

REVIEW REPORT

- following consultation -

ON THE CURRENT AND FUTURE REQUIREMENTS FOR FACILITIES
TO SUPPORT TRAINING, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FUNCTIONS
at Sligo General Hospital



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Prepared for Sligo General Hospital by



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Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Table of Contents

Preface	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Project rationale A: Training and Education	4
2.1 Medical (Hospital)	4
2.2 General Practice	6
2.3 Dentistry	7
2.4 Nursing	7
2.5 Associated Health Professionals	9
2.6 Management	10
2.7 Library and Information Services	11
2.8 Information Technology	12
2.9 Other Hospital Groups	13
2.10 Community Education Activities	14
2.11 Summary of the Role of the facility for training & education	15
3. Project rationale B: Research	16
3.1 Background	16
3.2 Supporting research activities	17
3.3 Summary of the Role of the facility for research	21
4. Current facilities	22
4.1 Research & Education Centre	22
4.2 Training/Education/Research facilities at SGH	23
5. Consistency with National Strategies	24
5.1 National Development Plan	24
5.2 Technology Foresight	25
5.3 National Strategy for Research and Innovation for Health	25
6. Project Description	27
6.1 Groups facilitated by a new facility	27
6.2 Location	28
6.3 Space requirements	28
7. Conclusion	30
Abbreviations	31
Appendix 1: Users of the Research & Education Centre 1999/2000	32
Appendix 2: Contributors to the consultation process	34
Appendix 3: Code of practice for commissioning Research at SGH	35
References	38

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Preface

In July 2000, Sligo General Hospital requested that the Research & Education Foundation develop the work of earlier reports on training and research to provide a basis for the planning of the capital development of the hospital that is required under the National Development Plan. The brief involved an investigation into the current and prospective need for facilities to support training, education and research for all disciplines within the hospital.

This document is the 3rd draft of the report and it is the result of an iterative consultation process with interested parties and disciplines to identify the requirements for facilities. All Heads of Department/Specialty Coordinators have had the opportunity to voice the needs of their department, staff and colleagues. Staff with a particular training/education/research remit has also been consulted for advice (Appendix 2). In order to learn from other institutions, visits were paid to The Education & Research Centre, St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin and to the Clinical Science Institute, NUI Galway in July 2000.

The report outlines the justification for a large facility to bring training and research opportunities in Sligo to the forefront of the national arena for hospitals of its type. The detailed requirements will be assessed through a collaborative consultation process between the interested parties, management and the assigned architects.

Mette Jensen Kavanagh carried out this study in the autumn of 2000 with the advice of members of the Foundation involved in Research and Education.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

1. Introduction

Training, education and research are areas in substantial change at Sligo General Hospital. Management at both SGH and the health board is addressing the development of structures to support these areas. It is therefore timely that the infrastructural needs of such developments are identified. This paper outlines the proposal and the justification for a capital development at SGH as part of the National Development Plan for the hospital. The facility is seen as subsuming present provisions.

One of the overall objectives of the *National Development Plan¹ (NDP)* is to balance out the geographical differences between the BMW region and the Southern and Eastern region of Ireland. This is reflected in the health care policy of the NDP. Measures outlined in the plan should ensure that patients from the North West will not have to travel long distances for essential and specialised health care. This notion should apply to health care staff in the North Western region also. They in turn should have the opportunity to receive training and carry out research in close proximity to their working environment.

Provision of support for training and research can be seen as reflecting a wider health policy for an integrated balanced whole as distinct from one limited to direct service provision only. The formal measurement of health problems on a wide scale calls for new skills in collecting, analysing and interpreting health data and in devising the right policy measures to address particular health problems². This approach also calls for an evidenced based health care service with appropriate mechanisms to implement and validate relevant research findings into clinical practice.

The initial brief for this paper and project envisaged the facilities required as one integrated physical unit servicing both training/education and research. Several requirements are common for both training and research, whereas others are specific to one activity. The project rationale argues the need for supporting new infrastructure for training/education and research separately and then considers the proposed facility as an integrated centre with service provision for both.

As the consultation process progressed the need to make dedicated physical provisions to facilitate many hospital wide clinical support activities in addition to training, education and research emerged. Hence, hospital and community functions such as Clinical Audit, Risk Management, Accreditation, Voluntary Groups etc. have similar requirements, which could be catered for in the overall design, without making the centre an answer to the so-called 'office problem'.

2. Project Rationale A: Training and Education

This section outlines the project rationale and justification relevant to training and education.

2.1 Medical (Hospital)

2.1.1 Background

Postgraduate medical training has been an integral part of the activities at Sligo General Hospital for decades. The hospital is approved as a training hospital for General Professional Training in all specialties and some specialties have obtained accreditation for Higher Specialist Training.

Traditionally the training culture of hospital medicine has been based on a model of apprenticeship rather than on a formalised training programme. In recent years there has been a move towards a more structured approach at all levels of postgraduate medical training in the UK. Ireland has moved in parallel and it is now evident that in the future, requirements for approval by the inspection bodies will be tightened. Sligo General Hospital has actively taken up the challenge of meeting these requirements and improving standards in general. Apart from raising the standard of patient care in general, the availability of structured training is likely to help overcome the current difficulty in attracting NCHDs to non-university hospitals such as SGH.

The report *Training of Hospital Doctors at Sligo General Hospital, April 2000*³ provided the Foundation, Hospital Management and the NWHB with the background to recent initiatives taken to improve training. Hence, a development project to deliver structured postgraduate medical training at the hospital is now underway and a Pilot Postgraduate Training Programme will commence in spring 2001. The framework as well as the immediate to medium-term targets have been agreed with all parties involved and funding has been secured. In order to accommodate the projected appointments and the training programmes it is necessary to expand the existing facilities available for training purposes.

2.1.2 Development of Structured Medical Training

Postgraduate Training

The plans to develop postgraduate training involve employing a Project Leader, two designated tutors (one for the surgical and one for the medical specialties) and secretarial/administrative support. Currently there is no

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

base available for such persons. Training of trainers will be a vital part of the Project in its early and subsequent phases. There are also plans to develop programmes for Continuous Medical Education (CME) of already qualified staff members.

The postgraduate training programme includes a 'core skills'* course for all doctors in training and a range of activities designed for the individual specialties. Such activities will require suitable facilities such as a large lecture theatre, seminar rooms, meeting rooms etc. The rooms should have the capacity to facilitate AV aided activities such as video conferencing, online presentations, digital image projection etc. The training programme will apply both didactic and practical teaching techniques. The latter will require the setting up of skills laboratories for practice of a variety of medical procedures (e.g. fibre-optic intubation, epidural anaesthesia, central line insertion, Temporal Bone procedures, various surgical procedures etc.). ENT Department had a Temporal Bone Skills Laboratory up until a couple of years, however due to space shortage, it was converted in connection with new service developments.

Training and teaching in small group sessions are encouraged by many official training guidelines and will require seminar rooms. All such facilities should be in close proximity to the working areas of the hospital as activities will be part of the working day.

