

Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework including COVID 19 Risk – September 2022

1. Introduction

The Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework was last presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at their meeting on 15 June 2022 and to the Board at their meeting on 29 June 2022.

The last meeting of the Risk Management Committee (RMC) was held on 26 September 2022 where RMC members reviewed the controls and actions against the risks on the risk register.

This Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework includes –

- Risk Assurance Framework – **Appendix I**;
- Risk Register – **Appendix II**;
- Review of Horizon Scanning – **Appendix III**;
- Risk Management Committee Minutes – **Appendix IV**;
- Risk Matrix Assessment Tables – **Appendix V**.

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 – September 2022

Business Transition

The Board approved the Social Care Council's Business Transition Plan in April 2022 which enabled the organisation to normalise its working arrangements. Alongside this the organisation has been piloting an Agile Working Policy and this has been extended to end October to enable the Senior Leadership Team to fully evaluate its impact.

A face to face hearing has been held on the premises, and a number of meetings/engagements have been delivered either face to face or using a hybrid approach. Personal responsibility for cleaning down communal areas remains in place alongside the increased hygiene and cleaning measures which were introduced back in March 2020.

The wearing of face masks in the office is no longer mandatory however staff (or visitors) are supported in wearing a face mask should that be their preference.

An all staff event was held in person on the premises on Thursday 29 September to celebrate the organisation's 21st anniversary - and some Board members also attended.

From the beginning of September, a small number of staff have reported contracting COVID, however for these individuals the symptoms have been much less than has been seen in previous years. Staff (and others) are however required to not attend the office if they have COVID or any other respiratory illness or symptom.

COVID Risk Assessment

While business has transitioned well into the new arrangements, the Risk Management Committee were of the view that the COVID risk should remain on the risk register (as currently assessed) during the winter months. If however the impact of COVID on the business and its staff continues to reduce, the Committee will consider, early in the new year, recommending to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), the potential to close off the risk. Advice and evidence will be brought to ARAC at that time.

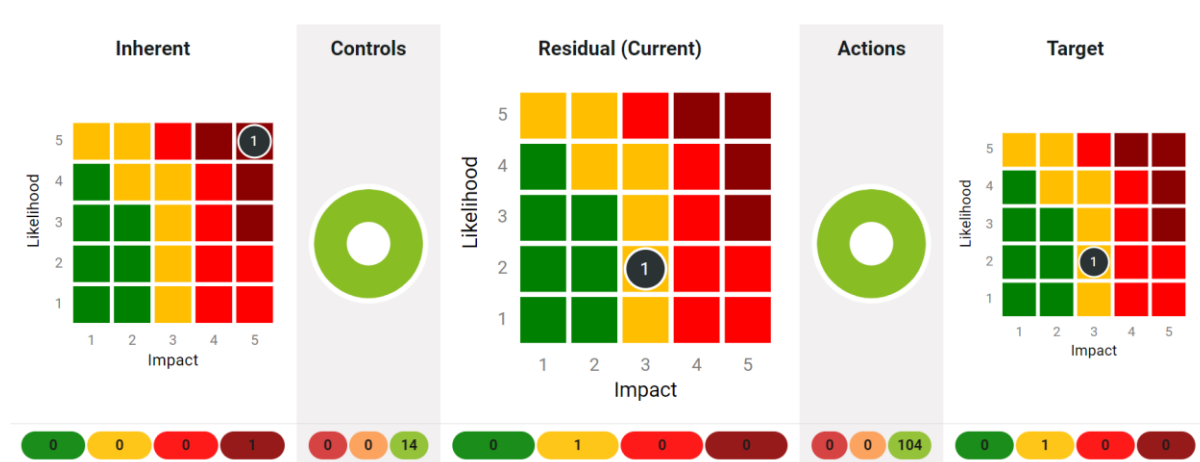
*In the meantime, the COVID risk on the Risk Register (ref. **COR16**) has been updated – an overview of which is set out below:*

There are 14 controls in place to manage the impact of COVID-19, and 104 actions have been identified. As at 26 September 2022, 103 actions have been completed. This leaves only one outstanding action - which is to review the agile working pilot. No new or other actions have been identified.

The level of risk remains at a Residual level of risk of 6 (**medium**) – this reflects the progress made to transition the business and successfully managing the impact of the pandemic on delivery of business objectives. As indicated at the outset, this will be reviewed again early in the new year (if not before).

	Controls	Total Actions	Actions Completed	Actions ongoing/ to be completed
June 2021	11	101	91	10
Sept 2021	11	101	95	6
Jan 2022	12	102	96	6
April 2022	12	103	98	5
June 2022	14	104	100	4
Sept 2022	14	104	103	1

An overview of the COVID-19 risk is set out below –



MANAGING THE MOVE TO JAMES HOUSE

Both the Board and ARAC were updated on the progress to move to James House at their respective meetings earlier this year.

