Lay Membership of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's Registration and Fitness to Practise Committees

Information Pack

Closing Date: **THURSDAY 19 MAY 2022 at 4 pm**

Interview Date: **MONDAY 13 JUNE 2022**

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Introduction from Mr Paul Martin, Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) is the regulator for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland. This workforce includes social care workers, social workers and social work students. Our role is to raise the quality of social care practice, to strengthen safeguards to protect people using social care services and to increase public confidence in our workforce.

There are approximately 43,000 people in the social care workforce. Social Care Council registrants are committed to meeting the Standards for their conduct and practice, and are required to update their skills and knowledge throughout their social care career.

The changing nature of social care means that we require both a robust and adaptable system of workforce regulation. Our Registration and Fitness to Practise procedures are vital to protect the 200,000 people who use care services from unsuitable individuals who fall short of the standards expected of a registered worker. Only by taking action when it is required can we hope to maintain a proud and professional social care workforce.

The Social Care Council Registration and Fitness to Practise Committees play a key role in delivering our registration and regulation systems in a fair and transparent way. To ensure that Committees reflect the interests of all of those involved in social care and those who use the services they provide, Committee Members are drawn from a range of staff in different job roles across the social care sector and lay people who wish to contribute to regulation.

The Committee Member role demands sound judgement, impartiality and the ability to apply fair and proportionate sanctions where appropriate. The success and public perception of the Social Care Council will be partly measured by the performance and decisions of members of its Committees which consider a registrant's suitability to register with the Social Care Council or to remain on the Register.

If you have the necessary qualities we need, and would like to assist us in assessing the suitability of applicants to join the Social Care Council Register and assessing evidence of allegations against registrants by participating as a Committee Member, then we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Martin
Chair
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

About the Social Care Council

The Social Care Council is a non-departmental public body accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and sponsored by the Department of Health. The Social Care Council was founded in 2001 as the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. We are one of 12 UK health and social care regulators established to ensure that health and social care workers are regulated against agreed standards.

On 01 June 2005, registration became compulsory for social workers in Northern Ireland and protection of title was enforced, meaning that anyone not registered with the Social Care Council who uses the title 'social worker' is committing an offence. It is also compulsory for the following groups of social care workers to be registered:

1. A member of care staff at a:
   a.) Children's home;
   b.) Residential care home;
   c.) Nursing home;
   d.) Day care setting;
   e.) Residential family centre.

2. A person who is supplied by a domiciliary care agency to provide personal care in their own homes for persons who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability are unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.

3. A manager of a:
   a.) Residential care home;
   b.) Day care setting;
   c.) Residential family care centre;
   d.) Domiciliary care agency.

The total number of social workers, student social workers and social care workers on the Register is currently around 43,000.

Our organisational aim is to protect the public through improving safeguards for vulnerable people, raising the standards of social care practice and strengthening the professionalism of the workforce.

Social workers and social care workers provide vital care and support to over 200,000 service users across Northern Ireland every day, helping them to live their lives as independently and safely as possible. Registration with the Social Care Council, and the requirement for registrants to continually update their training, helps to protect the public from poor standards and gives social care workers the professional recognition which they deserve.

The Social Care Council has a statutory requirement to produce and publish standards of conduct and practice which are expected of social workers and social care workers. The Standards of Conduct describe the values, attitudes and behaviours expected of registrants in their day to day work, while the Standards of Practice outline the knowledge and skills

required for competent practice. Both sets of Standards combine to provide a baseline against which a registrant's conduct and practice will be judged.

The Standards are binding on all registrants, irrespective of employment status or work setting. Fitness to practise is evaluated against these Standards and failure to comply could put registration at risk. If a concern is raised about a registrant's conduct or practice, it will be measured against the Standards when deciding what, if any, action needs to be taken.

The Standards are intended to reflect existing good practice and public expectations of the behaviour and practice of social workers and social care workers. They form part of the wider package of legislation, regulatory requirements, practice standards and employers' policies and procedures that registrants must meet.

The Social Care Council's regulatory Committees are governed by two sets of Rules:

- NISCC (Registration) Rules 2022; and
- NISCC Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2019.

The Rules set out the administrative arrangements and procedures which must be adhered to in the course of proceedings.

About the role

The Social Care Council maintains a pool of lay and social care members to sit on its Registration and Fitness to Practise Committees. Each Committee is scheduled as frequently as case load demands, and one social care member and two lay members (one acting as Chair) are selected from the pool to make up the Committee on each occasion. A Legal Adviser sits with the Committee to provide advice and to ensure that proceedings are conducted appropriately.

