

Northern Ireland



Social Care Council
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**Social Care Council Board Meeting
Confirmed Minutes
10.00a.m on Wednesday 27th May 2020
Via Zoom videoconference**

Present:

Paul Martin (CHAIR)
Noelle Barton, Board Member
Neil Bodger, Board Member
Sarah Browne, Board Member
Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member
Gerard Guckian, Board Member
David Hayes, Board Member
Christine Hunter, Board Member
Brenda Maitland, Board Member
Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member
Catherine McPhillips, 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
Claire Trainor, Communication & Engagement Manager, Social Care Council

Observer(s):

Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer, Department of Health (audio only)

Apologies:

Carolyn Ewart, BASW (N.I.)
Kate Harrison, Board Apprentice
Roberta Magee, Chair of the Social Care Council Registrants' Forum

Item	Agenda	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting via Zoom videoconference facilities.	
1.2	Apologies were noted from Carolyn Ewart, BASW (N.I), Kate Harrison, Board Apprentice and Roberta Magee, Chair of the Social Care Council Registrants' Forum.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	None to note.	
3.	Chair's Business	
3.1	<p>The Chair advised the Board that he had attended two meetings of the NICON Chairs Committee where the focus had been on the response of all Boards and Trusts to the Covid-19 pandemic. The view emerging from these exchanges was that we were moving to a new phase of this pandemic, one which was beginning to shift the focus to re-setting the health and social care agenda going forward.</p> <p>Work had been progressed, with a number of Board members involved, on drafting a social care section for the Non – Executive Directors' guidance and governance document currently being prepared.</p> <p>Finally, the Chair advised that he had attended a meeting of the Leaders in Social Care partnership which had been extremely useful. Many comments offered at this meeting had been constructive and forward looking in the post-Covid period. It had been agreed that he would write to the Minister outlining the main issues arising from the meeting and seeking a meeting with the Minister in due course to follow up on this.</p>	
4.	Interim Chief Executive's Report - Paper A for information	
4.1	<p>The Interim Chief Executive gave a brief overview of the report which outlines key activity undertaken for the period 1st April – 15th May 2020 to continue to deliver business remotely and support registrants and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Executive advised that the new learning resource for registrants: <i>Resilience and Well-Being for Social Care Workers</i> has been now been launched.</p> <p>The following key areas were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended two remote meetings of the Social Work Leadership Network (SWLN), connecting social work leaders, sharing information and experience, and agreeing a communication campaign to support social workers. The 	

	<p>Head of Communications and Engagement is working with this group to gather leadership messages and social work stories to build the campaign and promote the contribution of social work at this time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended two remote Leaders in Social Care Partnership meetings to share experience and discuss issues during COVID-19. The Partnership has identified the importance of continuing to progress the reform programme for social care and is keen to support a promotional campaign to showcase the contribution and value of social care; • Regular engagement has been maintained with Skills for Care & Development and UK Regulators groups to ensure continued connection to colleagues across countries and social care systems; • As the annual Professional in Practice (PiP) Award ceremony is not able to be held this year, a celebration of award recipients using a social media campaign focusing on each award category is planned. This year three social workers have achieved the new Advanced Scholarship award which will be promoted through the celebration campaign. The Interim Chief Executive to discuss a member's suggestion with the Head of Communications for acceptance/commencement speeches to be used as part of the PiP awards social media campaign. <p><i>Decision: The Board noted the Interim Chief Executive's Report.</i></p>	
5.	Minutes of previous Board Meeting of 22nd April 2020 - for approval	
5.1	<i>Decision: The Board approved the minutes of the Board Meeting of 22nd April 2020</i>	
6.	Matters Arising	
6.1	<i>Letter to DoH on extension of Corporate Plan - for noting</i>	
6.1.1	<p>The interim Chief Executive confirmed that the letter on the extension of the Corporate Plan has been issued to Sponsor Body and members will be updated once a reply has been received.</p> <p><i>Decision: The Board noted the letter to the Department of Health on the extension of the Corporate Plan.</i></p>	
7.	Business Matters	
7.1	<i>Draft Business Transition Plan - Paper B - for approval</i>	
7.1.1	<p>The DCRS presented the draft Business Transition Plan for Board approval and the following were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is anticipated that the plan will change as social distancing changes over time and considers how the business is delivered over the next few months and years; 	

