated they intended to have a further protest outside PHA in LHS on Friday 7th December unless they received a response that would address their petition requests, namely;

1. A suspension of PHA funding to Belfast Trust for the Service
2. That PHA would address their concerns and work with them to develop a new Service.

2.0 Issues/Concerns

2.1 BHSCT service redeployment:

- Belfast Trust had moved the [REDACTED] under the PHA commissioned service from RRCANI in May 2018 to an alternative venue based on concerns allegedly raised by Roma families to [REDACTED] about financial charges allegedly being applied to families for advice services, allegations on fraudulent claims and the view of the Trust of the need to [REDACTED] while these allegations were being investigated.
- The concerns of RRCANI were about the process and communication with their Board and staff by Belfast Trust about the [REDACTED] and relocation of service. In their view they were uninformed about the concerns being raised or [REDACTED] and there was no substance to any rationale for why the service had been moved.
- RRCANI state that no Roma families are using the service and that alternatively RRCANI are offering an after schools drop in at their own premises by Volunteers and that they have completed the required Child Protection vetting and training. In their view PHA should withdraw funding immediately from Belfast Trust and reinvest with an alternative provision.

2.2 RRCANI Claims of orchestrated campaign

- RRCANI raised concerns about what they described as an "orchestrated campaign" by Belfast Trust and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] They listed The Executive Office; Belfast City Council, Big Lottery, Dreamscheme, Romanian London Embassy and indicated that as a result of the contact by BHSCT this had led to verification visits (Big Lottery), unsuccessful applications for Funding (TEO Ethnic Minority Fund), late/suspended payments (Belfast City Council), suspended services (Dreamscheme Play Scheme) and the relocation of a passport service clinic, now held at Belfast Boat Club, instead of RRCANI (Romanian Embassy).

- They also raised a concern about BHSCT contacting the Modern Slavery and Economic Fraud Unit on allegations that RRCANI were involved in human trafficking.
- RRCANI indicated at the meeting that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- In their view the relationship between RRCANI and Belfast Trust has broken down completely and they are not willing to encourage Roma families to use the Service currently located at Mornington Enterprise Centre.

2.3 Current states of investigations / campaigns

- RRCANI stated that PSNI had confirmed to them that no evidence had been found on any of the allegations investigated and they had received confirmation from PSNI that the investigation is now concluded. Similarly RRCANI had received assurances from NI Social Security Agency that they are not currently carrying out any investigation as they have no evidence of any crime having been committed.

- [REDACTED]
- In the absence of evidence or statements from families or others to the PSNI or Social Security Agency RRCANI maintain that the active contact by Belfast Trust [REDACTED] to other statutory organisations was 'racist', 'based on prejudice', 'discriminatory' and damaging to the reputation and credibility of RRCANI. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

3.0 Discussion

Having actively listened to the series of concerns and issues there was a short period of discussion during which the following points were made:

- The situation is concerning and we need to emphasise that a policy of zero tolerance of intimidation against healthcare staff / within services has to be maintained at all times. PHA also indicated that Belfast Trust or any provider commissioned by PHA would be expected to raise and act on concerns for clients.
- [REDACTED] Having previously worked closely together it is perceived by RRCANI that BHSCT have no interest in working with them again.
- RRCANI were advised that the PHA's interest has and will continue to be on the need and delivery of the service that they commission through BHSCT. RRCANI confirmed that they believe the service is needed but they don't expect it to be used under the current arrangements. They were reminded that they have the option of using the BHSCT Complaints process to make a formal complaint to the Trust about the information that they had shared in the meeting with PHA and that the Trust would be obliged to investigate the issues accordingly.



Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

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Ms Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive
Public Health Agency
4th Floor South
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Belfast
BT2 8BS

6th February 2019

Dear Valerie,

Thank you for your letter of 14th December 2018.

The Trust, as you may be aware, has been dealing with a number of issues in relation to services delivered to the Roma community. A number of these issues have been of concern as they directly impacted on our staff. I have outlined further details below.

The Trust has a long history of working with the Roma community in Belfast and began working with RRCANI in 2011 and we have worked closely with the PHA to develop a Roma focused early years' service.

The Trust has [REDACTED] staff, who until May 2018 were working in the office of RRCANI on University Street. As a result of the issues of concern including allegations of charging for advice services the Trust along with its partner organisation, Surestart, were left with no option but to temporary relocate the Early Years' service from the RRCANI building. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Trust, as a public sector organisation with commitment to reducing inequality and protecting vulnerable people, has a duty to take seriously any allegations made to us, so we temporarily relocated the service, as we liaised with RRCANI to address the issues raised and the service continues to be delivered.

Senior members of Trust staff subsequently met with RRCANI on a number of occasions to attempt to seek a way forward. However, in late September we were disappointed to learn that RRCANI no longer wished to engage with the Trust.

In relation to the points raised in your letter, we are aware of all the unsubstantiated allegations being made by RRCANI against the Trust and [REDACTED] and over the last 8 months have dealt with a range of media, FOI and other queries in relation to this. The Trust position is that these allegations by RRCANI are completely unfounded. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In relation to complaints, the Trust have previously forwarded RRCANI the Trust complaints policy and leaflet on 28th June 2018, but to date, no formal complaint has been received.

Currently an early years' service, which is accessible to the Roma community continues to be delivered from Mornington Community Centre and the Trust are currently working with a range of statutory partners including The Executive Office, Belfast City Council, Department for Communities and PSNI, to develop an interagency advice clinic for the Roma community. The first two clinics were delivered on the 18th and 22nd January and were well attended. This will allow us the opportunity to continue to engage with the Roma community.

Throughout this process, Trust staff have been regularly liaising with Senior PHA staff to keep them updated and to discuss services models moving forward.

This has been a difficult time for all concerned, and the Trusts main aim has been, and will continue be, to support the staff affected by this situation and to continue to deliver services to the Roma community.

If you or your staff wish to discuss this, further please do not hesitate to contact me or Jennifer Thompson, Interim Director of Performance Planning and Informatics.

Yours sincerely,

MARTIN DILLON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE