

## **Northlands: Presentation to Derry City and Strabane District Council, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

### **Financial Situation**

As part of the new Northern Ireland Framework for Alcohol and Drugs, Northlands was asked by the Department of Health to continue to provide residential treatment services for the Western side of the province (i.e. the entire Western Trust and a large part of the Northern Trust).

Yet Northlands is currently faced with a situation whereby, as a result of its DHSSPS core funding grant (£168,000 annually) being phased out, it may well be forced to close its doors in one year's time.

Not to put too fine a point on it, this is a real emergency and we are running out of time. Our accountants have recently completed their annual audit and are informing us that for the financial year April 2016 – March 2017 Northlands will manage to stay in the black. However, after that date, come the beginning of April 2017, unless replacement funding is found, Northlands will immediately run into the red - at which stage our accountants will have no choice but to state that Northlands is no longer financially viable.

None of this reflects well on the new Framework for Alcohol and Drugs. It suggests that the financial dimensions of the Framework were not clearly thought through so as to ensure that all its elements (including residential provision for the Western side of the province) could be delivered as promised and properly paid for.

There are only two residential treatment facilities in Northern Ireland. If Northlands was forced to close, this would mean the whole of Northern Ireland would have to be served by the one remaining residential facility (Carlisle House in Belfast) and the Western side of the province would be left with no residential treatment provision whatsoever.

### **Referral Pathways**

Northlands has also become increasingly concerned that some of the changes being proposed as part of the new Framework for Alcohol and Drugs will have a negative impact on people's ability to access help quickly and easily. We are not alone in this. Other voluntary/community organizations working in the addictions field across Northern Ireland share our concerns.

So as to ensure that people in the communities they serve can access help as quickly and easily as possible, the voluntary and community sector has worked long and hard to establish and maintain services on an open door basis. But what we now seem to be witnessing is an undoing of this good work as the statutory sector seeks to impose on

existing voluntary and community sector organizations referral pathways which are making the process of accessing help demonstrably longer and more complicated.