- The plan outlines a 3 phased approach to transitioning to office based working that takes into account the needs of the organisation, the needs of its workforce and the need to ensure the safety of staff;
- Phase 1 – the office is an optional location for staff. Intelligence gathered over the last few weeks indicate that some staff would prefer to maintain a mixture of office and home working and a small number of staff prefer to be solely office based. The Senior Leadership team support an agile working approach and will work to facilitate a range of options subject to business needs. It was confirmed that social distancing measures, including the use of flexi glass partitions, could be implemented in the office to safely accommodate 25 - 30 staff. A range of protocols for staff will be introduced in relation to sanitisation and use of kitchen facilities in the office;
- Phase 2 - fewer social distancing measures are in place and some meetings may be held in the workplace in line with advice. More staff can be accommodated in the workplace. Management of phones and a website chat function would be considered for registrants. Visitors are not allowed on site and videoconference arrangements for meetings and Committee hearings will be maintained. It was noted that consideration is needed on the cost implications for the provision of Health & Safety requirements and equipment at home;
- Phase 3 – social distancing measures are no longer in place and agile working will be part of staff terms and conditions. An Agile Working Policy will be developed going forward as there is no current Home Working Policy in place;
- Phases 1,2 and 3 may change depending on government advice;
- The Assurance Plan can be reactivated and the transition to home working implemented within 24 hours in the event of a second wave of the pandemic;
- Feedback indicates that staff feel connected and well communicated with;
- A more detailed Operation Plan sits under the Business Transition Plan and includes office fit out needs and purchase of Perspex screens.

The Interim Chief Executive highlighted that a factor for onsite meetings and visitors will be transit to floor as the Social Care Council is on the seventh floor of a highly populated building. The current arrangement with the landlord is one person per lift at one time.

In response to a query regarding the agile workforce planning in relation to the move to James House, the DRCS assured the

	<p>Board that the Belfast Optimisation Project leads had given several presentations and the Social Care Council were mindful in the design of the office to provide a flexible working space for a variety of type of staff; touchdown, agile and office based. The Belfast Optimisation Project are taking cognisance of the current pandemic and adjusting as necessary. For example, in light of the pandemic the principle of shared desk space may need to managed appropriately.</p> <p>The DRCS confirmed that as all fees have been deferred until October 2020, there is no office based payment facility currently needed. Phase 2 will enable people to pay their registration fee in the office and arrangements for this will be driven by guidance from the Assembly.</p> <p>Decision: The Board approved the draft Business Transition Plan.</p>	
7.2	<i>COVID-19 Assurance Progress Report - Paper C for approval</i>	
7.2.1	<p>The DRCS advised that the COVID-19 Assurance Progress report provided an update from the paper presented at the April Board meeting and noted that supporting governance documents are now available in the Decision Time library.</p> <p>The DRCS gave an overview of the report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation has been working remotely for ten weeks; • Five remote hearings have been conducted via Zoom since April Board meeting; • Weekly business reports have been developed for issue to staff and Partnerships; • COVID-19 risk was discussed at ARAC and the Risk Management Committee and the assessment of the risk remains at high due to its impact on the organisation; • There are 65 actions against the COVID-19 risk of which 62 have been completed; • The Head of Fitness to Practise managed the process for t Social Work returners to the register, at the request of the Department of Health. Details of 24 returned pro formas were received and details sent to the relevant Health Trusts; • 1,259 emergency registration applications have been received and are being processed through the emergency application route; • 4 COVID related Fitness to Practise referrals were received from employers of which two did not meet the Standards of Acceptance. It was noted that the number of Fitness to Practise referrals have started to rise again since the return to business as normal for employers; 	