Training guidelines insist on protected study time for postgraduate medical students and provision of dedicated reading rooms with access to journals, on-line information and other study materials during library out-of-hours.

The Intern year

The Medical Council is in the process of restructuring the Intern year programme moving away from the strong emphasis on service provision towards a supervised and well-structured training post. The training proposals directly related to formalised intern training posts contain an educational package to combine teaching relevant skills e.g. consultation/prescribing skills, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, personal development, career guidance, self directed learning, project work and a didactic component. Such training programmes require a range of training facilities ranging from multipurpose training rooms, lecture hall, skills labs etc. Accreditation of hospitals for Internship training will partly depend on the availability of such facilities.

* Generic topics such as study skills, risk management, audit, presentation skills, management skills, personal skills (interviews, CVs etc.), research methods etc. are generally common for many health professions and could be taught to staff across the disciplines.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Medical Examinations

Sligo General Hospital should consider providing the facilities for hosting membership and other medical examinations to reduce the need for trainee doctors to travel to other examination centres.

2.2 General Practice

2.2.1 General Practice Training Unit

The General Practice Training Unit (GPTU) in Sligo has trained medical doctors in the specialty of General Practice for about 20 years. The Unit is based at Sligo General Hospital and supervises the training of 12 GP trainees at any one time. The four-year programme has a take-up rate of 3 doctors per year. Two years are spent working and training in the hospital on a rotational basis and the trainees undergo a two-year training programme in the General Practice setting. In the hospital, the trainees rotate between Paediatrics, A&E Dept., Obs/Gynae, Psychiatry and Medical Dept. A full-time Course Administrator, a part-time Programme Director, a part-time Course Organiser and a part-time Research Tutor run the course. During their hospital attachments, the trainees follow the training programmes of the department in which they are based and are released from their clinical duties for one full day per week to attend an all-day GP Training module in the hospital.

From September 2000, NUI Galway (funded by NWHB) offers a Diploma in Primary Health Care. It is a joint programme between the Dept. of General Practice, UCG and NWHB and all teaching and training will take place in Sligo on two consecutive days once a month. This activity is currently located outside the hospital campus due to space shortage in the Research & Education Centre. The course also involves a weeklong residential teaching module based in NUI Galway every autumn. The course offers 12 places annually to students from a wide range of primary healthcare disciplines: Doctors, GP nurses, PH nurses, Pharmacists etc. The course is run by a part-time Course Co-ordinator, based in Sligo General Hospital and a part-time secretary, also based in the hospital.

In a new facility, dedicated space should be provided for the GP Training Unit servicing the administration of the course, the teaching/training activities and research.

2.2.2 General Practitioners

Training and education needs of General Practitioners in the SGH catchment area could also be catered for in a new facility and it could play an important role in creating further points of contact between primary and

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

secondary care. The facility could host activities such as the GP Society monthly training/information meetings, annual 1-day seminar for all GPs in the area, joint meetings/courses involving hospital doctors and GPs, CME activities etc.

2.3 Dentistry

The Department of Orthodontics in Sligo General Hospital provides postgraduate training on a periodic basis. In future, links with other centres may be established and a continuous programme for postgraduate training will again be part of the responsibilities of the department. At present the needs of the Department of Orthodontics are concerned with facilitation for Continuing Professional Education, library, clinical research etc.

Training and education needs for non-hospital based dentists, dental nurses and hygienists could also be accommodated in a new facility. For example, the General Dental Group in Sligo regularly hosts meetings and courses run by the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board for Continuing Professional Education. At present, it has a section of the library devoted to hosting its literature.

2.4 Nursing

In its recent document⁴, the Nursing Commission has recommended a framework, which aims to give a secure basis for the further professional development of nursing and midwifery in the context of anticipated changes in the health services. Hence, on a national level, structures are being put in place to accommodate the modern requirements for training and education right from the pre-registration level to the Nurse Management grades. Training and educational activities are already ongoing at a local level and will intensify over the coming years as a result of national initiatives. It is essential that SGH is capable of supporting such activities with appropriate facilities.

2.4.1 Nursing School

Following the transition of the pre-registration nurse training to a nursing degree programme based in third level institutes from 2002 there will still be a need for an undergraduate nursing education presence in the hospital. The nursing students in clinical placement need educational support whilst on their 12 months clinical placement and facilities such as library, IT equipment, seminar rooms etc. are crucial. There will also be a need to support nursing staff in the clinical areas to which students are assigned.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

2.4.2 Training of Registered Nursing Staff at SGH

The Nursing Commission identified an increasing demand for and proliferation of post-registration education for the profession⁴. Nurses at local level have echoed this: In May 2000, the SGH Nurse Education Committee (NEC) produced a document informing the Director of Nursing on the staff nurses' learning and training needs in the hospital⁵. One of the main recommendations of the NEC document is, that courses need to be accessible locally, as travelling to major centres such as Dublin is not an option for many nurses. The document catalogues a comprehensive list of nurse education/training requirements categorised into five groups: Mandatory in-service training, Voluntary in-service training, Personal & professional training, Academic/specialist courses and other issues relating to educational needs. Examples of the almost 40 suggestions for training in the in-service categories, which were mentioned by respondents in the Committee's consultation process, include: Infection control, Health & Safety, Usage of Equipment, ECG interpretation, Pharmacology updates, Blood test analysis etc. Training modules already taking place in the hospital includes lifting and handling, Preceptor-ship, BLS, ACLS, CPR, Computer training ECDL, IV training, Restraint and control and monthly clinical educational updates.

The recommended dedicated facilities required for running courses vary, but would generally be multipurpose training rooms and various portable equipment. At present, such facilities are limited or non-existent in the hospital. Already the approval of one course, Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics, may be obstructed due to lack of appropriate facilities within the hospital.

The academic opportunities for the nursing profession have increased significantly in recent years and a range of postgraduate programmes for nurses, ranging from Higher Diploma Courses to Masters and PhD level, are being availed of by staff. The holders of the new CNS (Clinical Nurse Specialist) and ANP (Advanced Nurse Practitioner) posts will be characterised by relevant specialist post-registration university/college diplomas and extensive nursing experience. At present SGH facilitates the Higher Diploma in Orthopaedic Nursing with NUI Galway and there are plans to introduce diploma courses in Theatre Nursing, Critical Care and Accident & Emergency Nursing (from Oct. 2001) via St. Angela's College and NUI Galway. The increased prevalence and usage of distance learning facilities, such as videoconferencing, will also present new opportunities for local training and education via the major academic centres.

Nursing Management training has traditionally been non-existent or inadequate in Ireland⁶. The Nursing Commission recommends that nursing

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

and midwifery managers should have management training before taking up a post. Where appropriate the Commission recommends that management training programmes should be run in conjunction with management programmes for other professional groups and general managers. Already, the training modules in Management Skills available to staff within the NWHB has proven highly popular amongst nursing staff in management positions and has confirmed the appetite for training in this area.

