

Northern Ireland



Social Care Council  
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**Social Care Council Board Meeting**  
**Confirmed minutes**  
**10.00a.m on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**  
**Via Zoom videoconference**

**Present:**

Paul Martin (CHAIR)  
Noelle Barton, Board Member  
Neil Bodger, Board Member  
Sarah Browne, Board Member  
Roslyn Doherty, Board Member  
Gerard Guckian, Board Member  
Christine Hunter, Board Member  
Brenda Maitland, Board Member  
Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member  
Anne O'Reilly, Board Member  
Lee Wilson, Board Member

**In Attendance:**

Patricia Higgins, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council  
Declan McAllister, Dir. of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council  
Maureen Martin, Secretariat, Social Care Council  
Marian O'Rourke, Interim Director of Regulation & Standards  
Sandra Stranaghan, Policy and Operations Manager, Social Care Council  
Claire Trainor, Communication & Engagement Manager, Social Care Council

**Observer(s): None**

**Apologies:**

Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer, Department of Health  
Carolyn Ewart, Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers  
David Hayes, Board Member  
Kate Harrison, Board Apprentice  
Roberta Magee, Chair of the Social Care Council Registrants' Forum  
Catherine McPhillips, Board Member (not able to link in)

Item	Agenda	Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
1.1	The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting via Zoom videoconference facilities. The Director of Registration & Corporate Services gave a brief overview of the etiquette and management of the videoconference by the Chair in order to ensure that all participants were able to effectively engage and contribute to discussion.	
1.2	Apologies were noted from Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer, Carolyn Ewart, Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers, David Hayes, Board Member, Kate Harrison, Board Apprentice and Roberta Magee, Chair of the Social Care Council Registrants' Forum.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
2.1	None to note.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Chair's Business</b>	
3.1	<p>The Chair noted that many scheduled meetings had been cancelled_or postponed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic period in March 2020.</p> <p><u>Landscape Review</u></p> <p>Richard Humphries, SCIE has completed face to face and telephone meetings with Board members. The Chair reported that he had received positive feedback from Mr. Humphries and is anticipating the release of the Landscape Review Report within the next several weeks.</p>	
3.2	<p><u>NICON Chairs meetings</u></p> <p>The Chair reported on several NICON Chairs' meetings that had been attended which had primarily focused the current crisis and the Board management of business and governance during the pandemic. A number of Chairs are involved with developing a governance system for implementation during the crisis</p>	
3.3	<p>The Board formally expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Social Care Council Executive team and staff during this period and for the quality of resources and materials that have been made available within a short time frame. The Chair also recorded thanks on behalf of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), Health Minister and officials for the positive attitude of the Council, the direct engagement with the Department of Health and for the production of high quality resources for the social care workforce. The CSWO had noted that the contribution of the Council had brought about a change in perspective going forward on the positioning of the organisation as a front line service.</p>	
3.4	The Chair reported that materials produced by the Council for the	

	social care workforce on Infection Control and ‘Hope, Hints and “How to” resources have been well received by the sector. Three additional resources; Loneliness, Professional Resilience and Self-Care are to be made available in the coming weeks. The Council has issued a letter of thanks and support to registrants on behalf of the Department of Health.	
3.5	<p>The Director of Registration &amp; Corporate Services (DRCS) reported that the Department of Health have issued a revised Annual Report and Accounts timetable which defers key submission dates by an additional two weeks. Key date changes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due date for submission of the Annual Report &amp; Accounts has moved from 7<sup>th</sup> May to 26<sup>th</sup> May;</li> <li>• Due date for laying of accounts has moved from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> July</li> </ul> <p>The DRCS confirmed that the Council is working with BSO Finance to prepare the accounts in line with the original timetable and the dates will only be changed if BSO are impacted by COVID related illness.</p> <p>The Annual Report is in the formatting stage and will be shared with members in advance. The draft Governance Statement will be presented at the May Audit &amp; Risk Committee and the draft Annual Report will be brought to the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> June for approval. The final draft Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted at the Board meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June for final sign off.</p>	
3.6	The Chair advised members that the Ground clearing meeting and End of Year Accountability meeting with Sponsor Branch have been withdrawn due to current circumstances.	
3.7	The DRCS noted that a revised version of Paper H (Millennium House lease) has been uploaded for review and approval at agenda item 7.6. The revised paper has an additional line outlining that the Council has raised the increased rental costs for the extended lease period as a pressure to the Sponsoring Department. It was noted that the timescale for the refurbishment of the new office premises may have to be increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Interim Chief Executive’s Report</b>	
4.1	<p>The Interim Chief Executive gave a brief overview of the report and noted that the primary focus during the February to 31 March period was the implementation of emergency planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the set-up and transfer of business operation via remote working capability.</p> <p>The following key areas were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Communications team have supported the increased development of online resources and videos for social care</li> </ul>	

