

Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework – June 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework was last presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at their meeting on 8 May 2024 and to the Board at their meeting on 24th April 2024. The last meeting of the Risk Management Committee (RMC) was held on 23rd April 2024 where RMC members reviewed the controls and actions against the risks on the risk register.

The Strategic Plan (2023/24 – 2026/27) sets out a number of strategic actions and outcomes for the next four years across four strategic themes of:

- Deliver effective regulation;
- Develop the capability of the workforce;
- Lead with influence; and
- Innovate and improve.

The Board reviewed and agreed new strategic risks for the organisation to reflect the strategic objectives set out in the Strategic Plan. This risk progress report describes how those strategic risks are being managed.

This Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework includes –

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

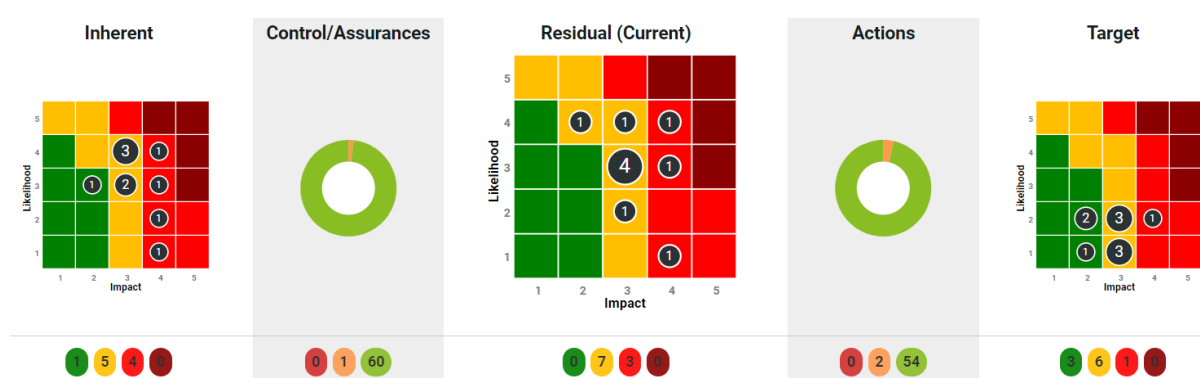
REVIEWING THE STRATEGIC RISKS

The Risk Assurance Framework now contains **10 strategic risks** identified by the Board of the Social Care Council. Strategic risks are defined as requiring close scrutiny and oversight.

The detail of the management of these risks is set out in the Risk Assurance Framework - **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.

Social Care Council Strategic Risk Register – June 2024



Jan 2024 (Residual Risk)	April 2024 (Residual Risk)	June 2024 (Residual risk)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 3 risks assessed as high level. 5 risks assessed as medium level. 0 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 2 risks assessed as high level. 6 risks assessed as medium level. 0 risks assessed as low level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No risks are assessed as Extreme 3 risks assessed as high level. 7 risks assessed as medium level. 0 risks assessed as low level.

As can be seen in the high-level overview above, of the current 10 strategic risks

- 3 are assessed as **High**
- 7 are assessed as **Medium**
- There are currently no **Extreme** or **Low** strategic risks

Variances:

- A new strategic risk in relation to Climate Change has been added (COR25). This new risk reflects the impact of failing to deliver positive change to reduce the impact of greenhouse gases.

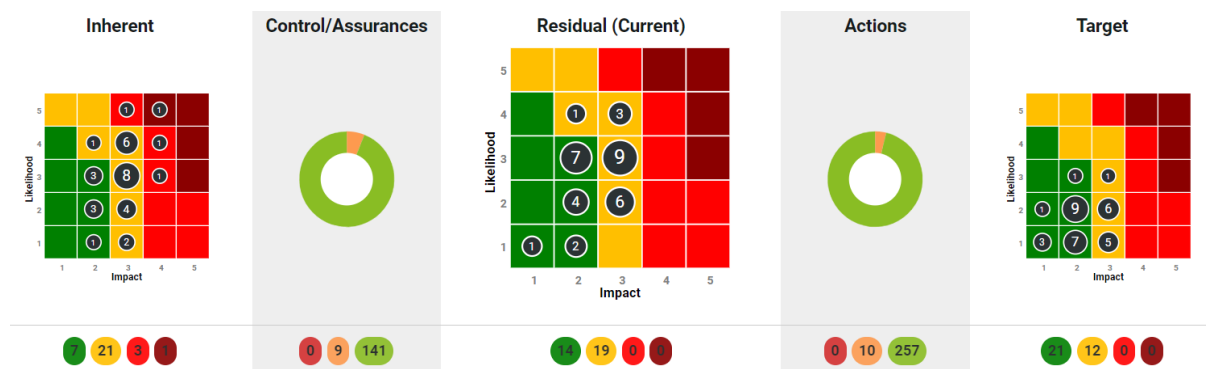
- The risk in relation to the possible changes at Board and/or senior executive level (COR13) has been escalated from an operational to a strategic risk as both the Chief Executive and the Director of Regulation and Standards will retire this year.

Operational Risk Register – as at June 2024

In addition to the strategic risks, there are **33 operational risks** as set out in the diagram below (none of these risks are high or extreme level risks).

This is a reduction from 35 risks reported in April 2024 – the risk in relation to the move to James House (COR22) was previously closed off by ARAC and this has now been formally closed on the risk register. In addition, the risk in relation to possible changes at Board and/or senior executive level has been escalated to a strategic risk.