The Commission proposes that the requirements of nurses to participate in and complete various programmes of continuing professional education are met with protected training/education time and recommends that a minimum of two days paid study leave is provided each year for continuing professional education.

2.4.3 Centre of Nursing Education

The Nursing Commission recommends that “Centres of Nursing Education” are established at a regional level providing a range of educational and training services to nurses in the health services. The Centres, such as that at SGH, will provide services to all nurses in the hospital catchment area. With the transition of the pre-registration nursing degree programme from hospital schools into third level institutes there will still remain a need for strong nursing education presence in the hospitals and health services. The Nursing Centres will play a crucial role during the clinical placement of students on a degree programme, in the professional development of registered nurses and midwives, provision of in-service training to nurses, post-registration education of nurses, research etc.

2.5 Associated Health Professionals (AHP)

Groups of ‘Associated Health Professionals’ (AHP) at Sligo General Hospital include the staffs of Physiotherapy, Dietetic Services, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Laboratory, Ophthalmology, Radiology and Social Work Department. The availability of courses for further education and training of staff in these disciplines has increased significantly over the past decade. Many health professionals now pursue Postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas and Masters Programmes. Some staff members also obtain doctorates. Such further education and training is encouraged by the Health Board in terms of study leave, payment of fees etc. At present most courses are run in other centres, however support for associated research projects, presentations, search for information etc. needs to be available close to the working environment. Lack of facilities could have implications for the

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

quality and quantity of staff seeking to work at SGH. In one department there is experience of staff leaving due to shortage of postgraduate training facilities/opportunities.

Several departments receive undergraduates for practical training placements. For disciplines such as physiotherapy, radiography, occupational therapy and dietetic services, recruitment of qualified staff have traditionally happened from this pool of former students, who already have experience of the hospital and the area. It has proven vital to continue undergraduate training in order to ensure future staffing in departments with recruitment difficulties. Ophthalmology has not previously had students in training, however it is likely that the department will receive trainees in the future.

Continued Professional Development will be a compulsory part of AHP's career in the near future. The EU is in the process of developing a scheme whereby health professionals must obtain a certain number of points for CPD via course participation, conferences, research, education supervision etc. In line with the EU initiative, the Minister of Health announced in November 2000 to regulate the ongoing education of all Health Professionals.

Other training activities that need support include various OTJ (On The Job) training, Journal clubs, Patient group training and information (e.g. diabetics, obesity sufferers), Training of Carers (e.g. carers of stroke victims), Case Conferences etc. The Pathology Dept. requires a training laboratory that could be utilised for research purposes also.

The Social Work department would benefit from an observation room with video recording facilities for training purposes and facilitation of long-distance supervision of undergraduates. Such a unit would also be useful for most other disciplines in the training of communication and consultation skills e.g. bedside manner, psychiatric service staff training etc.

2.6 Management

The need for specific management orientated training for staff of all disciplines in Health Care is recognised nationally and has led to the setting up of the Office of Health Management to drive this forward. The NWHB has been very proactive in this matter and all middle managers have been (or will be) involved in a formal *Action Learning* and personal development programme overseen by the University of Brighton. Each individual's programme involves considerable project work, which generates an

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

ongoing demand on information, library and audio-visual resources. These practices are expected to become a “way of life” following completion of the final programme. There is a need for NWHB to provide the infrastructure and support this way of working.

Evidence based healthcare management too has created the need to provide for a wide range of information outside the clinical stream. The *Action Learning* programmes involve monthly learning group meetings and the provision of suitably equipped small meeting rooms and associated facilities is recognised as an urgent necessity.

The management systems themselves are ever evolving and demand continuous On-the-Job-Training (OJT) of all grades of staff. Frontline managers and their staff are involved in constant training in the many skills required to perform their duties. Managers and staff of other groups such as Catering, Reception, Portering, Domestic Services, Maintenance also have training needs to be met.

Middle and Senior General and Clinical Managers require demanding management training and education courses based on third level institutions or National Bodies either in Ireland or the UK. This activity needs to be supported in a variety of educational ways equivalent to that provided in third level institutions. In this context it is important that all methodologies of distant learning be available on site.

Management type training (IT excluded) calls for provision of lecture room, break-out room, small group discussion rooms, reading room and project work with suitable social facilities.

2.7 Library and Information Services

There has been a significant improvement in library facilities in SGH since 1998. The library is frequented by large numbers of staff from all sectors of the hospital and community services. In January 2001, opening hours were extended to weekdays (8.30 am - 9.30 pm) and also on Saturday (9 am - 1 pm) to facilitate out of working hours study and research.

The library design was originally restricted by the limited space available on Level 6. With the present and projected increase in staff and research & education activities in general a need for expansion of the facilities is evident. New facilities should include the following: a permanent reading room, inclusion of the archives which at present are housed two floors away from the main library, extra study space in the library, offices for staff, a

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

work room, expansion of shelving space, further IT facilities and various domestic facilities.

2.8 Information Technology

The NWHB strategy 'Cúram le Eolas'⁷ places learning and knowledge as delivered by IT systems at the heart of the care process. This emphasis will impinge on every member of the staff of NWHB and involve training, retraining and development programmes in the years ahead. The change will also be very demanding on supportive structures. To help the Strategy succeed IT Training needs to be incorporated seamlessly into the general training facilities and seen as part of ongoing training. Furthermore, an R&D component to clinical computing needs to be supported.

The demand for training classes and courses as well as self directed learning has increased significantly in recent years and it has become evident that the current facilities (IT learning centre and training room) need to be supplemented.

At present the demands on in-house training include: Hospital Information System for all nursing and clerical staff, Laboratory Information System, Radiology Information System, Maternity & Infant Records System, Basic IT Training, Basic MS Word, Basic MS Excel, Basic MS Powerpoint, Basic Access, Lotus Notes email & internet, ECDL.

Recently the IT training facility has catered for the training of external NWHB groups such as PPARS, Smartstream (Financial systems), GP email/internet training, Public Health Nursing PC training, Social Work PC Training.

In the immediate future, training needs will expand further including PC training for Nursing Staff and NCHDs, training in the new HIS for all users, further development of the audio/visual courseware in the learning centre etc. In broader terms, the IT aspect of the organisation will be continually changing and expanding and requires ongoing effort by staff. It is vital that these needs are assessed and that the infrastructural demands are carefully planned for.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

2.9 Other hospital groups

A number of other training activities with cross-disciplinary and voluntary groups also requires facilitation.

An Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) course has been running since September 1998 in the hospital and Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) courses will operate for the first time in early 2001. Both of these courses require 4 adjacent multipurpose training rooms each providing a “skills station”. At present alternative accommodation outside the hospital is sought due to the lack of suitable and available facility within the hospital. The Health Board is in the process of employing Resuscitation Training Officers, two of which will be based at SGH. Development of a Paediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) course will be part of their brief, an activity that will require 5 adjacent multipurpose training rooms.