	<p>and social work. The HSC logo has been added to the social care certificate to enable social care workers to be identified as essential workers and the team has been liaising closely with supermarkets and the PSNI to support this inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Executive team is working strategically across the health and social care system and with UK social care and social work regulators to ensure the Council is aligned in the approach to regulatory business.</li> <li>• Regular meetings have been scheduled with the Chief Executives of regional organisations, BASW and the Social Work Leadership Network and the Council is supporting the Department of Health around the recruitment of nearly qualified Social Workers.</li> <li>• In order to facilitate the return of emergency social care workers to the workforce, the Council had agreed with the Department of Health to waive the registration fee for 6 months. At the end of this period, the fee will be sought from those wishing to remain on the register.</li> </ul> <p>The Director of Regulation &amp; Standards responded to a query from a Board member regarding the sudden notification on the cessation of social work student placements. It was confirmed that, in light of COVID-19, the decision had been made by the Vice Chancellor of the Ulster University to terminate the placements of student social workers early for health and safety reasons. The Social Care Council had been asked by the Department of Health (DoH) to support the early graduation of student social workers and had been engaged with universities and employers towards the early qualification process. The Social Care Council issued a letter to social work students explaining the reason for the early cessation of placements and giving information on work being undertaken to support early entry to the workforce.</p> <p>The interim Head of Workforce Development is working with the DoH and Trust Governance leads to ensure that as there are opportunities to build in enhanced levels of support in relation to early entry to the workforce and for newly qualified social work students. It was agreed that a broader piece of work would be needed to give these students an opportunity to reflect on the different journey taken for qualification and during their first year in employment.</p> <p><b><i>Decision: The Board noted the Interim Chief Executive's Report</i></b></p>	
6.	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
6.1	There were no matters arising.	