There are four regulatory Committees:

1. The Social Care Council refers to the **Registration Committee** any application for registration which it is not minded to grant, and may refer applications which it is minded to grant subject to condition(s). The Registration Committee meets in private to consider the application, and the applicant and / or their representative may attend and make oral submissions in support of their application.
2. Where an allegation of misconduct or lack of competence is made against a registrant, or where a registrant had been convicted of a criminal offence, and where the case is not appropriate for consensual disposal, the Social Care Council refers the case to the **Preliminary Proceedings Committee** (PPC) to determine whether the evidence is such that it should proceed to a fitness to practise hearing to test the evidence. In circumstances where it is necessary for protection of the public, or it is otherwise in the public interest or it is in the interests of the registrant, the PPC may make an Order suspending the registrant's registration, or impose conditions on the registrant's registration, until such time as the matter has been concluded.
3. The **Fitness to Practise Committee** (FtP) considers the allegations against the registrant and determines:

   - Whether the facts in the allegation are proved;
   - Whether, if the facts are found proved, the registrant's fitness to practise is impaired;
   - Where the registrant's fitness to practise is impaired what, if any, sanction to impose.

   The following sanctions may be imposed upon a finding of impaired fitness to practise:

   - A Warning for a period of up to five years
   - A Conditions of Practice Order
   - A Suspension Order
   - A Removal Order.
4. Where a registrant has been removed from the Register following a finding by the FtP Committee, he / she may make an application for restoration to the Register after a period of five years has elapsed. The **Restoration Committee** considers such applications.

Committee Members

Membership of Committees

The Social Care Council is required by Rules to appoint a lay member to sit on each Committee. The NISCC Fitness to Practise Rules define a lay member as follows:

"**Lay Person"** means a person who is not, and has not within 5 years of an appointment to the Fitness to Practise Committee ever been –

(a) a social worker or social care worker; or

(b) involved in the training, education, appointment, employment, supply, supervision, monitoring or representation of social workers or social care workers.'

Eligibility

We are initially seeking to appoint **seven lay members** to the Committees. However, we may draw off a reserve list if we need to supplement the pool over the next two years. To be considered a lay person, you must meet the definition set out above. If you are unsure as to whether you meet the eligibility criteria, you should contact Cathy Kennedy at **niscc.committee@hscni.net** or on 028 9536 2933.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities and duties of a Committee Member include:

- Assessing applications to enter the Register against criteria when concerns have been raised about the application
- Assessing and evaluating evidence of allegations against registrants and making deliberations and judgements based on that evidence
- Deciding if additional specialist advice is required in order to assist the Committee
- Making sure that deliberations and decisions are taken objectively and consistently and that they are not influenced by public opinion, emotion or external persuasion
- Presenting and discussing decisions as required, making sure that reasons for the decision are given and that complex issues are clearly explained
- Providing feedback on any area of future development that will enhance the service provided in delivering Committee meetings and hearings
- Acting in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Registration and Fitness to Practise Committee Members
- Taking part in mandatory induction, training, performance reviews and governance appraisals in order to improve the decision-making, credibility and competence of Committee Members
- Complying with the Social Care Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures
- Responding constructively to any form of feedback about own conduct or performance
- Responding promptly to all communication from the Social Care Council.

Personnel Specification

Applicants will be shortlisted for interview against the following essential knowledge, qualities, skills and abilities. All applicants should demonstrate on the application form how they meet these requirements through the use of specific examples from their own experience. The information provided here will be used as the basis on which to shortlist for interview, so it is very important that applicants demonstrate all of the criteria listed.

Essential Criteria

Abilities and Skills

1. Oral communication skills, with the ability to state your views clearly and concisely with a style that is respectful to others
2. Ability to consider and evaluate complex information objectively in order to make fair, balanced and proportionate decisions that are based on fact and not influenced by emotive, political or social persuasion
3. Ability to take responsibility for the collective decision-making process and to accept the final decision
4. Written communication skills with the ability to take accurate and concise notes to assist you in Committee discussion and decision-making
5. Ability to pay close attention to detail throughout the hearing process
6. Ability to listen and ask relevant questions as part of formal processes
7. Ability to work as part of a team, working collaboratively to enable consensus within the decision-making process
8. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with team members
9. Ability to understand diversity and the application of equal opportunities in working practice.

Knowledge and Experience

10. Commitment to, and an understanding of, the role of the Social Care Council
11. Have an understanding of the statutory frameworks relevant to the work of the Social Care Council.

Personal Characteristics

12. Personal commitment to apply equal opportunities and diversity policies in all personal and professional activities
13. Professional approach incorporating respect, confidentiality and sensitivity at all times
14. Capacity to be calm under pressure and work flexibly to meet deadlines
15. Willingness to undertake relevant training
16. Willingness to give feedback on the effectiveness of the Social Care Council's regulatory processes.