OTJ (on the job) training modules for various groups of health professionals should also be provided for on site. Courses such as group facilitation skills, in-service training etc. require seminar rooms and lecture facilities and at times several training rooms are needed concurrently. When interdisciplinary groups of health professionals have similar needs for training (typically generic skills) it can justify bringing in an external trainer to carry out the training programme locally. The Health Board has already run several courses following this model.

Care Attendants/Assistants is a new skills mix grade introduced by the Department of Health and Children. The functions of care attendants will be to assist in the nursing activities on the wards. The training programme is in the process of being formalised by the NCVA (National Council for Vocational Awards). A number of centres around the country will acquire the remit to run the training programme and the first pilot scheme will be launched in January 2001. The programme will involve the training of new staff and the mentors/supervisors of the Care Attendants will also require training. If Sligo is to become one of the new Care Attendant Training Centres it will require relevant and sufficient facilities.

Induction of staff. The Health Board Training Office is addressing further development of induction courses of all new staff. Induction is an important component of Risk Management and formal arrangements for induction will shortly be a requirement. Special requirements are considered necessary for orientation of staff now being recruited from significantly different health care systems.

Housekeeping. Sligo General Hospital has recently introduced standardised procedures for training and assessing Housekeeping Supervisors and

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Housekeeping Staff. SGH is the first Irish hospital to be passed as an assessment centre by the British Institute of Cleaning Science. Adopted as Health Board standard, all present and future housekeeping staff must acquire a “Cleaning Operator Proficiency Certificate” before commencing employment at the hospital. The first certificates were awarded to staff in December 2000. Housekeeping staff will need a ward-like environment for training and assessment without ongoing clinical activities. A training/education/research facility could simulate such a setting.

Inter-disciplinary activities. Theme based training modules or study days involving a range of health care disciplines can teach core competencies that are central to the effective functioning of the health care services. The Core Skills Curriculum is an example of a shared interdisciplinary learning experience undertaken at Sligo General Hospital. There is however great potential for further inter-disciplinary activities.

2.10 Community Education Activities

The Health Board, SGH and the Research & Education Foundation all have a role to play in informing and educating the public on health matters. Activities such as public lectures and study days require a lecture theatre with capacity to hold large groups. Health Promotion, a health promoting hospital, efficient use of services, optimum use of medication and of rehabilitation all require patient education.

The future health care provision embraces the ethos of the empowered and informed patient. This idea calls for investments in the enlightenment and education of patients on an individual level and in groups. The hospital, with its range of highly qualified staff has its own pool of educators available for intensified interaction with patient groups, voluntary health groups etc.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

2.11 Summary of the role of the facility for Training/Education

In summary the objectives of the facilities for **training and education** will be:

- Creation of a focal point for training and education within the hospital campus in close proximity to the working environment of trainers and trainees where training and education of all health professionals across grades and disciplines within the hospital can take place as an ordinary everyday component of working life.
- Provision of teaching and study facilities such as lecture hall, reading room, seminar rooms, meeting rooms, multipurpose training rooms, skills laboratories, observation room etc.
- Provision of office space for the Postgraduate Co-ordinator, Medical and Surgical Tutors, GP Training Unit, Centre of Nursing Education as well as support and administrative staff.
- Provision of library and information services.
- Housing of equipment for training purposes e.g. clinical photography, AV & multimedia equipment, skills training equipment etc.
- Promotion of health awareness within the community by making the centre available to the local network of voluntary community health groups.

3. Project Rationale B: Research

This section outlines the project rationale and justification relevant to support research activities.

The Health Research Board defines research as an activity with the following characteristics⁹:

- It is intended to provide new knowledge and/or understanding
- The results are generalisable. The methodology is designed so that the results will be of value to those facing similar problems or can be reproduced in similar circumstances.
- The findings are put in the public domain for critical examination and access by those who could benefit from them.

3.1 Background

Research has taken place at a sporadic level at Sligo General Hospital and in its catchment area for many years and several health professionals have obtained national and international standing in the research community. Traditionally the research undertaken is initiated by enthusiastic health professionals (typically doctors, laboratory staff, nurses etc.) and carried out mainly outside normal working hours. There has been no or very little administrative and financial support for such projects and the facilities required are made available, when not in use for service provision, out of goodwill by the hospital and other health board institutions.

A recent survey “*Research Survey of health professionals in the Sligo General Hospital region of the North Western Health Board 1995-99*”¹⁰ has shown that in the Sligo Region the interest in participating in research is very strong amongst health professionals of all disciplines. The Research & Education Foundation is currently working with the hospital to set up structures to support and initiate new research programmes. The National Strategy discussion paper⁹ indicates that the National Health Research Strategy will aim to develop a research culture in Ireland where investigative activity can be carried out to the highest level, collaboration is encouraged and researchers are supported financially and administratively. In order to facilitate a research environment of high quality it is vital to offer the necessary infrastructure. This hospital itself has adopted a supportive approach to R&D that will facilitate the implementation of the National Strategy (Appendix 3).

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Protected time for research, research sabbaticals, post-graduate research projects etc. will evidently become more readily available to many disciplines within the health care sector and new contracts will provide for this. Activities arising out of such opportunities require a range of facilities to ensure that the protected research time is spent to its full potential.

3.2 Supporting research activities

Sligo General Hospital has no physical space dedicated to supporting research activities. There are many signs that research will become a stronger integral part of the activities of the hospital and its community in the medium to long term and that a range of disciplines within the health board are likely to become more actively involved in research. Such activity will be necessary to support the quality of care, for accreditation, to recruit staff and will be necessary to maintain the national and local profile of the hospital. All are important factors influencing the quality of care available to the community.

3.2.1 Medical research

In the case of doctors, the imminent restructuring of postgraduate medical education in the hospital means that the research aspect of the training of hospital doctors must be addressed. Knowledge of research methods and practices will be an important component of SHO and Registrar training. Participation in actual research is an obvious route to the acquisition of this knowledge. Towards this end the hospital has created medical and surgical tutor posts with a part-time research commitment. Consultants in SGH generally have significant research experience, usually obtained prior to employment at the hospital. Many have an interest in continuing their previous investigations. In conjunction with protected research time, facilities for clinical research (that could be used for treatment purposes) would greatly enhance consultants' potential for research activity.

3.2.2 General Practice Research

The GP Training Unit at Sligo employs a Research Tutor on a part-time basis supervising three substantial research projects undertaken each year by the three 4th year GP trainees. Furthermore, all GP Trainers, i.e. General Practitioners supervising GP trainees when training in the GP setting, carry out a "Quality Initiative" every year. A Research Officer from Public Health Department supports these projects. All GP trainers meet on a monthly basis in the R&E Centre. The Quality Initiative Programme will be expanded to involve all GPs in the SGH catchment area in the near future. Furthermore, the new Primary Care Diploma course will involve supporting 12 research projects annually (see 2.2)

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

3.2.3 Associated Health Professionals

Most associated health professions have incorporated research projects into the undergraduate and particularly the postgraduate education process. Health professionals with an interest in furthering their education with a qualification involving a research project benefit from a cross-disciplinary research facility and staff will expect facilities to be available to support such endeavours.