	<p>A member queried how many of 726 newly registered social care staff had applied due to furlough and whether it was expected that they would remain on the register and pursue as a career. The DRCS confirmed that comparative analysis on those remaining on the register should be available in October as the registration fee will be sought at this time. A report on the intelligence gathered can be brought to the October Board meeting for review.</p> <p>Members commended the Executive Team on the rapid transition of the organisation to agile working and the implementation of the Business Continuity Plan. The work of the Social Care Council was acknowledged for not only maintaining business as usual but for exploring more avenues due to the current crisis and raising the profile of the organisation.</p> <p>Action: Comparative Analysis Report on Social Care registrants remaining on register post-COVID to be brought to a future Board meeting</p> <p>Decision: The Board approved the COVID-19 Assurance Progress Report.</p>	DRCS
8.	Performance Reporting	
8.1	<i>Financial Performance Report at year end 2019/20 - Paper D for approval</i>	
8.1.1	<p>The DRCS presented the Financial Performance Report for approval and outlined the key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A final breakeven position of £8776 was achieved which is well within the breakeven target. The surplus relates to an overcharge of £6k to a previous Non-Executive Director and additional costs due to the relaxation of the carryover of Annual Leave during pandemic. • Board members have been provided with a full draft set of accounts at Appendix 1 • Capital underspend of £1600 • Prompt payment targets met; 97% paid within 30 days and 78 % paid within 10 days 	
8.2	<i>Budget Profile Report 2021- Paper E for review</i>	
8.2.1	<p>The DRCS presented an overview of the Budget Profile Report 2021 and highlighted the following key details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opening allocation does not include the additional pressure outlined in the approved Fitness to Practice business case of £166k. The DOH Sponsoring Unit are currently reviewing this with DOH finance; • The opening allocation does not include any transformation funding for 2020/21 as this has not been agreed as yet due to COVID related priorities; • The Budget Profile shows a current end of year overspend 	

	<p>position of £195k and there are potential savings of approximately £50k expected in some areas due to COVID-19 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Printing and Stationary ✓ Telephone and Postage ✓ Travel ✓ Catering ✓ Electricity ✓ Training 5220 ✓ Legal and Committee Fees ✓ General Services <p>Next steps include continued engagement with the DOH on the outcome of the business case for Fitness to Practice. COVID–19 expenditure was £30k in March and £15k in April and a monthly forecast profile has to be provided to Sponsor Body. It is expected that COVID 19 specific expenditure will be covered by a separate COVID 19 allocation.</p> <p>The DRCS confirmed that some of the projected deficit is historical and has been impacted by the annual previous efficiency savings requested by the Department of Health. The DRCS advised that the report had been provided for information only and approval was not being sought from the Board as the report reflects an over spend which has been highlighted at a number of key meetings previously.</p> <p><i>Decision: The Board noted the Budget Profile Report 2021.</i></p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Governance</p>	
<p>9.1</p>	<p><i>Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 - Paper F for review - to follow</i></p>	
<p>9.1.1</p>	<p>The DRCS gave an overview of the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 and the following were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were requested to review and feedback to Social Care Council officials on the early draft in advance of the next Board meeting on 24 June. The draft report will be presented for approval at the June Board meeting which will allow for submission to the N.I Audit Office by early July as per the accounts timetable; • The accounts section of the report has been reviewed by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and will be finalised at the ARAC on the 10th June. It was noted the Annual Report takes account of the work that was done towards the end of the business year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Chair and Chief Executive’s Introduction and Reports reflect this work. • The Social Care Council has successfully delivered its business objectives for the year and continues to work towards its strategic outcomes. The organisation broke 	

