



Northern Ireland Social Care Council
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Social Care Council Board Meeting
Unconfirmed Minutes
10.00a.m on Wednesday 29th June 2022
Via Zoom videoconference

Present:

Paul Martin (CHAIR)
Sarah Browne, Board Member
Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member
Gerard Guckian, Board Member
David Hayes, Board Member
Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member
Catherine McPhillips, Board Member
Anne O'Reilly, Board Member
Lee Wilson, Board Member

In Attendance:

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council
Declan McAllister, Dir. of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Marian O'Rourke, Interim Director of Regulation & Standards, Social Care Council
Catherine Maguire, Interim Head of Workforce Development, Social Care Council
Helen McVicker, Head of Fitness to Practise, Social Care Council
Andre McKeown, Evaluation Manager, Social Care Council
Hollie Bishop, Secretariat, Social Care Council

Observer(s):

Deirdre Allison, Board Apprentice

Apologies:

Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Business Services, Social Care Council
Brenda Maitland, Board Member

Formalities

Item	Agenda	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting via Zoom videoconference facilities.	
1.2	Apologies were noted from Brenda Maitland and Sandra Stranaghan.	

2.	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest	
3.	Board Minutes	
3.1	<i>Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 27th April 2022</i>	
3.1.1	The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting of 27 th April as a true and accurate record.	
3.2	<i>Action List</i>	
3.2.1	See Annex I for action list review, and new actions arising out of the meeting of 29 th June 2022 (and previous meetings)	
3.2.2	Item 10.1 – It was agreed that the review of Partnership minutes will be rotated to the top of the Board agenda for every other meeting to ensure appropriate time can be dedicated to all standing items.	
Chair and Chief Executive's Reports		
4.	Chair's Business	
4.1	<p>The Chair reported the following activity since the last meeting on 27th April 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congratulations were extended to Patricia Higgins on her permanent appointment to Chief Executive. • The Board meeting on 29th June 2022 marks the end of the term of office for Board members Lee Wilson and Brenda Maitland, as well as the Board Apprentice. The Chair expressed gratitude for their hard work. • Fitness to Practise Committee members have been appointed. There were 28 individuals interviewed and 18 appointments made; 6 lay members, 6 chairs and 6 Social Care members. The interview panel continues to provide feedback at the request of a number of applicants. The first day of training for all newly appointed Committee members will be 30th June. • Members were thanked for their feedback on the Board Skills Audit Survey which is underway and David Nicholl will have a report completed within the next few weeks. • Meeting held with the Chief Executive and Chair of the Safeguarding Board NI to discuss the challenges faced by their Board, in particularly the ongoing issues of child exploitation that have surfaced in recent weeks. • Meeting with RQIA has been postponed and will take place at some point in July. • Attended the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Board Effectiveness launch of the Good Practice Guide. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services will circulate a copy of the guide to Board members which sets out the 	DMcA