3.2.4 Nursing

The Commission on Nursing⁴ has recommended several initiatives that would strengthen the research profile and activities of the nursing profession. It attaches particular importance to the development of nursing and midwifery research at every level; within each individual community or hospital, at health board level and within the DoHC. National initiatives such as the establishment of a Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Division within the HRB, funding of nursing research through the HRB, representation on the HRB board etc. will eventually, together with the strengthened academic profile of nurses and midwives, allow for a significant increase in research activity. A National Nursing and Midwifery Research Strategy is under development at DoHC level. It is at an early stage at present, but will in its final form serve to encourage and support a strengthened research environment in the nursing profession.

The Commission recommends that nurses and midwives wishing to develop a career in research be encouraged and supported to do so through the clinical, education or management pathway. With time, these national interventions will result in increased research activity at local level and the need for facilities and support is now evident.

3.2.5 Management

Management and personal development programmes are now being provided by the NWHB and most involve projects of research nature. The area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) urgently needs R&D work and is a natural provision in an increasingly modernised Health Board (see 2.8).

3.2.6 Community Access

The infrastructure that an acute hospital will be expected to provide for its staff for research activities, will be similar to that required by staff dispersed throughout the community services. Capacity at the hospital should be provided to permit those undertaking research in the community to acquire full benefit of the resources developed at the hospital.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

3.2.7 Research Units

The Department of Health Strategy is fully supportive of hospitals actively pursuing appropriate research and recognises that hospitals such as Sligo have a particular role to play. The strategy envisages 100 research units each supporting about 10 researchers grouped in Research Centres being provided throughout the health service. This infrastructure would be utilised by and supported by competitively funded (collaborative) research. The occupancy and focus of units would change flexibly over the years.

The Health Services in the Sligo, Leitrim and South Donegal areas and their associations within third level institutions should justify provision of some units and the support facilities of a research centre. Examples of potential research units for Sligo are primary care, clinical research, nursing, multidisciplinary, biomedical etc. One or more of the Research Units should be designed to have a multipurpose function equipped with laboratory services (fume hoods, gas supply, de-ionised water supply, appropriate electrical supplies etc). The exact equipping of laboratories should be given careful consideration and expert advice sought.

3.2.8 Collaboration

One of the advantages of carrying out research at a medium sized hospital such as SGH is the relative intimacy of the working environment. Because the specialties are small and in close physical proximity, there is abundant potential for strengthening collaborative and interdisciplinary research. Already a number of projects carried out in recent years have involved contributions from partners within and indeed outside the health board. It is vital to offer a facility where such collaborative research can continue to develop.

3.2.9 Dissemination of Research Findings

As well as support for research, support is also required for the dissemination of research findings (Information Transfer) by establishing fora, where research findings will be presented and discussed. Much research is about identifying the right practice. Consequently an evidence based health care service with appropriate mechanisms to validate and implement relevant research findings into local clinical practice is an important method of securing a high standard of clinical practice.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

3.2.10 Related Hospital Support Functions

Clinical Audit, Clinical Risk Management, Quality Assurance, Ethics Committee are provisions that operate to support the multidisciplinary teams in all specialties. They are core clinical functions closely aligned to professional learning and training and also draw on information and knowledge. They can function best if integrated with training and research provisions.

The Clinical Audit Support Team carries out examinations of clinical practice that use similar methodologies to that of research and require many of the service functions a research unit would provide. Clinical Audit also has an educational component supporting evidence based practice in the hospital.

3.2.11 Technical support

A need for a dedicated technician servicing IT equipment, Medical Imaging, audio-visual technology such as video conferencing, etc. is evident at SGH. Research and educational staff need support in the maintenance and running of such technically sophisticated equipment. It follows that arrangements for equipment storage, maintenance, control and office space need to be made available in future facilities.

3.2.12 Research Policy

In parallel to these initiatives, the hospital is currently developing policies on the commissioning, management and quality assurance of research and in providing a local Research Ethics Committee. An interim policy document on the commissioning and management of research at Sligo General Hospital valid until January 2001 is annexed in Appendix 3.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

3.3 Summary of the Role of the Facility for Research

In summary the objectives of the facility for **research** will be:

- Creation of a focal point for health care research within the hospital campus in close proximity to clinical activities where staff, researchers, other interested parties and shared support staff can come together to provide a self-sustaining critical mass of productive research activity.
- Provision of dedicated units for research teams, individual researchers, research registrars as well as support and administrative staff.
- Assisting collaborative research by facilitating visiting researchers.
- Provision of exhibition and presentation space where interdisciplinary research teams can discuss their work in an open forum.
- Provision of IT equipment exclusively for research purposes and information resources (library).
- Provision of other research related equipment such as medical images, laboratory equipment etc.

4. Current Facilities

4.1 Research & Education Centre

In 1991, the staff of Sligo General Hospital, the Institute of Technology Sligo and prominent members of the community formed a charitable organisation (*The Research & Education Foundation*) to promote training, education and research at Sligo General Hospital. With the Hospital, the Foundation realised phase one of a physical development plan, *The Research & Education Centre*. It is located at level 6 in the hospital, covers 300 m², and it houses a library, IT equipment, conference room and videoconferencing facilities. The facility is open to all members of staff on a daily basis.

The centre has proven a success primarily for education and meeting purposes. Year 2000 for example, has seen a total of 674 meetings/presentations and 66 day-courses/seminars. In 1999 the Centre hosted a total of 503 meetings/presentations and 77 day-courses/seminars. A variety of groups from the Hospital, the Community Services and External groups availed of the facilities. A full record of users in 1999/2000 is listed in Appendix 1 showing how an increasing variety of groups use the centre.

There has also been a significant improvement in the library services with the extension of opening hours, expansion of the collection of books, journals, databases etc.

However, the Centre does not have the capacity for the future expansion of training and education activities outlined in previous chapters and it does not meet the requirements of a Research Centre. There are no dedicated offices for researchers and their support staff, basic IT equipment is at present shared with all other users and meeting and conference space is limited. There is no space for technical backup service needed for many aspects of training, education and research.

The Research & Education Foundation and the Research & Education Centre at level six are manifestations of the importance of training, education and research to health professionals. Staff's willingness to covenant their own monies for the Centre is another indication of the future utilisation of additional facilities that may be provided by the hospital. The present facilities have pointed the way and have also served to identify a range needs.

The previous chapters have outlined how this need can be expected to grow with change in staffing arrangements and contracts, training and

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

accreditation requirements, emerging national strategies, development of current links with third level educational institutions etc. An additional factor may be the growth of the hospital to serve the need of an expanded population expected as a result of a forthcoming National Spatial Plan and a change in age profile of its population leading to higher dependency rates.