<b>7.</b>	<b>Business Information</b>	
7.1	<i>COVID-19 Assurance Report including Business Continuity: Supplementary Plan in Managing a Pandemic – Paper C for information</i>	
7.1.1	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Control and Command arrangements were activated as part of the Business Continuity Plan. Command and Control, which is headed by the Senior Leadership Team, meet three times per week and will continue to meet until complete business recovery is in place. A COVID-19 Risk had been raised on the Risk Register and progress against controls and actions is reviewed at each of the Command and Control meetings. The risk has 9 controls in place with 62 of 68 actions completed.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Assurance report and supplementary plan was issued to the Board in advance to allow sufficient time for a detailed review. In order to assist with the management of the Zoom Board meeting, members were requested to send any queries and comments directly to the Executive team for response by email.</p> <p>The DRCS gave an overview of the Assurance Report and noted the following key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of Social Care Council staff now have access to laptops/tablets for remote working;</li> <li>• Communications on the Social Care Council website and social media, alongside targeted correspondence is ongoing to provide information and resources through the pandemic period;</li> <li>• The Senior Leadership team continues to maintain regular contact with the DoH and Chief Social Work Officer;</li> <li>• The Social Care Council is managing the registration of new and returning registrants including the waiver of the fee for 6 months in order to expedite the registration process and support the sector;</li> <li>• A Fitness to Practise Briefing paper ( Appendix IV) provided to the DoH for assurance is included in the report and outlines the operational arrangements during the period of remote working;</li> <li>• An internal Business Log is being maintained to record all cancelled and postponed meetings, training, events, projects and process changes and will inform the Business Recovery Plan;</li> <li>• The Chief Executive shares a weekly update with all staff and partnerships.</li> </ul> <p>The DRCS confirmed the following agency staff in post</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 - Fitness to Practise team</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 – Database team</li> <li>• 1 – Registration team</li> </ul> <p>All agency staff have been retained and are set up for remote working. The agency staff in the Database and Registration teams has had their placements extended to the end of June. The agency staff in the Fitness to Practise team will be extended subject to the outcome of the business case submitted to the DoH.</p> <p>In response to a query on the issue of Personal Protective equipment (PPE), the Chief Executive noted that as the Council does not have expertise in this area, the organisation is signposting to the Public Health Authority (PHA) guidance.</p> <p>The Senior Leadership team agreed with the proposal that the COVID-19 Assurance report should be maintained during the current crisis as a live document. It was noted that the report could be used as an audit trail to record activity, to show proactivity in the promotion of guidance and raising concerns and as an aid in the medium term planning process. The Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee will be involved in monitoring the Assurance report and providing oversight of the proposal. It was agreed that discussion of strategic risks as a result of the pandemic would be deferred to an appropriate time.</p> <p><b><i>Decision: The Board noted the COVID-9 Assurance Report including Business Continuity: Supplementary Plan in Managing a Pandemic and that the report should be maintained as an update for the Board during the current crisis</i></b></p>	
7.2	<i>Quarter 4 Business Performance Report – Paper D for approval</i>	
7.2.1	<p>The DRCS requested approval from the Board for the Quarter 4 Business Performance report which details the performance of the organisation in the last quarter of the 2019/20 business year and the cumulative position for the year. It was noted that the data includes information up to the end February 2020 instead of the end March due to the reprioritisation of business in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Mitigation for the following KPIs was brought to the attention of the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI 2 - Process 100% of applications / renewals within 20 days</b> This KPI is under at 93% at end February 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic additional staff from other functions has been trained to support the registration of the workforce particularly, the Emergency Applications.</li> <li>• <b>KPI 4 - Triage 100% of new referrals to Fitness to</b></li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Practise Team within 3 days</b> This KPI is under at 96% at end February 2020. The Board are aware of the particular pressures which have been in place for the Fitness to Practise team and that we continue to support this team through additional agency staff provision. The cumulative total for this KPI relates to a total of 450 referrals completed up to end of month 11, 17 of which took an additional 3-5 days to complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>KPI 5 - 100% of ISOs concluded within 4 weeks of referral</b> This KPI is under at 88% at end February 2020. A particular difficulty with this KPI is that the volumes are low and any divergence from the delivery of the KPI by a small number of days has a negative impact. By way of context, a total of 26 ISO's were concluded up to month 11, of which 3 required an extra day/week to conclude. No additional risk to the public has been identified as a result of the additional days required to conclude these ISOs.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked the DRCS for the presentation of the report and the Board approved the Quarter 4 Business Performance Report.</p> <p><b>Decision: The Board approval the Quarter 4 Business Performance Report</b></p>	
7.3	<i>Finance Performance Report to 29th February 2020- Paper E for approval</i>	
7.3.1	<p>The DRCS gave an overview of the Finance Performance Report to 29th February 2020 and the supplementary Breakeven report provided. The DRCS reported that the Social Care Council had maintained a breakeven position with an under spend of £524. The DRCS commented that the under spend reflected a positive position for the Social Care Council given the small number of non-recurrent allocations and large non- recurrent revenue received in year from the Department of Health. A full finance report to the end of March will be provided to the Board.</p> <p>The Board commended the Executive team on the breakeven position of the organisation and the detailed finance reporting.</p> <p><b>Decision: The Board approved the Finance Performance Report to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020</b></p>	
7.4	<i>Business Plan 2020/ 21 - Paper F for approval</i>	
7.4.1	<p>The DRCS confirmed that the Business Plan has been in production since 2019 and consultation has been sought from the Board and colleagues.</p> <p>The impact of COVID-19 has now been reflected in several areas of the Business Plan; the Chief Executive's introduction, Strategic content and Business Planning Assumptions.</p>	