	<p>core responsibilities for members and the links to other bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAO good practice guidance for the size of a Board is between 5 and 8 members to make it effective and fit for purpose. • The move to James House has been delayed to Christmas/New Year. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services will provide a more detailed update later in the meeting. 	
4.2	Board Member, Lee Wilson, thanked the Chair for the kind words regarding his departure.	
4.3	The Chair advised Members that there is an agreement with the Department of Health to await the outcome of the Board Skills Audit and subsequent report before recruitment for new Board Members would be conducted.	
5.	Chief Executive's Report – Paper B	
5.1	<p>The Chief Executive provided an overview of the Chief Executive Report, with the following key highlights;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A continuation of the Social Care Council lease has been negotiated with Millennium House through to 28th February 2023. • A range of recruitment exercises have been carried out; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A new Head of Communications and Strategic Engagement has been appointed following Claire Trainor's departure. The new appointment has extensive knowledge working with regulatory bodies and the Northern Ireland Health Care Sector and should take up post in mid-August. ○ A number of posts filled by temporary agency staff have been consolidated to permanent positions; including two Business Support Administrators, two FtP officers and three Registration advisors. ○ The Fitness to Practise Manager has given notice that she will be moving on from the Social Care Council. A recruitment exercise will be undertaken to fill this post. ○ Recruitment will begin to appoint a permanent Director of Regulation and Standards as a result of Patricia Higgins permanent appointment as Chief Executive. • The Head of Business Services and a colleague attended the IIP Award Ceremony to receive the IIP Gold Award on behalf of Social Care Council. • There have been a number of learning and development awards achieved amongst senior staff, including; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Interim Director of Regulation and Standards completed the ILM Diploma in Coaching and Mentoring, which will assist in the coach leadership approach within the organisations ○ The Head of Business Services completed the Transformative Leadership Program with the Chief Executive's Forum ○ The former Head of Communications and Strategic Engagement completed the Women in Leadership program prior to her departure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DoH have delegated the Social Work Leadership Framework to the Social Care Council. The Chief Executive and Interim Director of Regulation and Standards will begin looking at how the framework should be implemented and how it will link to the Professional in Practice Framework. • The Chief Executive and Interim Director of Regulation and Standards met with the social workers and a social care worker from the Derry GP Federation Multidisciplinary Team (MDT).. The meeting was very encouraging, displaying the creativity, innovation and enthusiasm of the MDT and the contribution that social work and social care is able to make in this context. As such, the Chief Executive will look to engage with other MDTs to better understand their work and the support that the Social Care Council can provide. • A range of communications activity has taken place over the previous months, particularly in respect of the ongoing Social Care Campaign. 	
Governance		
6.	Update from the Chief Social Work Officer	
6.1	<p>The Chief Social Work Officer provided an update on next steps after closing of the Reform of Adult Social Care consultation; the Children's Services review; the UK Review of Health Services in a Pandemic 2022; and the current political position. He highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike other ALBs, which had usual oversight arrangements relaxed throughout the pandemic, the DoH continued to observe a more standard level of governance with the Social Care Council given the close working arrangements already in place and collaboration on a number of key projects. • He is confident that despite the regrettable delay in the move to James House, the Social Care Council will continue to deliver core business. 	

<p>6.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mental Health Strategy is making good progress in terms of implementation. This will provide enhanced roles for Approved Social Workers and assist them with the navigation of implementation of requirements of the Mental Capacity Act. The DoH worked closely with NIPSA to stabilise the roll out of the Mental Capacity Act and reduce anxiety amongst trade unions. Budget uncertainty is making implementation difficult, however there is a 10-year timeline in place for the Mental Health Strategy. • Political uncertainty will continue to impact budgets, at present nothing is confirmed for the financial year. The current Minister can remain in post for 6 months on a roll-over basis in the absence of an Assembly. • The Health Minister is meeting with party leaders to brief on issues affecting the Health and Social Care system – this is not operating in the same capacity as a committee but is working to ensure all leaders are informed. • The consultation process for the Reform of Adult Social Care was extended due to the high volume of expressions of interest and intent to respond. The response has been positive for the most part. High level costings similar to that undertaken for the Mental Health Strategy will be curtailed for completion until budgets are agreed later in the year. • Professor Ray Jones continues to engage with a wide range of organisations and groups on the Review of Children’s Services, including the Social Care Council. Prof. Jones has called for a discussion with DoH to address immediate concerns within the sector – this includes the workforce supply. While the supply of qualified social workers does need increased, the overall affected vacancies are generally concentrated in certain areas which suggests an issue of retention more than supply. One of the interim recommendations presented to the DoH is to recruit staff with a wider skill mix to take on support tasks which do not require a social work qualification, eg. administration, transporting children for family visits. • Permission has been given to HSCTs to recruit widely for vacancies. It has also been recommended that HSCTs should consider running their own Trainee schemes. • The Review of Children’s Services has recognised that the model for residential childcare in Northern Ireland is more stable than in England as it is not outsourced. • The Review of Children’s Services report is due for submission in late Spring 2023, however an interim report may be presented to the Minister this autumn. <p>Members engaged in discussion following the Chief Social Work Officer’s update, with the following key points;</p>	
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6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market regulation under the proposals in the Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation would likely see either a discrete care home regulator or the responsibilities would be absorbed by the RQIA. This would require legislation for change and therefore will take a while to process. • The recommendation to HSCTs to offer Trainee Schemes is similar to the previous Employment Based Programme and is simply a recommendation at this point, workforce planning of this nature will require additional funding which is not readily available. • A Board Member commended the work of the Belfast Trust in developing a Business Assurance Framework to ensure a clearer transition for young people into adult services. Moving forward any policies involving structural change will be met with challenge to provide continuity within business and statutory functions. • At present Trainee Schemes are only offered in collaboration with the Open University course due to the flexibility offered. – • Social Workers were historically disproportionately represented in senior leadership posts in HSCTs – however, the skills, training and value base of a Social Worker naturally fits very well for compassionate senior leadership models. Now that this disproportion has been addressed, the remit of Directors needs to be revised. <p>Members thanked the Chief Social Work Officer for attending the Board meeting and communicating openly regarding on-going projects.</p>	
7.	Subcommittees	
7.1	<i>Remuneration Committee Unconfirmed Minutes of 1st June 2022</i>	
7.1.1	<p>The Chair provided an overview of the Remuneration Committee decisions, with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive pay award has been approved • Objectives have been agreed and set for the coming 12 months 	
7.1.2	<p>The Board approved the decisions and minutes of the Remuneration Committee from 1st June 2022.</p>	
7.2	<i>Audit Committee Unconfirmed Minutes of 15th June 2022</i>	
7.2.1	<p>The Chair of the Audit Committee– provided an update from the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit committee met on 15th June to discuss the Committee performance and membership. 	