Desirable Criteria

1) Experience of being part of a panel in either a paid or voluntary capacity
2) Experience of investigative proceedings, either within work or outside of own job role
3) Have the ability to demonstrate public trust and professional confidence.

Remuneration

The daily attendance fee for Committee Members is currently £200. A fee of £75 is paid for all training days, regardless of length of day. When attending Committees in the Social Care Council's offices, reasonable travel and subsistence allowances are also payable and calculated on an individual basis.

Fees are not subject to VAT and are claimed via the Social Care Council's payment proforma.

Please note that fee levels are currently under review and that a half day fee may be introduced at the conclusion of the review.

Time Commitment

Caseload dictates frequency of Committee business. Members should be prepared to commit up to between seven and 15 days per year, although the Social Care Council is unable to guarantee the number of sittings which you will be offered per year.

Hearings commence from 9.30 am onwards. Members must be prepared to sit until business has been concluded for the day or until 6.30 pm, which ever happens first.

Location

Committee business is currently being held remotely via Zoom. Our office is based at Millennium House, 19-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, which will be the venue for physical hearings once circumstances change to allow us to do so. In addition, there could be occasions when you would be required to sit at an outside venue.

Performance

The Social Care Council has a 360 degree assessment system in place, and all Members are required to participate.

Training

Members are required to complete induction training and to observe two Committees before being eligible to sit on a Committee. Attendance at refresher training on an on-going basis is also required.

Term of Appointment

Members are appointed for a period not exceeding four years. Reappointments can be made for a further period not exceeding four years. Terms of appointment are based on the needs of the Social Care Council and are subject to performance, and re-appointments are therefore not automatic.

Conduct

The role of Committee Member requires a high degree of personal integrity and conduct, and Members must sign up to the Social Care Council's Code of Conduct for Committee Members. A breach of the Code of Conduct may lead to termination of office.

Members will be required to enter into an Agreement with the Social Care Council before providing services to the Social Care Council as a Committee Member.

Application Process

How to apply

You should complete and submit an application form, which can be downloaded from our website **www.niscc.info**. Guidance notes can also be downloaded from the website to help you complete your application.

Applications must be received by 4 pm on THURSDAY 19 MAY 2022. Late applications cannot be accepted. Applications should be submitted electronically to **niscc.committee@hscni.net**. The time at which an electronic application is received will be determined by the time indicated automatically on the email. Applications will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt.

Disclosure

You should note that failure to disclose information on your application form surrounding disciplinary matters, or criminal investigations or proceedings, will be treated seriously and is likely to result in your term of appointment being terminated and could result in fitness to practise proceedings being brought against you. Declaring information will not necessarily debar you from appointment.

Selection Process

An indicative timetable for the process is as follows:

Closing Date	Thursday 19 May 2022 @ 4 pm
Sifting	Tuesday 24 May 2022
Shortlist	Monday 30 May 2022
Interviews	Monday 13 June 2022
Induction Training	Thursday 30 June and Monday 04 July 2022

Sifting - the first stage following the closing date is to sift the applications received to ensure that all applicants meet the eligibility criteria. You will be advised in writing if you do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Shortlisting - applications which meet the eligibility criteria will then be shortlisted against the personnel specification. You will be informed in writing whether or not you have been shortlisted for interview.

Interviews - interviews will last for approximately 30 – 45 minutes. An alternative date will be offered only at the discretion of the interview panel if you are unable to attend on the date set. All candidates who attend interview will be informed of the outcome within 14 working days.

Training - letters of offer will be issued to successful candidates explaining that the offer is subject to two satisfactory referee reports and completion of a two day mandatory training course, for which they will be paid the training fee of £75 per day. Failure to complete the training course will result in the offer being rescinded.

Please note that the dates contained within the table above are indicative only. While all efforts will be taken to ensure that the timetable is adhered to, unforeseen circumstances may dictate a change in any or all of the above dates.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Social Care Council welcomes applications from persons with a disability and persons without a disability. If you consider that a reasonable adjustment would be helpful at any stage of the process, please contact Cathy Kennedy on 028 9536 2933 or at niscc.committee@hscni.net.

Feedback

You may request feedback about any decision made concerning your application during the selection process. All requests for feedback must be made within seven days from the date of the written notification which you receive. Your request will be acknowledged within five working days.

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the selection process, you may do so by completing the Social Care Council Complaint Form. This can be accessed on the About Us section of our website, **www.niscc.info**. A complaint should be lodged within 28 days of the matter(s) complained of.

Enquiries

If you have an enquiry about any aspect of the role or about making an application, please contact Cathy Kennedy on 028 9536 2933 or email niscc.committee@hscni.net.

Appendix 1

The Seven Principles of Public Life

As a public body, the Social Care Council expects Committee Members to demonstrate the following principles:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.