4.2 Training/Education/Research facilities at SGH:

Research & Education Centre & Library level 6:

Lecture room/Meeting Room	63 m ²	(40 m ² /23 m ²)
Library area, R&E Foundation Office, Library Office, IT area, Dark Room, reception etc.		approx. 200 m ²

Nursing School

(Planning to move off site in spring 2001, present facilities will be converted to clinical service facilities)

Classroom 1	56 m ²
Classroom 2	56 m ²
Study/tutorial room	21 m ²
Reading/IT room	35 m ²
Staff Offices, storage rooms etc.	

Other facilities

Conference room level 4	34 m ²
IT training room level 4	32 m ²
IT learning centre level 4	26 m ²
A&E dept. teaching room	21 m ²
Orthopaedic Dept. teaching/audit rooms	40 m ² /23 m ²
Anaesthesia teaching room	14 m ²
Library Archives level 4	

5. Consistency with National Strategies

5.1 National Development Plan (NDP)

In the National Development Plan¹ the Government has as its overall objective for regional policy the aim of achieving more balanced regional development in order to reduce the disparities between and within the South Eastern Region and the BMW Region (Borders, Midlands and Western Region). One of the specific objectives for the BMW Region is “*to improve the quality of the Region’s economic and social infrastructure and human resource skill-base*” (pg. 43).

5.1.1 Education & Training.

According to the plan the impact of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme will be provision of “*significant investment in the BMW Region for education, training, skills development, lifelong learning and other schemes designed to support the maximum involvement of the Region’s population in economic activity*” (pg. 148). The NDP has made provision for significant investments in education and training infrastructure. This will cover “*further education centres*” and will provide buildings, equipment and IT (pg. 114).

5.1.2 Research & Development

Investments planned in the BMW Region in Research, Technological Development & Innovation (RTDI) amount to 150 million Euro for 2000-2006. An integrated approach to RTDI including linkages with the education sector is being pursued (pg. 95). The plan recognises the need for promotion of a more balanced regional development, while at the same time having due regard to the excellence of proposals funded. The new programme will aim to “*Strengthen the research capabilities in the third level and state research institutes and increase the quantity and quality of the RTDI linkages between institutions and companies*” (pg. 129).

5.1.3 Health Care

The NDP provides for the upgrading of acute hospital infrastructure to supply a better and more accessible service through investment in estate maintenance and new developments. Initiatives in the BMW region will centre on investments aimed at improving access to services in order to address inequities arising from lower population densities, higher dependency rates and a narrower range of acute services available. This is in line with the overall objective stated in the Action Plan accompanying the National Health Strategy of “*providing within each health board area a self-sufficiency in community and regional specialties*” (pg. 74).

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

5.1.4 Infrastructure

There is no direct provision for dedicated research and education infrastructure in the Health Care Sector in the NDP. However, provision of Research & Education facilities in Sligo will indirectly contribute to the overall objectives of the NDP's Health Capital Strategy of upgrading the regional health services. An institution with an actual research culture in place will attract highly qualified staff, encourage research relevant to regional issues, facilitate participation in collaborative research initiatives etc. Similarly, proper training and education programmes and supporting facilities will also make possible a service of clinical excellence to the benefit of the community.

5.2 Technology Foresight

In its report "*Health and Life Sciences Panel*"⁸ predating the NDP, the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI) has advised the Government on a programme for creating a Biotechnology Infrastructure in Ireland by a series of strategic investments. The investment programme put forward will create an infrastructure with strong links and feedback mechanisms joining government, universities, high technology industries and the financial and services sector. Within the area of Biomedical Science alone, the Council proposes facilitating 100 research groups nationally by supporting infrastructure and skills development.

5.3 National Strategy for Research and Innovation for Health

The Discussion Document for the new National Strategy for Research and Innovation for Health⁹ produced by the Health Research Board (HRB) in 2000 is stimulated by the overall supposition that knowledge improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the health services. The HRB recognises that, in general, the knowledge base in the health and social services is underdeveloped and relevant information is not available to inform practice, enhance the effectiveness of services or encourage innovation. If the overall ethos in health and social care is evidenced based decision making then the health services need to have relevant knowledge and information available on which to make good decisions.

5.3.1 Priorities for Health Research

The Discussion Document acknowledges the need for improving the relatively underdeveloped research infrastructure in Ireland by investing in buildings and equipment for research purposes. It also plans to support a comprehensive programme for health sciences research by funding research

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

units that are closely linked to third level education institutions but with roots in the clinical setting, such as a hospital. The HRB will play a role in ensuring a successful implementation of the research investment programme. One hundred or more research units of world class standard in the biomedical area will be supported. It is suggested that they be grouped in Research Centres. Support for clinical research centres are seen as fostering a strong research culture in hospitals and “*ensures that patients are receiving care that compares with the best in the world*”.

5.3.2 The Role of the Health Boards

The Discussion Document consolidates the responsibility of the health boards in the promotion of research for health. It states that “*in view of [the health boards’] responsibilities to promote health in an increasingly knowledge based society, they have an obligation to ensure that research informs policies and practice*”. The HRB also highlights the important role of the health boards in the provision of access to clinical issues for research. This in turn can enhance health, improve the effectiveness of services and train staff in research methodologies. The strategy recognises the significant pool of highly educated and trained staff with the interest and skills to participate in research for health. A recent survey has confirmed that there is a large number of staff with such interest in the NWHB¹⁰.

The final version of the National Health Care Strategy has been submitted to the DoHC and will be publicised in 2001*. It will support Research Infrastructure and activity in hospitals such as SGH. The Strategy will recommend the appointment of R&D Officers in the Health Boards and encourage the Health Boards to prepare regional Health Research Strategies that reflect health service priorities¹¹.

* The Proceedings of a conference that concluded the discussion phase of the Strategy development is found on the HRB website www.hrb.ie

6. Project Description

6.1 Groups facilitated by a new facility

A Capital Development supporting training, education and research at Sligo General Hospital and its catchment area could facilitate the following groups and activities:

- Postgraduate Medical Training incl. Offices for Director of Medical Training, tutors, administrative staff etc.
- General Practice Training Unit
- Research Centre incorporating several research units (incl. clinical research facilities, laboratories and offices)
- Multipurpose training facility (lecture theatre, seminar rooms, multipurpose training rooms etc.) for activities such as postgraduate medical training, GP Training, ACLS/ATLS, CPR, AHP postgraduate training, Induction programmes, OTJ (on the job) training etc.
- Medical Illustrations/graphics + associated staff offices
- Centre of Nursing Education
- Nursing Practice Development Unit
- Management development facility, interview rooms etc.
- Base for Clinical Audit, Clinical Risk Management, Quality Assurance, Ethics Committee/Office
- Information Technology Training
- Library and Information Service, incl. archives
- Public Health Department?
- Examination Centre facility
- Research & Education Foundation
- Offices for Voluntary Bodies
- Health Promotion
- Recreational facilities i.e. restaurant; common rooms; locker, change and shower facilities; toilets etc.
- Support functions such as creche, bank, postroom, cybercafe, copyroom, maintenance,

The brief of this document was to investigate the hospital aspects of training, education and research. However, the response to the 2nd draft circulated in November 2000 suggests that the hospital should give immediate and significant consideration to providing additional capacity to meet some of the needs of health care professionals not based in the hospital. It has become evident that there is a strong wish on the part of many of those in primary care and community services to have a right of

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

access. The inclusion of such groups could be considered in the planning process.