7.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Solicitor handling the negotiations for the James House licence attended to discuss the most recent delay as well as ongoing licence negotiations. • Governance statement was approved by Audit Committee members • The Audit Committee approved the Accounts subject to further discussion on the issue of deferred income treatment. An extraordinary meeting will be convened to further review the accounts and discuss deferred income recommendations before approval is granted. • The Governance Statement was approved by the Audit Committee. • The Internal Audit Annual Report includes figures for all ALBs and reflects that the Social Care Council are performing well, appearing at the top of the table in most areas. • The Report to those Charged with Governance is agreed subject to further discussion on deferred income again. • Internal Audit provided reassurance that the 49% of outstanding actions had been impacted by delayed commencement with Covid and other factors. <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee advised members that further detail from BSO Finance and Deloitte is required to provide greater clarity on the issue of deferred income. The matter will be approved in a brief extraordinary Audit Committee meeting and then returned to the Board for final approval.</p>	
8.	COVID-19 Assurance and Risk Progress Report incl. Business Continuity: Transition Plan	
8.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services presented the COVID-19 Risk Report with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Transition; Phase 2 has been approved by the Board - this allows external visitors, face-to-face training, in person interviews and hybrid Partnership meetings if desired. Majority of meetings are still being held virtually, but the option for in-person is available. Phase 3 would enable the public and registrants to attend the office. • James House: Advised that the delay is related to issues with equipment fitted by previous contractors that now needs replaced, however a shortage in materials and backlog in orders means that the move-in date has been pushed back to December. A 'Side Letter' has been drafted by the legal representatives to address a number of the outstanding licence issues. • The new lease for Millennium House has been agreed in principle with the landlord to extend residency up to 28th February 2022 with a rolling one-month break option after 	