	<p>even at year end and can account for the management of its finances and resources for the year;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair and deputy Chair of the Participation Forum have given feedback on the work of the partnership for the PPI Report (Personal and Public Involvement) which reflects the work of the Participation Forum and the work of the Council with people who use services and their carers; • The Annual Report and Accounts will be subject to review by the Audit Office and a final draft will be brought to the Board in June for final approval, prior to publishing online.. It was advised that a short term version of the report will be available subject to review of resources in August; • The Remuneration Report will be presented to the Remuneration Committee at the meeting on 10 June and members were requested to send any queries on this section of report to the DRCS for response. <p>The Chair thanked all the contributors to the Annual Report and noted the excellent production and easy to read content.</p> <p>A member reported that anecdotal positive feedback had been received in relation to the responsiveness of the Social Care Council during the current crisis. The DRCS noted the recommendation for the availability of a shorter, more accessible version of the Annual Report and this will be considered based on resources available.</p> <p>Decision: The Board noted the Draft Annual Report and Accounts.</p>	
9.2	Policy Pack for approval - Papers G - I included	
9.2.1	<i>Staff Travel and Subsistence Policy - Paper G for approval</i>	
9.2.1.1	<p>As a regional or BSO policy is not in place, this policy was developed to address an outstanding recommendation from an Internal Audit Report and to clarify what can and what cannot be claimed for. The Policy aims to cover all aspects of travel, how to claim for reimbursement and the arrangements for travel outside of NI. Staff have been operating in line with the draft Policy, pending its review by the Board. The DRCS confirmed that as a Home working Policy does not exist, it will be highlighted to staff that Millennium House is considered as base and not the individual's home.</p> <p>Decision: The Board approved the Staff Travel and Subsistence Policy.</p>	
9.2.2	<i>Complaints Management Policy - Paper H for approval</i>	
9.2.2.1	<p>Minor changes have been made to Complaints Management Policy and the organisation is working with the HSC Leadership Centre to develop a training package for staff that can be delivered by way of a webinar.</p>	

	<p>The DRCS confirmed 2- 6 as the average number of formal complaints received per year. Complaints are brought to the Risk Management Committee and the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee for review and recording and to ensure the correct system is in place to enable and the capture and raising of formal complaints.</p> <p>The DRCS noted that the performance on responding to registrants' email queries has improved during the current period of remote working which is likely due to the registration telephone system not being in place.</p> <p>Decision: The Board approved the Complaints Management Policy.</p>	
9.2.3	<i>Adverse Incident Policy - Paper I for approval</i>	
9.2.3.1	<p>In response to a query on learning arising from 'near misses ' in relation to Adverse Incidents, the DRCS confirmed that anything that is not normal business or of particular note is discussed at Operational Leadership Team meetings. Near misses are brought to Risk Management Committee. Any lessons learned are reported to the Senior Leadership team and inform future guidance.</p> <p>It was agreed that the definition of an adverse incident under section 3.1 of the Adverse Incident Policy would be clarified.</p> <p>Action: the definition of an Adverse Incident under section 3.1 of the Adverse Incident Policy to be clarified.</p> <p>Decision: The Board approved the Adverse Incident Policy subject to the above amendment.</p>	DRCS
10.	AOB	
10.1	<p>The DRCS advised that the Department of Health have just received the Landscape Review report as it had been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19. The report reflects positive feedback from service users and carers and supports the constructive role and need for the Social Care Council.</p> <p>The report will be reviewed by SLT and should be available to members for review in advance of the next Board meeting on 24th June.</p>	
10.2	Members thanked the Interim Chief Executive and Head of Communication for the weekly updates and the use of plain English in the updates.	
10.3	Birthday wishes were extended to the Chair on behalf of the Board and organisation.	
11.	Dates of next meetings	

11.1	The following key meeting dates were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remuneration Committee – 10.00a.m Wednesday 10 June 2020• Audit & Risk Assurance Committee- 10.30a.m Wednesday 10 June 2020• Board meeting - 10.00a.m Wednesday 24 June 2020	
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Signed by: **Paul Martin** (*Chair, Northern Ireland Social Care Council*)

Date: 24th June 2020

Signature: 

ACTION LIST

Wednesday 27th May 2020

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER	PROGRESS
7.2.1	Comparative Analysis Report on Social Care registrants remaining on register post-COVID to be brought to a future Board meeting	DRCS	Ongoing
9.2.3.1	The definition of an Adverse Incident under section 3.1 of the Adverse Incident Policy to be clarified.	DRCS	Ongoing

Wednesday 22nd April 2020

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER	PROGRESS
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	Completed

Wednesday 5th February 2020

ACTION	OWNER	PROGRESS
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