	<p>An additional supporting paper was provided to the Board outlining the potential impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Business Plan objectives and to give more detail on the feasibility in the delivery of objectives. It was noted that objectives of a red RAG status are not anticipated and a progress report on objectives should be available to the Board in November/December 2020.</p> <p>It was agreed that as the profile and perception of the social care sector and the Council have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, the wording of objective on Workforce Development (strategic theme 3) may need to be reviewed to consolidate the current challenges. The reference to full and complete engagement will be revised to reduced engagement due to COVID-19. Members noted the excellent quality of the reported and particularly noted the helpful presentation of the glossary at the front of the report.</p> <p>Discussion took place around the position of the Social Care Council to capture data and evidence during the current crisis that would be useful in the future. The DRCS confirmed that data analytics are a key ambition for the Council and a small resource has been allocated in the Database team for the production of analytics with a potential to progress an additional resource in the Department of Health. The Workforce Development team are looking at how to build a bank of intelligence and the reflections of practitioners during that may help to understand the positives and challenges of practice during this period.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the use of the collective term ‘Board’ instead of ‘Council’ is still under review.</p> <p><b><i>Decision: The Board approved the Business Plan 2020/21 subject to the addition of qualifications highlighting the context under which the report was produced.</i></b></p>	
7.5	<i>Corporate Strategy – Paper G for approval</i>	
7.5.1	<p>At a Board Strategic session on 11 March, executives had presented a proposed timeline commence engagement and consultation on the new Corporate Strategy for the period 2021 – 2025.</p> <p>The DRCS advised that, in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Care Council seeks the approval of the Department of Health to extend its current Corporate Plan by one year with a view to engaging on a new Corporate Strategy from April 2022.</p> <p>In response to a query, the DRCS confirmed that it was expected that the all but one of the current Board members would be still be in position during the revised Corporate Plan consultation period.</p> <p>A line will be inserted into the Business Plan on the revised</p>	



	<p>timeline for the Corporate Strategy subject to approval of the proposal by the Department of Health.</p> <p><b>Decision: The Board approved the proposal for the Chief Executive to write to the Department of Health requesting an extension to the current Corporate Plan by one year with a view to engaging on a new Corporate Strategy from April 2022</b></p> <p><b>Action: Letter to be written to the Department of Health requesting an extension to the current Corporate Plan by one year with a view to engaging on a new Corporate Strategy from April 2022</b></p>	<p><b>Chief Executive</b></p>
<p>7.6</p>	<p><i>Millennium House Lease – Paper H for information</i></p>	
<p>7.6.1</p>	<p>The DRCS advised that the Social Care Council is due to move premises to James House, Belfast as part of the Belfast Optimisation Project. It was originally planned that the move to James House would coincide with the ending of the current lease, however due to slippage on the Belfast Optimisation Project, the move to James House is now not expected to take place until summer 2022.</p> <p>The Social Care Council engaged Property Management Services in the Department of Finance and Personnel to negotiate on its behalf for an extension to its lease at Millennium House. A new lease has been agreed with the landlord until 31 August 2022 with an increase in the rent from £16.65 to £20 per square foot. This has been confirmed as in line with current sector rates for the building by the Department of Finance.</p> <p>Table 1 in the report sets out a breakdown of the additional rental cost for Millennium House incurred for the period April 2020 to August 2022 with a final figure of £127,163. The DRCS highlighted that the rental pressure has been raised with the DOH Sponsoring Unit and Finance, however the savings that would result from the move to James House in terms of the reduction in rent over a 10 year period was outlined.</p> <p>The Board agreed to approve the lease on the basis that the financial pressure raised with the DOH would be funded.</p> <p>The lease has been signed and witnessed by the Executive team however it is not able to be sealed due to current circumstances and this will be completed at a later date.</p> <p><b>Decision: The Board approved the Millennium House Lease extension. Members formally recorded their concerns in relation to the additional costs incurred by the increase in rent.</b></p>	