Since that time, further slippage on the project has occurred (related in part to some of the earlier issues with the sub-contractor for the mechanical engineering, and also the ability to procure some key health and safety products). This change in the project timeline means that the Social Care Council will move into James House on **3 February 2023** (with the physical move of goods and other items taking place over 1 - 2 February).

The Social Care Council entered into a new lease for its current premises at Millennium House from 1 September 2022 to 28 February 2023, as it anticipated further slippage.

The Social Care Council has engaged closely with the Project Team and is confident that the dates now outlined are realistic and achievable.

The engagement however identified a number of issues, including the funding and procurement of the ICT infrastructure needed for the Social Care Council to deliver on all aspects of its business.

As a result, the Social Care Council has engaged the DoH (and DFP) to secure an additional £180k revenue funding to make good its shortfall. In addition, the Social Care Council is developing a business case to secure the additional capital funding required (£112k). This funding will ensure the organisation has the correct kit and

infrastructure to support hybrid meetings, Committee hearings and an agile working space for all staff.

A small number of staff also had the opportunity to visit James House which enabled the project team to better understand the organisation's requirements including those in relation to floor points.

The outstanding matters of the licence have now been resolved to the satisfaction of the Dept of Health and the Social Care Council as follows:

- a) In relation to the possibility of a commercial rent being introduced, the Side Letter says that the parties are to agree that a market licence fee will only be charged on renewal; "subject to DoF having carried out a review of the charging arrangements of its estate, and subject to budgetary conventions and considerations of the budget for accommodation functions held by all bodies at the commencement of the licence". This arrangement would lead to any profit being made from market rent being passed to the Department which would in turn then fund the increased rent. This arrangement follows charging conventions and **the DOH is content with this.**
- b) In relation to "no option to break within the first five year term of the Licence" DOF has made clear that it has been agreed that ALBs will be permitted to assign / share occupation which provides some flexibility in the event ALBs no longer require all of the space for their own needs. **The DOH is content with this arrangement.**

The risk in relation to the move to James House has been updated on the risk register (Ref. COR 22).

RISK ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The Risk Assurance Framework contains **19 strategic risks** identified by the Board of the Social Care Council. Strategic risks are defined as requiring close scrutiny and oversight; and those risks that have an overall residual score of 12 or more.

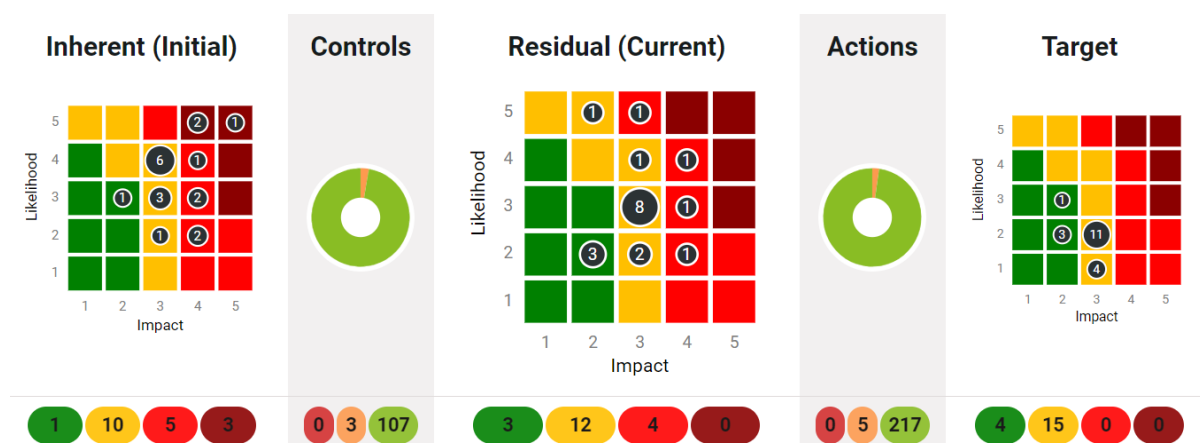
The Board will also be engaging in the development of a new Corporate Strategy and as part of that work, will be reviewing the strategic risks and risk appetite for the organisation. A workshop will be arranged during the year to facilitate this exercise.

The Risk Assurance Framework is at **Appendix I.**

All other risks are considered operational and managed by the Executive team through the Risk Management Committee.

An overview of the residual (current) level of strategic risks is shown below. There has been no change in the volume of risks categorised as **High**, **Medium** or **Low** level.

Social Care Council Strategic Risk Register – September 2022



How the risks have moved during the year is set out in the table below (detail of any changes are set out in the body of this report).