8.2	<p>the six-month lease agreement. As this is a new lease and not an extension, a Business Case is being drafted for the Department of Health to approve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition plans will continue to prepare for the move to James House with no delay to ensure that archiving of records, transition of technology etc are completed on time. • The delayed move to James House has resulted in increased expenditure with a deficit of £130k due to sustained higher rent rate, this shortfall has been alerted to DoH. • Shared Services HRPTS system remains a risk to the ability to deliver HR & Payroll, however at present BSO is ensuring delivery of business. HRPTS was due to be replaced in 2025 so work for a replacement system is underway. • Board Governance risk has been increased in light of the pending Board vacancies and potential skills gaps. <p>Board members approved the Assurance and Risk Progress Report.</p>	
9.	Business Performance Report to 31st May 2022	
9.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services presented the Performance Report with the following key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five KPI's are rated Amber and seven are currently rated Green. • First Pulse Survey results were fed back to staff at the Town Hall on 28th June which were overwhelmingly positive with 12-weeks still left on the agile working pilot. • Continuing to manage business activity under the Covid Business Leadership Team which meets weekly. • Communicative Absence is running above the usual target at 4.71% at the end of month 2, this is affected by a small number of Covid cases and will continue to be monitored closely. • Service Delivery – risks and assurances are constantly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team, Risk Management Committee and Audit Committee. 	
9.2	<p>The Director of Regulation and Standards presented an update with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work flow within the registration function is working well. • KPIs indicate good customer satisfaction with 93% reporting positive feedback. • At end of May there were 42873 individuals on the register. The register is beginning to stabilise following the pandemic. • A new Registration Manager has been appointed as well as three Band 3 Registration Advisor positions. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness to Practise – whilst referrals and suitability assessments have risen in April and May, an average of 32 cases are being opened per month with 39 cases closed in May. The Fitness to Practise Manager will be leaving the organisation to pursue a career opportunity, recruitment exercise for a replacement to the post will be undertaken shortly. A Project Support Officer has been appointed for the new Case Management System – work on this project will commence as soon as confirmation of the release of the funding is received. • Workforce Development staff are returning to face-to-face engagement with registrants and stakeholders. 	
9.3	The Head of Fitness to Practise advised the rise in referrals is not an uncommon fluctuation although the types of cases coming in may serve as an indicator of the pressures on the system, such as rough handling and rushing care provided. There are also a number of referrals relating to Muckamore, where a large portion of these are failure to report safeguarding issues.	
9.4	Members approved the Business Report.	
10.	Finance Performance Report to 31st May 2022 and Budget Profile 2022/23	
10.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services provided an overview of the Finance Performance report with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report provides an indication of expenditure at end of May and budget profile at this stage. Due to the impact of cost of living on budgets, figures remain estimates at this time. • Financial Monitoring letter was received at £2.67million as expected – this covers BSO re-charges cost and allows for the agenda for change pay award. • Expecting an allocation letter from DoH, however have confirmation that £297k will be received in respect of the Reform of Adult Social Care work. This allocation has changed the budget to an overspend of £32k which reduced the impact of other pressures. Anticipating a better position at the end of July to review a more accurate budget which incorporates all allocation (non-pay, recurrent pay, capital allocations for case management project). • Due to timing of the completion of the management accounts, BSO Finance have yet to include the budget profile for month 1 & 2. The income position at 31st May shows an income reflecting £756k from fees and 2/12th of the revenue resource limit. • Table 3 of the report shows the Pay Expenditure position at 31st May 2022, the staff increase is a result of the pay award 	

	<p>from last year. Agency expenditure for last year was budgeted at £67k but actually over £200k were expended last year – posts have now been consolidated and the reliance on agency staff has started to decrease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-pay costs are anticipated to increase as staff return to the office increases. • Current financial position at 31st May shows a deficit of £75,752. 	
10.2	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services informed members that both the Department of Health Finance and Estates Director, and Department of Finance Director of James House Project have been approached to seek compensation for the £150k shortfall accrued due to the delay in moving to James House.	
10.3	Members approved the Financial Performance Report.	
11.	Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22	
11.1	<p>The Evaluation Manager presented the Annual Report and Accounts with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of changes to financial reporting in the report this year as well as greater detail on staff composition was requested. • Clarity was included in the section on Key Issues about the role of Fieldfisher and audit conducted. • Prompt payments has been updated to include the year closing and the year prior. • Governance statement was a last-minute addition from the DoH outlining the budget position authority and clarity on how budget is managed with relation to allocations. • Reference to staff benefits has been removed from the Remuneration and Staff Report as there are no benefits beyond pension contributions • Help and Fair Payment Policy has been updated and now includes greater detail comparing the various bands of payment. Clarification was added stating that agency staff are not included in the fair employment disclosures. • Page 77 - additional information was requested on staff composition in terms of actual people to include figures rather than just percentages as well as staff turnover figures. • Page 99 – financial reporting statements have been updated to reflect the current negotiations amidst the delayed move to James House. • No other substantive changes have been made at this time. 	
11.2	The Annual Report and Accounts were approved subject to the finalisation of the accounts regarding deferred fee income.	