<b>8.</b>	<b>Governance Matters</b>	
8.1	<i>Board Self-Assessment Action Plan sign off – Paper I for sign off</i>	
8.1.1	<p>The DRCS advised that the Board is required to carry out a self-assessment every year using the Department of Health ‘Board Governance Self-Assessment Tool’. The outcomes of the annual assessment are reported in the Social Care Council’s Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Report and Accounts. Paper provides an update on last year’s assessment and a review of the current year.</p> <p>The template for the Board Self-Assessment is provided by the Department of Health and comprises four Board Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Composition and Commitment</li> <li>• Board Evaluation, Development and Learning</li> <li>• Board Insight and Foresight</li> <li>• Board Engagement and Involvement</li> </ul> <p>The Board were invited to review the draft Self-Assessment for 2019/20 and two areas assessed as Amber/Green were explained as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Criteria 1.2 - Where appropriate, the Board includes people with relevant technical and professional expertise</b> Action: Only one Board Member has financial experience. We are therefore taking this up with the Department of Health and the Public Appointments Unit as part of the planning for future Board appointments.</li> <li>• <b>Criteria 2.3 – Board Members should be appropriately inducted</b> Action: Board Member induction, including attendance at external training courses, takes place however a review of induction is underway to strengthen how induction is managed and rolled out.</li> </ul> <p>The DRCS gave an update on the 2018/19 Action Plan and noted that the Interim Chief Executive appointment has been highlighted again in this year’s assessment and is expected to be resolved during 2020/21 following the outcome of the Landscape Review</p> <p>In response to queries relating to key messages and Board engagement, the DRCS confirmed that development of a Board pack is underway and should be available in the coming months. The Board pack will support ongoing learning and ambassadorial role of members and will include a new Board governance manual and an Ambassador pack.</p> <p>Subject to consideration by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Self-Assessment template will be finalised for signing by</li> </ul>	

	<p>the Chair;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the actions identified will be updated in a new action plan;</li> <li>• the outcome will be reported in the Governance Statement for 2019/20.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision: The Board approved the Board Self-Assessment Action Plan.</b></p>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Any other Business</b>	
9.1	The Chair thanked executives for the production and digital issue of the Board papers. The Chair reiterated that members should engage directly with officials with any comments and concerns relating to the Board papers.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Dates of next meetings</b>	
10.1	<p>The DRCS advised that the next two meetings have been converted to formal Board meetings to ensure that members are regularly updated during the current pandemic period.</p> <p>A fortnightly update will be shared with the Board outlining actions and work undertaken and materials/resources requested by the DoH and social care sector.</p> <p>The Landscape Review report will be made available to members as soon as it is received to allow feedback before it is formally endorsed and presented.</p> <p>The Board Strategic session on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was approved for conversion to a formal Board meeting.</p>	

Signed by: **Paul Martin** (*Chair, Northern Ireland Social Care Council*)

**Date:** *Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020*

**Signature:** 

## **Action List**

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>
7.5.1	Letter to be written to the Department of Health requesting an extension to the current Corporate Plan by one year with a view to engaging on a new Corporate Strategy from April 2022.	Chief Executive	Ongoing

### **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>
Members to read the Business Plan 2020-2021 and provide feedback to the Policy and Operations Manager by the end of February.	ALL	Ongoing
Aine Morrison to be invited to next Board meeting to present updates on the Mental Capacity Act.	JA/MM	Ongoing
Query of ownership of risk [STN01] Social Care Workforce at next Workforce Review Group.	MO'R	Ongoing
Dates and times for upcoming landscape review to be circulated to Members.	MM	Completed