6.2 Location

The vast majority of the groups consulted repeatedly iterated the importance of locating a new facility on the hospital campus. The growth of such activities to become a normal part of the working day underscores the appropriateness of providing the facilities on site. If the activities outlined in this document are undertaken on site they can be attended with minimum cost associated with travel, loss of working time etc. A facility in the immediate proximity to the working environment also ensures easy and frequent access by staff.

Another argument for locating a facility on the hospital campus is the issue of Risk Management. Integrating a facility as part of the hospital would be in line with modern Risk Management, which has identified off site training arrangements as a risk factor that should be avoided.

Representatives of the education and research centres visited at St. Vincent's Hospital and NUI Galway strongly expressed the importance of locating a facility with immediate access from the hospital. In their experience, it is crucial for the development of a clinical research environment and for the continuous training of staff to have easy and frequent access to the appropriate facilities. Location off-campus would, in their opinion, undoubtedly be an obstacle for developing training, education and research activities at SGH.

Other departments that could be facilitated include Public Health Department and Health Promoting Hospital Team.

6.3 Space requirements

The specific requirements for the above activities will be assessed in the next steps of the planning process through collaborative consultation with the interested parties, management and the assigned architects and form part of the development project for the hospital. However, as a first rough exercise in determining the required space for the facilities mentioned in section 6.1, the following is a preliminary estimate of the area required and is for purposes only of indicating the general nature of the need to be met:

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Accommodation	m²
Foyer, reception etc.	80
Lecture Hall tiered (over two floors, 150 on each) 140 seats	300
Seminar room (50 seats)	70
2 Meeting rooms @ 35 m ²	70
5 multipurpose training room @ 35 m ²	175
Board room	25
5 Offices for medical training/education @ 20 m ²	100
2 skills laboratories @35 m ²	70
3 Offices for GPTU @ 20 m ²	60
10 Research Offices @20 m ²	200
3 research laboratories @ 80 m ²	240
IT room for research	30
Equipment storage, freezer room etc.	60
Medical Illustrations storage	30
6 offices for Clinical Audit, Risk Management, Ethics Office, Quality Assurance etc. @ 20 m ²	120
IT Training (learning centre, training room, offices etc)	200
Library and information services	500
3 Offices for R&E Foundation @ 20 m ²	60
Voluntary bodies, offices etc.	60
Common room	40
Restaurant/café	60
Change/shower/locker facility	80
Health Promotion	100
Public Health Department (?)	?
Centre of Nursing Education	300
Maintenance, porter, post room, copy room @ 15 m ²	60
3 sets of male/female toilets @ 30 m ²	90
Subtotal	3080
+ 10% corridors, stairs, lifts etc.	308
Total approx.	3500

According to this first estimate of the space required, without provision for Public Health Department and Health Promotion, the needs call for a facility **11-12 times larger than the present Research & Education Centre on level 6.**

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

7. Conclusion

The National Development Plan provides the opportunity to examine the requirements for all aspects of hospital development for the years ahead and to put forward arrangements that meet the projected needs in optimum ways, structurally and functionally.

The consultation process, documented in this report, aimed at assessing the future needs for facilities to support training, education and research at Sligo General Hospital and its catchment area. It has established that an appropriate permanent environment needs to be provided as a resource for the future plans for training, education and research activity and to maintain interest and involvement by health professionals in these activities. Training, education and research activities are necessary to support the quality of care, for accreditation, to recruit staff and to maintain the national and local profile of the hospital. Without appropriate facilities it is impossible to realise the expectations of the community for the hospital. A lack may impinge on the quality of the health professionals attracted to work in the hospital and its surrounding community.

The facility should support a wide range of health disciplines such as Postgraduate Medical Training, GP Training, Associated Health Professionals, Management, Nursing, Community Groups, other hospital functions and perhaps other NWHB departments such as Public Health, Health Promotion etc. The facility should also provide this region with its first dedicated research centre.

A first attempt to estimate the space required suggests a new facility of about 3500 m². That excludes provision for Public Health Department and Health Promotion as appropriate to the hospital.

The specific requirements for the design of a facility to support training, education and research activities should be assessed through a collaborative consultation process between the interested parties, management and the assigned architects. A core facility readily accessible from all patient areas of the hospital which would contain most staff support structures and arrangements would seem to describe the broad concept involved.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Abbreviations

ACLS	Advanced Cardiac Life Support
AHP	Associated Health Professionals
ANP	Advanced Nurse Practitioner
ATLS	Advanced Trauma Life Support
AV	Audio Visual
BLS	Basic Life Support
BMW	Borders, Midlands, Western
CME	Continuous Medical Education
CNS	Clinical Nurse Specialist
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPR	Cardiac Resuscitation
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
ECG	Electro Cardio Graph
GPTU	General Practice Training Unit
HRB	Health Research Board
IV	Intra Venous
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
NDP	National Development Plan
NUI	National University Galway
NWHB	North Western Health Board
OTJ	On The Job
PH	Public Health
RTDI	Research, Technological Development & Innovation
SGH	Sligo General Hospital

APPENDIX 1

Users of Research & Education Centre SGH level 6 1999/2000

Lecture Theatre/Small Group Room 1999

In-house Meetings (SGH)	Community Care Services
Accident & Emergency Dept. Breast Care Catering Dept. Child and Family Service Clinical Audit Group Coronary Care Dept. Dietetics ENT Dept. G.P.T.U. General Management Hospice Housekeeping Dept. Infection Control Medical Dept Nursing Management Obs/Gynae Dept. Occupational Therapy Dept. Orthopaedic Dept Paediatric Dept Pharmacy Physiotherapy Dept Psychiatry Dept Radiology Dept Research Advisory Comm. Research & Education Foundation Speech Therapy Dept. Surgical Dept Theatre Mgmt Committee	Health Promotion Occupational Health Dept. Social Work Department N.W.H.B. Groups Management Team Manor Personnel Dept. Manor. PPARS Public Health Dept. Video Conferencing Orthopaedic Dept. External Users Charles Shaw - ISQH Conference/OHM Cystic Fibrosis Mtg. Demonstration by Medical Rep on use of Rapidysin Dr. O'Carroll (Letterkenny) - Family planning International Year of the Elderly Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists Conference National Cancer Strategy 1999 National Hospice Conference Pfizer Sarah Woolf - Spring Board - Fundraising SMA St Angela's College

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Lecture Theatre/Small Group Room 2000

