

# Northern Ireland Privacy Advisory Committee (PAC)

The following is an update on the work of PAC over the past eighteen months.

## **1 Advice and Guidance to inform service users and staff**

A major task for PAC has been the review of the Code of Practice on Protecting the Confidentiality of Service User Information (Code of Practice). This included:

- consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Patient Client Council, professional regulatory bodies and the Information Commissioner's Office;
- discussion with Personal Data Guardians;
- consideration of all feedback received on the present Code of Practice.

The Service User leaflet has also been reviewed.

## **2 Procedures to improve working practices**

Personal Data Guardians - PAC has continued its yearly meeting with Personal Data Guardians and Executive Directors of Social Work, or their representatives, to share and discuss current issues relating to Service User Confidentiality.

PAC is pleased to note the issuing by the Department of *DHSSPS & HSC Protocol for Sharing Service User Information for Secondary Purposes*. The protocol has been significantly informed by the Code of Practice and should enhance working practices in relation to the uses and disclosure of Service User information for secondary uses.

The Health and Care number - PAC continues to encourage the use of the Health and Care number which should facilitate arrangements for pseudonymisation.

## **3 Training to increase awareness and understanding on confidentiality**

A third training day for Personal Data Guardians has been provided. Given current assessed need a further training day is being planned for early 2012. This will include top-up training.

## **4 Information and communication technology improvements regarding access and security of personal information**

PAC has maintained regular contact with the Board's ICT Unit to promote privacy enhancing technologies, the incorporation of methods to record consent and the use of anonymised databases for secondary uses.

PAC has had further discussions with Board staff on the development of Safe Havens and Honest Broker provisions to help address the need for specific Secondary uses of HSC information.

## **5 Consideration of legislative changes .**

PAC remains persuaded on the need for new legislation to enable the appropriate and limited use of identifiable service user information for essential health and social care purposes which are not directly related to the care of individual service users.

## **6 Advisory Role**

The Privacy Advisory Committee, in fulfilling its responsibilities as outlined in the Recommendations provided by the Minister, has continued to advise on existing and new uses of personal information and to generally advise on confidentiality issues in HPSS.

The Chairman has met with the BMA (NI) IT committee on informational privacy standards and confidentiality. He has also met with PSNI representatives on the development of information sharing arrangements in relation to victims of domestic violence.

PAC has provided advice on projects approved by the National Information Governance Board (NIGB) for England and Wales where access to HSC (NI) data or service users is being sought – Royal College of Physicians National Review of Asthma Deaths, Royal College of Anaesthetists National Audit Project.

PAC has also provided advice:

- on draft information sharing arrangements in relation to children;
- on draft information sharing arrangements in relation to victims of domestic violence;
- to the NI Cancer Registry;
- to NI Breast Screening Service.

**Roy McClelland**  
**Chairman, Privacy Advisory Committee**  
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