

LF10154/12

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From: P Martin
ACI

Date: 16 December 1998

PS/Minister

OMAGH TRAUMA CENTRE

Room 2
Mr Turner
To note & file (BP2836/98)
13.1.99
Mr Popplestone
23.12
22/12

Summary

Issue: Minister is due to make a courtesy visit to the Trauma Centre in Omagh on Monday next 21 December.

Recommendation: Minister is asked to note the content of this briefing minute.

Introduction

The Bridge Centre

1. Six weeks ago the Trauma Centre in Omagh moved from its accommodation in High Street to more suitable accommodation at 5a Holmview Avenue, Campsie. This was considered appropriate given that the new accommodation is wheelchair accessible and is considered more accessible to many individuals in Omagh who remain traumatised and feel unable to return to the town centre.
2. The names and range of staff working from the Trauma Centre are attached at Tab A. The staff in the Centre are working at present with 300 people of whom almost 100 are children ranging in age from 2 years to 18 years.
3. A range of voluntary organisations are also located in these new premises including:

Victims Support (Northern Ireland);

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WAVE;

Tara Centre;

CRUSE (Counselling);

Samaritans;

Red Cross;

St Vincent de Paul;

These organisations are currently providing a range of services, including, befriending and counselling to 200 people from the Omagh area.

4. The Trauma Centre currently provides 4 main functions as follows:

(i) **Direct Services including:**

- individual and group therapies - art and play therapy for very young children;
- occupational therapy directly to those who have been physically disabled;
- a psychiatry service which is provided by 2 part-time consultant psychiatrists, 1 working specifically with children and the other with adults;
- a psychology service currently provided by 2 part-time psychologists;
- a psychiatric nursing service is provided by 2 community psychiatric nurses;

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- cognitive behavioural therapy is provided by 1 nurse and 1 “suicide awareness” nurse is located at the Centre on 1 day each week;

- 4 social workers continue to provide an ongoing support service to bereaved families. Each bereaved family still retains access to an identified social worker for support and ongoing counselling. One of the social workers currently provides bereavement counselling.

All of the staff working at the Trauma Centre are currently supported administratively by 2 full time secretaries.

- (ii) **Co-ordination in respect of offers of help.** At present a significant number of offers of help continue to be co-ordinated by the Trauma Centre staff. This includes offers of holidays and other gifts. I understand that on Tuesday 14 December, 82 small boxes of toys were received by the Trauma Centre from Liverpool for distribution to the Children of Omagh.

- (iii) **Community development support.** There is considerable work being undertaken with local community groups throughout Omagh, assisting them to come to terms with the effects of this tragedy.

- (iv) **Media Liaison.** There continues to be considerable media interest in Omagh. This has been more noticeable in recent weeks as Christmas approaches. For the most part, the staff in the Centre are satisfied that the media are co-operating well and all requests for interviews with individuals affected by the trauma are now directed to and managed by the Trauma Centre staff.

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5. The Trauma Centre is currently operating 5 days per week including evenings to accommodate school children and those in employment. It is also open each Saturday morning to provide a service to those unable to avail of it from Monday to Friday. It is perhaps worth pointing out that 3-4 weeks ago there was a noticeable lull in the number of referrals being received by the Trauma Centre. However, in the last 2 weeks there has been an increase in the number of referrals from professionals including GPs and there has also been an increase in the number of people turning up at the Centre seeking help. The Centre staff are of the view that this is very much related to the extra pressures and stresses of the Christmas period.

6. The Minister will be met by Michael Duffy, a senior social worker in the Trust who is the trauma team co-ordinator and David Bolton, Director of Social Work in the Sperrin Lakeland Trust who will introduce members of the trauma team, who are present, to him. I know that both are looking forward to his visit and that an opportunity will be provided for Minister to talk to a few members of the staff about the ongoing work of the Centre.

7. I understand that radio and television company RDF will be in Omagh on Monday next. This company, based in London have been commissioned by ITV to undertake a longitudinal study of coping with the aftermath of this traumatic event. I understand with Minister's permission that they may like to take a number of shots of him visiting the Centre and meeting staff. Perhaps you could advise me if Minister would be happy to accommodate this request.



PAUL MARTIN

Assistant Chief Inspector

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