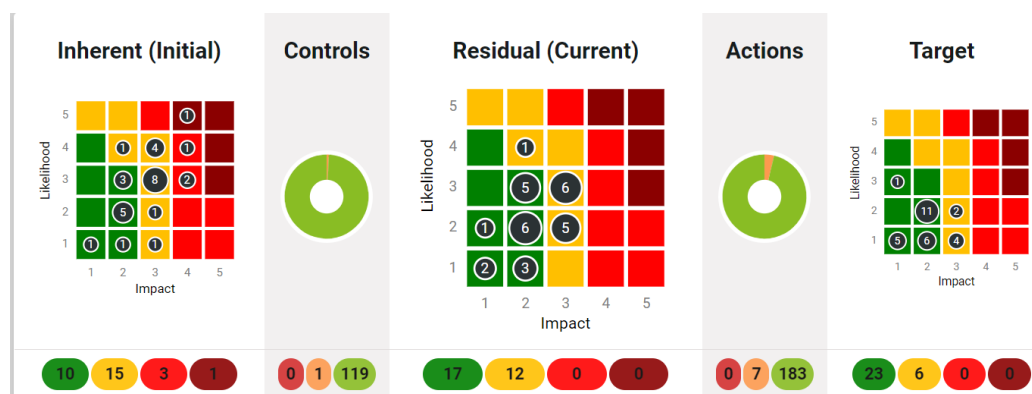
September 2021	January 2022	April 2022	June 2022	Sept 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 risk assessed as extreme level 4 risks assessed as high 9 risks assessed as medium level; 3 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 3 risk assessed as high level. 10 risks assessed as medium level. 4 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 3 risk assessed as high level. 10 risks assessed as medium level. 4 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 3 risk assessed as high level. 10 risk assessed as medium level. 4 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 4 risk assessed as high level. A new high risk (Recruitment - COR24) has been added 12 risk assessed as medium level. One low level risk has increased to medium (COR01 - Funding) SYS02 - Systems Leadership 3 risks assessed as low level.

Operational Risk Register – as at September 2022

In addition to the strategic risks above, there are **29 operational risks** as set out in the diagram below (none of these risks are high or extreme level risks). There is one

new operational risk relating to recruitment. A copy of the full risk register can be found at **Appendix II**.

Overview of Operational Risk Register at September 2022 –



2. ASSESSMENT OF RISKS ON THE ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Extreme Level Risks

- There are no **Extreme** level risks at this point in time.

High Level Risks

There are 4 **high** level risks facing the organisation and these are described below.

- Fitness to Practise (FTP) Resources and Capacity** [Ref: REG01] – Good progress continues to be made to fill the FTP vacancies with three substantive Fitness to Practise Officers being appointed. While training is ongoing, and at an early stage, this has enabled the organisation to reduce this risk from a **high level** 12 - to a **high level** 8. The organisation will however keep this risk under close scrutiny. The Fitness to Practise Manager recently left to take up an appointment elsewhere and a scheme to fill that vacancy has just completed with a successful candidate appointed.
- Development of Social Care Policy and Resourcing of the Social Care Workforce** [Ref: WFD01] – The Social Care Council have identified this Board strategic risk as critical to the overall development of the social care workforce, however it is accepted that much of this risk is out with the control of the Social

Care Council. The Board will be reviewing the strategic risks as part of the development of the new corporate plan and the Executive team would wish to reword this risk to reflect the actual controls and actions that are within the statutory remit of the Social Care Council. As the Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation is underway it is important that the overall risk associated with the Social Care Sector is highlighted on the register and it is currently assessed as **high level** (with a **score 16**).

- **Resourcing of the Workforce Development Team** [Ref. WFD06] – all permanent vacancies have now been filled within the Workforce development team, however additional team resources supporting the Adult Social Care Reform work are on a non-recurrent funding basis. There are still some temporary arrangements in place across the team however these are gradually reducing. This area still remains a risk to the team until such time as more sustainable funding sources are confirmed to continue with the Adult Social Care Reform Work. The risk is currently assessed as **high level** (with a **score 12**).
- **Recruitment [NEW]** - [Ref. COR24] - the organisation has an operational risk on its risk register in relation to the range of shared services provided by BSO, and these generally work well, however specific recent experience in relation to recruitment has resulted in a separate risk being added. The risk in relation to recruitment has two parts - firstly the service currently being provided by Shared Services Recruitment and Retained Recruitment which has not met the standards expected - and secondly, the issues with recruiting and securing the best talent in a very competitive market - including for administrative posts. A range of actions have been identified in relation to this risk which has been assessed a **high level** (with a **score of 12**).