In house Meetings (SGH)	N.W.H.B. Groups
Accident & Emergency Dept. Anaesthetic Group Breast Care Catering Dept. Child and Family Service Clinical Audit Group Coronary Care Dept. Day Services Dietetics ENT Dept. GP Training Unit General Management Hospital Management Committee Hospice Haemovigilance Nurse Housekeeping Dept. Infection Control Library Committee Medical Dept Nursing Education Committee Nursing Management Nursing School Obs/Gynae Dept. Occupational Therapy Dept. Orthopaedic Dept Orthoptology Paediatric Dept Pastoral Care Pharmacy Physiotherapy Dept Psychiatry Dept Radiology Dept Renal Unit Research Advisory Committee Research and Education Foundation Specialty Co-ordinators Speech Therapy Dept. Staff Union Mtgs. Surgical Dept Theatre Mgmt Committee	CEO Dept. Community Care Dept. Hospital Care Dept Management Services Dept. Personnel Dept M/H Public Health Dept. Technical Services Dept
	Video Conferencing
	General Management Law Society Orthopaedic Dept Personnel Dept - M/H Surgical Dept. Eurotransmed (satellite)
	Community Care Services
	Area Medical Officers Community Hospitals Community OT Health Promotion Occupational Health Dept Social Work Department Technical Services Dept
	External Users
	Brid McGrath - Trainer with DoHC Cow & Gate Cyriax Mtg. - Physio group D.O.H.C Helsinn Birex I.H.C.A. I.N.O. Law Society of Ireland Milupa Prof. A. Muir, Director JCHMT St. Angela's College

APPENDIX 2

Contributors to the consultation process

The following departments of Sligo General Hospital availed of the opportunity to take part in the consultation process on the development of a training/education/research facility:

Specialty Co-ordinators of the following departments at SGH:

Accident & Emergency
Anaesthesia
ENT
Internal Medicine
Obs/Gynae Dept.
Ophthalmics
Orthopaedics
Orthodontics
Paediatrics
Pathology
Psychiatry
Radiology
General Surgery

Nursing:

Director of Nursing
UNOs
Director of the School of Nursing
Nursing Practice Development Officer
Michael Shannon, DoHC

Associated Health Professions:

Dietetic Department
Laboratory
Occupational Therapy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Radiography
Social Work Department

Other Hospital Based Groups:

Clinical Audit Support team
Clinical Co-ordinator
General Management
General Practice Training Unit
IT Management
Library and Information Department
Postgraduate Co-ordinator
Research & Education Foundation and its Research Advisory Committee
Services Manager

External Advisors:

Dr. Cliona O'Farrelly, Dir. of Research, Education & Research Centre, St. Vincent's Hospital
Dr. J Duffy, Dept. of Pathology, Education & Research Centre, St. Vincent's Hospital
Prof. A Carney, Postgraduate Dean, Clinical Science Institute, NUI Galway
Prof. A Murphy, Dept. of General Practice, NUI Galway

APPENDIX 3

Code of practice for the commissioning and management of Research & Development at Sligo General Hospital

Interim Policy Document

Adopted by the Hospital Management Committee on the 11th July 2000.

Valid until Jan 1st 2001

This code of practice sets out the principles and practices by which SGH funded R&D is commissioned and managed and quality ensured.

SGH support for R&D is provided through a commissioned programme of projects; SGH also operates an R&D grants scheme. The code does not cover the conduct of R&D per se.

The main principle governing any hospital funding of R&D is “the customer says what he wants, the contractor does it, if he can, and the customer pays”.

Policy Relevance

R&D commissioned by SGH should be in line with policy and management objectives. Priorities for SGH commissioned R&D should be identified on the basis of their policy and management relevance and on their assessed potential for improving policy and management and/or contributing to health gain. Individual projects should be problem driven.

Accessibility

The findings of R&D should be reported so they are accessible and open to critical inspection. The appropriate publication of R&D results should be encouraged and, where necessary, more detailed dissemination strategies should be developed and pursued, having regard for the protection and appropriate exploitation of intellectual property.

Transparency

To ensure better decision-making on R&D priorities and resource use and to avoid duplication, information on all plans and commissioned projects should be shared within the Health System.

Accountability

Individual budget holders need to account for their R&D expenditure by reporting to the Finance Section on their R&D activities.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

Quality and Value for Money

To ensure the quality of SGH R&D, requirements should be informed by expert advice and R&D projects should follow a well-defined protocol, be subjected to expert peer review, seek to maximise value for money and meet agreed targets.

Consistency

The same principles and practices should apply to all SGH R&D and be consistent with wider Government and EC R&D requirements and policies.

Practices

Set out below are the main practices, which should be followed.

Practices should provide for as close integration as possible between policy and management objectives and R&D management.

Expert advice should be fed into the determination of R&D needs.

In considering proposed R&D, “customers” should assess and if possible quantify its importance to their policy and management needs and whether the results are likely to be capable of implementation.

A statement of the problem to be addressed and its importance to policy and management should be drawn up, SGH requirements formulated and lead customers identified at the outset.

Projects commissioned should reflect overall R&D priorities determined annually by the Hospital.

Projects commissioned should have approval of the Hospital Research Ethics Committee.

R&D contracts should be open to tender wherever appropriate.

Spontaneous R&D proposals may be pursued if they are in line with agreed SGH priorities but should be viewed in relation to other potential contractors.

Potential R&D researchers should be informed of SGH procedures and likely time scales for commissioning R&D.

No financial commitments should be made to researchers until formal applications have been received and considered.

R&D applicants should be required to set out details of the R&D objectives, methodology, outputs, timetable and resources required, in a formal protocol and to a standard format.

R&D applications should be routinely peer reviewed by suitably qualified referees and their anonymised comments fed back to researchers; revisions to applications may be considered appropriate.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

All costs should be scrutinised and should be in line with SGH policy on financing R&D before being finally agreed.

Customer approval for the final protocol should be obtained and availability of funds confirmed before a contract is issued.

Agreed support for R&D should be on the basis of a formal contract letter and subject to standard terms and conditions.

Arrangements for project management and liaison should be agreed with the researchers from the outset to ensure that policy and management developments are taken into account and customers' objective met.

Plans for major surveys within projects should be sent to the Statistician.

Researchers are expected to provide progress reports and a final report of their study; other reports and outputs required should be negotiated with researchers.

All final reports should be peer reviewed to assess the scientific quality of the research conducted and ensure that it is sufficiently robust to inform policy and management.

The policy and management implications of the completed R&D should then be considered with customers.

The appropriate publication of results from R&D should be encouraged in accordance with standard hospital terms and conditions of contract.

Where necessary, more detailed dissemination strategies should be developed and pursued, in collaboration with Hospital facilities for dissemination of R&D based information.

Arrangements should be made for the protection and appropriate exploitation of intellectual property generated by the R&D.

The impact of completed R&D on policy and management should be assessed, with lessons drawn where impact has been less than intended.

Plans for and use of all resources should be reported to the Hospital.

Review Report

on a Capital Development to support Training, Education and Research at SGH

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