Overview of Operational Risk Register at June 2024 –



As can be seen in the high-level overview above, of the current 34 operational risks

- 19 are assessed as **Medium** (residual)
- 14 are assessed as **Low** (residual)
- There are currently no **Extreme** or **High** operational risks (residual)

A copy of the operational risk register can be found at **Appendix II**.

2. ASSESSMENT OF RISKS ON THE ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

ARAC's attention is drawn to a number of the additional issues facing highlighted risks below.

Extreme Level Risks

- There are currently no **Extreme** level risks.

High Level Risks

There are 3 **high** level risks facing the organisation and these are described below.

- **Regulatory Fitness to Practise Function Resourcing** [Ref.REG01]. Current level of assessment: **High Level 12**
This function remains a high risk however given the nature of the work and the increasing workloads being experienced by the team. A new Case Management system is being developed which will assist the management of cases however a review of workloads is also being undertaken which will take into consideration the complexity of work, impact of workloads from consensual disposals and the increase in Interim Suspension Orders. The new Case Management System is expected to go live in July 2024.
- **Sustainable Resourcing for the Council to Support Adult Social Care Reform** [Ref. WFD01]. Current level of assessment: **High Level 16**
Following a review by the Board at their meeting on 24th April 2024 it was agreed that this risk title needed to focus on Social Care Council resources to support the Department in its work on Adult social care reform. Through our work on developing the capability of the workforce and our development work in innovation we aim to support the sustainability of the social care workforce. These are longer term ambitions. The workforce is under pressure financially and from recruitment and retention. As a systems leader the Social Care Council will use its influence and voice to support the sector, however it requires sustainable resources to carry out these duties.
- **Climate Change** [Ref. COR25]. Current level of assessment: **High Level 4**
ARAC reviewed a proposal at their May meeting to include a strategic risk on the risk register in relation to climate change. While climate change is a global issue, organisations worldwide are affecting positive change to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels and promote better biodiversity to reduce the production of greenhouse gases. For its part, the Social Care Council is already engaging thinking and planning, and an action plan and Climate Change Strategy will be developed this year.

Medium Level Risks

Of the 7 **medium level** risks ARAC are asked to note the risks which are described below –

- **Changes at Board and Senior Level** [Ref COR13]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level – 9**
With a delay in public appointments to replace the three current vacancies at Board level and confirmation of two Senior Executive retirements this risk has been raised and will be mitigated by a number of actions which will include recruitment and the development of an assurance campaign to manage the impact of changes at the senior level in the organisation.
- **Management of Financial Resources** [Ref: COR01] – Current level of assessment: **Medium Level 9**
Pressures on the budget remain under active review. Without sustainable and sufficient funding going into the new financial year the organisation's ability to deliver all of its services could be compromised. However, the risk has been assessed a medium level due to assurance that the organisation will receive a flat cash budget for 2024/25 and the latest projection is showing a breakeven position which is being presented to the Board at their June meeting for approval.
- **Promoting the Value and Importance of Registration** [Ref REG02]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level – 9**
An engagement programme continues using stories and experiences. The Communications Team is working closely with Registration and Workforce Development colleagues to deliver a targeted communication programme to registrants, employers and others including using benchmarks and surveys to evaluate and monitor impact and outcomes. A new Engagement Strategy is also being developed following a period of consultation which will also support the management of this risk.
- **Effective partnership/engagement with Stakeholders** [Ref WFD02]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level – 9**
The Department of Health has transferred the Leadership Framework for Social Work to the Social Care Council 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.
- **Social Work and Social Care Sector Data Intelligence** [Ref: SYS03]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level – 8**
An extensive programme of work has been put in place to gather, maximise and share our data to improve outcomes and decision making. A workstream on Social

Care Data and Intelligence has been established, with reporting on progress to the Social Care Leadership Forum. We are triangulating our data to join up data sets across the HSC and carrying out deep delve reviews into specific business areas including Fitness to Practise referral data. The first published report on the Register analysis is now available at [Data reports - NISCC](#)

A new Social Care report is also being produced for 2023/24 which will be shared with stakeholders and interested parties.

- **Promoting Systems Leadership** [Ref SYS02]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level - 6**

During the consultation on the organisation's new Strategic Plan, the Social Care Council heard from registrants about the need to use our voice and our role to help shape better outcomes for the sector. In response to this, the organisation has a new strategic theme (Lead with Influence) which will build on our earlier work to support the sector and influence decision makers and decision making. The organisation is working closely alongside an extensive range of stakeholders to make this happen. The organisation is also working alongside the DOH on a Social Care Collaborative Forum to support this work in relation to the social care workforce.

- **Capturing the views of stakeholders** [Ref. COM01]. Current level of assessment: **Medium Level – 9**

We are continuing to work with people who use services and carers to develop our evidence base and evaluate effective engagement. An engagement platform based on MS Teams is in place which enables our partnership members to share information, events, connections and intelligence to support the work of the Social Care Council. We are also developing an Engagement Strategy which will support our engagement – in particular with people who use services and carers.

Low Level Risks

There are no Low Level risks.

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**.

*The minutes of the April Risk Management Committee are attached at **Appendix IV** for information.*

*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 approve 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;
 - To note the minutes of the April 2024 Risk Management Meeting