Medium Level Risks

There are 12 **medium level** risks which are described below –

- **BSO Shared Services** (**medium level – 12**) [Ref. COR11] – As can be seen, a separate strategic risk in relation to recruitment has been created. While support in other areas from the BSO Shared Services remains adequate this area is kept under close review given the range of services provided to the organisation through SLA's with BSO. For this reason, this risk remains unchanged.
- **Maintaining Registration** Ref: STN02] – The Board and ARAC are sighted on the issues which the registration function faced during the year – and the work to stabilise this area of the business. A full report on this was presented to the Board earlier this year. The risk is currently under control however it has been agreed to

keep this risk under close scrutiny and deliver the action plan arising from SoS Medical. The Registration Manager post has now been filled on a substantive basis following a recruitment exercise, and three new additional permanent Band 3 positions are about to be filled for the team. The risk is currently assessed as a **medium level** risk (with a score of 9).

- **Resourcing of the Communications Function** [Ref. COM03] – this risk is currently assessed as a **medium level** risk (with a **score of 9**). A new Head of Strategic Communications has taken up post and is currently reviewing the strategic work plan and priorities for the team as part of her induction.
- **Lack of Social Work Workforce Planning** [STN01] has an overall residual score of (**medium level – 9**). The organisation is limited in what it can do to mitigate against this risk which will be reviewed as part of the Board’s review of all strategic risks.
- **Promoting the Value and Importance of Registration** (**medium level – 9**) [Ref. REG02] – an engagement programme is underway using stories and experiences. This work will continue to be developed as part of our new Corporate Strategy.
- **Effective partnership/engagement with Stakeholders** (**medium level – 9**) [Ref. WFD02] – The Dept of Health has notified the Social Care Council of the transfer of the Leadership Framework for Social Work and this will strengthen partnership working around the Professional in Practice Framework and engagement with Universities. With a recent change in representation from the University of Ulster work is underway to build relationships to ensure high quality delivery of the Social Work degree;
- **Credit Accumulation Route** (**medium level – 9**) [Ref. WFD03] - system developments are ongoing and following completion of the updated PiP process documentation further work on system redesign is underway;
- **IAR functionality** (**medium level – 9**) [Ref.WFD04] – system developments are ongoing together with a PR programme to improve support for this work. As with the above risk in relation to Credit Accumulation, further work is now taking place with the system supplier to refine the IAR processes and operation;
- **Capturing the views of service users/carers** (**medium level – 9**) [Ref. COM01] – continuing to work with service users and carers to develop our evidence base and evaluate effective engagement. The recommendations arising from the recent audit on service user and carer engagement will also assist in managing this risk. A new engagement platform based on MS Teams has been initiated which will

enable our partnership members to share information, events, connections and intelligence to support the work of the Social Care Council.

- **Management of Financial Resources** (medium level - 10) [Ref.COR01] - this risk was previously a low level risk and does change throughout the year depending on various funding issues which may arise. At present a forecasted deficit of £131k at month 5 is highlighted and plans are in place to ensure breakeven is achieved. For this reason the risk has increased from a low level to a medium level.
- **Promoting Systems Leadership** (medium level - 6) [Ref. SYS02] - this risk has increased due to resources required to effectively influence this area. Actions have been identified to address this going forward.
- **COVID-19** (medium level - 6) [Ref. COR16] - this risk is covered in the previous section.

Low Level Risks

There are 3 low level risks –

- **Promotion of Communication material** (low level risk – 4) [Ref. COM02] – the organisation has been able to maximise its online presence and engagement to support the workforce during the pandemic. This risk has decreased slightly from a score of 6 to 4. This is due to the work to effectively promote our communication material online).
- **Sector Intelligence** (low level – 4) [Ref. SYS03] – A new Information Analytics and Information Intelligence Officer has been appointed and a programme of work to start to improve our analysis and reporting of information is underway.
- **Ability of stakeholders to engage** (low level – 4) [Ref. SYS01] – this risk reduced from a medium level to a low level risk in the previous report given the work that has taken place to connect with others online and through social media. The value of the risk has further reduced from a score of 6 to 4, again due to the way in which stakeholders have been engaged.

Horizon Scanning

As part of the risk management process, Risk Management Committee review the External, Operational and Change factors that may influence or impact on the organisation's ability to effectively manage its risk environment. The horizon scanning review is attached at **Appendix III** for ARAC's consideration. Changes suggested to the Horizon Scanning map are highlighted in red for ARAC's consideration.

Risk Management Committee

The Risk Management Committee met on 26 September 2022. A copy of the minutes will be shared once available.

*The Risk Assessment Matrix Tables are attached at **Appendix V** for information.*

Summary of Decisions for ARAC

Action

- ARAC are invited to review the Risk Assurance Framework and advise –
 - If there any amendments that you would suggest to the risk register;
 - If you are content with the work being done to manage the organisation's strategic risks;
 - To confirm you are content that the issues identified in the review of horizon scanning are appropriate.