	Business Matters	
12.	Partnership Committee Minutes	
12.1	<i>Leaders in Social Care Partnership unconfirmed minutes of 7th June 2022</i>	
12.1.1	<p>The Chair of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership presented the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting on 7th June with the following key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workstream proposals relating to the career structure for the social care workforce was recently presented to the partnership and was very well received. • Continued positioning on communications – excellent to see continued resourcing provided for communications which facilitates a live interaction amidst ongoing recruitment and retention issues and the continued pressures on the workforce. • Members would like to propose for more senior leadership figures to attend the Leaders in Social Care Partnership, particularly in the statutory sector to better align issues and address matters across the wider health and social care sector. 	
12.1.2	The minutes of the Leaders and Social Care Partnership meeting on 7 th June 2022 were approved.	
12.2	<i>Participation Partnership unconfirmed minutes of 14th June 2022</i>	
12.2.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services presented the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting on 14th June 2022 with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update on James House was provided to partnership members. • Discussion on contribution to the Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation. • Planning for the virtual promotional event which took place on 24th June and received positive feedback and learning to help inform the development of a larger event scheduled for the autumn. • Joanne Sansome was a panel member for the Harkin Institute which received worldwide coverage across social media and communication channels. • Members attended the third meeting of the Impact Assembly. Karen McCormack, who has been appointed as Service User and Carer project lead and will attend the next Participation Partnership meeting. 	
12.2.2	Minutes of the Participation Partnership meeting on 14 th June 2022 were approved.	

12.3	<i>Professional in Practice unconfirmed minutes of 8th June 2022</i>	
12.3.1	<p>The Chair of Professional in Practice provided an overview of the minutes from 8th June with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional in Practice virtual award ceremony will take place on 19th September. • Anne McGlade (SPPG) engaged with members on the importance of continued research and the use of research evidence to support change and development across social work and social care. • Plans are underway for a Professional in Practice workshop on 21st September. 	
12.3.2	The minutes of the Professional in Practice meeting on 8 th June 2022 were approved.	
12.4	<i>Registrants Forum unconfirmed minutes of 9th June 2022</i>	
12.4.1	<p>The Director of Regulation and Standards provided an update on the Registrant's Forum with the following highlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As previously discussed with the Board, low attendance at meetings has been an ongoing issue which impacts engagement abilities of the forum. • In light of the retirement of the current Registrants' Forum chair, members sought Board approval to stand down the forum to review and reflect on what is needed to best support and engage with registrants for the future. • A project plan will be developed with Board members, the Board Apprentice and the Director of Regulation and Standards and brought to the Board for further discussion at the next meeting. 	
12.4.2	Members agreed to stand down the Registrants' Forum, however moved to maintain the standing agenda item to allow for continued updates on the re-development of the group. Additionally, the Chief Executive agreed to write to the Department of Health to advise that the Registrants' Forum will be suspended.	
12.4.3	The Director of Regulation and Standards will write to Registrant Forum members to advise of the plans for redevelopment and reflection.	
12.4.4	The minutes of the Registrants Forum meeting on 9 th June 2022 were approved.	
13.	Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation Response	
13.1	The Chief Executive provided an update on the Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation response with these key points:	

13.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Social Care Council response includes feedback from the Board and the Partnerships. The response and cover letter highlight that the consultation is an ambitious programme of reform which will require adequate resources and Departmental support. Providing clarity on the definition of social care and social care workers for the purpose of registration presents an opportunity to manage the anomalies of healthcare assistants and other non-registered roles. Clarification has been sought on the proposed role of the Social Care Council in relation to Personal Assistants. Response references the need for the role of a Social Care Champion Referenced the need to review legislation and governing service Regulations particularly in relation to residential and nursing homes. Response is to be submitted by 1st July. <p>The Board approved and endorsed the Reform of Adult Social Care Consultation Response.</p>	
Closing Formalities		
14.	Any other Business	
14.1	The Board Apprentice expressed her gratitude to the Chair and members for their support over the last year and commended the efficient functioning of the Board and Committees.	
15.	Dates of next meetings – for information	
15.1	10:00am Wednesday 12 th October 2022	

ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST

ITEM	NEW ACTIONS- 29th June 2022	OWNER	PROGRESS
4.1	<i>Audit Office Board Effectiveness Good Practice Guide to be circulated with Board members</i>	DRCS	Open
ITEM	NEW ACTIONS- 27 April 2022	OWNER	PROGRESS
9.1	<i>Stipulation that Lay Committee members can serve one term of 4 years only to be removed from the Committee Standing Orders and clarification this relates only to lay Committee members</i>	DRCS	Closed 29.06.22 Amendments have been approved
10.1	Meeting to be arranged to review Board business and agenda composition. A formal proposal to be	Chair/SLT	Closed 29.06.22

	drafted and circulated for advance comment and Board approval at June Board meeting		
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