



Northern Ireland Social Care Council
Participation Partnership

Unconfirmed Minutes
Tuesday 4th June March 2024
James House / Hybrid MS Teams



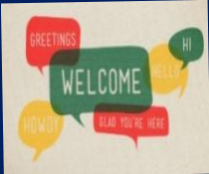

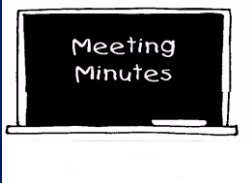

June 4th

Members at the meeting:


Sarah Browne (Chair) (Board Member)
Anne Mallon (Co-Chair) - online
Gerard McWilliams (Co-Chair)
Declan McAllister (Director of Registration and Corporate Services)
Alan Ritchie (Member)
Susan Croy (Cedar Foundation)
Mandy Cowden (Professional Advisor)
Joanne Sansome (Member)
Ronnie Patterson (Member)
Maria Somerville (Member) - online
David Gillen (Member) - online
Andre McKeown (Evaluation Manager)
Rita McCullagh (Head of Strategic Communication & Engagement)
Nicholas Campbell (Graphic Designer and Animator)
Caroline Cumberland (Head of Hearings Services)
Declan Beare (Note Taker)



Apologies:

Grace Price (Member)
Marcus Duignan (Member)
David Hayes (Member)




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| 1. |  | Welcome, Apologies, and Introductions | apologies  |
| 1.1 | Sarah welcomed everyone and noted apologies from Grace Price, Marcus Duignan, David Hayes. | | |
| 2. |  | Previous Meeting's Minutes and Matters Arising | |
| 2.1 | Previous minutes from 12 th March agreed by everyone and signed off. | | |
| 3. |  | Matters Arising | |
| 3.1 | <p>Social Care Collaborative Forum</p> <p>Declan McA updated on progress from the collaborative forum. The forum delivers work through seven workstreams. Declan leads on the workstreams for social work and social care workforce intelligence. The latest meeting of the forum was in March. The workstreams have been developing action plans and now need support which includes funding to start putting these plans into action. Bids have been submitted to the Department of Health to enable the Data workstreams to move forward with workshops and development work</p> <p>Gerard asked for an update on the forum's workstream for supported living and learning disability. Joanne is a member of this workstream. She advised it's still at the beginning stage. They have just met with researchers and are hoping to progress soon. There have been delays with a number of meetings for the various workstreams having to be postponed. Alan commented that lack of capacity at Departmental level and restricted funding may be impacting on the workstreams capacity to deliver on all these actions.</p> <p>Declan acknowledged the frustrations of these delays. On the positive side, there is a good structure for Social Care workstreams. Sarah commented that it is particularly disappointing for meetings to be cancelled, especially when there has been such good buy in from service users and carers from much wider interests than this group. Joanne added that it has been helpful for their workstream to have been involved with the research team because they may be able to bring in an economist from the university and look for alternative ways to keep their work moving.</p> | | |


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| | <p>Anne noted the positive news amongst political parties in England about giving carers higher wages, but this hasn't been mentioned here in NI yet.</p> <p>Declan noted the next meeting of the Social Care Collaborative forum is the 18th June and he will provide an update at the next Partnership meeting.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p><i>Update on Social Work Awards</i></p> <p>Mandy reported that due to funding pressures, the 2024 awards event will not be proceeding and no new date has been proposed. Everyone involved with the planning and preparation is very disappointed with the decision, but we recognise the pressures on the Health Department at the moment. Mandy thanked everyone who agreed to chair or be on the panel from the participation group for their support.</p> |
| 3.3 | <p><i>Update on the Social Care Council Registration App</i></p> <p>Declan updated on the project. Final work is being completed on the build and the team are into the first phase preparations for releasing the app for pilot. It will be later in the summer before it goes live to everyone. Joanne volunteered to be involved in the pilot group</p> |
| 3.4 | <p><i>Update on Communication and Engagement Work</i></p> <p>Rita thanked Anne, Alan and Grace for their contribution to a new Care to Chat podcast. Editing should be completed shortly and the release date should be 10th July 2024.</p> <p>Rita updated on the Social Care Making a Difference communications campaign which launches 22nd July at the Long Gallery in Stormont. This has been delayed because of the timing of the general election on 4 July. This campaign recognises the value of the Social Care Workforce. The launch event involves social care workers who have been featured in the campaigns over the last few years and thanks them for their contribution. Liz Kimmins (MLA) is sponsoring the event and will make the opening speech. Other guests include Peter Toogood Deputy Secretary for Social Care Policy in the Department of Health and Wendy Austin who has worked with the Council on the Social Care campaigns. A Participation Partnership member may be needed to speak at the event too. The Minister for Health (Mike Nesbitt) has not confirmed attendance yet.</p> <p>DECLAN ACTION to recirculate the engagement strategy from Rita to let members of the Participation Partnership see where their input is reflected.</p> |

| 4. |  | Chair's Update Participation Partnership Engagement and Membership |
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| 4.1 | <p><i>Review of Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Participation Partnership</i></p> <p>The Partnership Terms of Reference are due for review. Declan Beare to schedule an online meeting to discuss the points in the TOR's that are now outdated. The TOR's will then be ready to present at our next meeting in September.</p> <p>DECLAN ACTION to schedule an online meeting to discuss the Terms of Reference</p> <p>Gerard commented on the importance of giving people an understanding where the group's strengths lie and the review of TOR's will help this. Joanne mentioned inviting Gerry Skelton, to join the Partnership. Gerry has retired from his lecturer role in the Social Work course at Belfast Met and has extensive experience including leading on homelessness education and initiatives. Declan MCA will follow this up with Gerry.</p> | |
| 4.2 | <p>Sarah advised that the workshop on Equality, Disability and Inclusion (EDI) has been rescheduled for the 20th November in James House. Everyone will receive invites shortly and will include an option to participate online.</p> | |
| 4.3 | <p>Sarah acknowledged the release of the 2nd series of the Care to Chat podcasts. These will be published every two weeks. First podcast talks about the Leadership Framework. Mandy was involved in recording a Care to Chat podcast about Loneliness which included social workers from different backgrounds with a wealth of experience. This should be released next Wednesday. (12 June)</p> | |
| 4.4 | <p>Sarah congratulated Declan and the staff team on the Social Care Council achieving Investors in People Platinum Award. Only 7% of organisations worldwide hold this award and the Council is the first HSC organisation in NI to achieve this standard. Susan congratulated the Social Care Council in joining The Cedar Foundation in achieving the liP Platinum Award.</p> | |
| 4.5 | <p>Sarah advised that we are still waiting for the Non-Executive Director posts to be advertised by the Public Appointments Unit but it is hoped that these posts will be put out in the forthcoming months.</p> | |
| 4.6 | <p>Sarah shared news about upcoming changes to senior staffing in the Council. Patricia Higgins and Marian O'Rourke are due to retire from the Social Care Council. Patricia plans to retire in October and Marian in December. All agreed that they were delighted for them, but it will be sad to see them both leave the organisation. Patricia and Marian may join the September Participation Partnership meeting to allow members to properly recognise their contributions. Gerard's asked if recruitment has started for replacement? Declan that this was in progress.</p> | |

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| 5. |  <h3>Co-Chairs Update</h3> |
| 5.1 | Anne reported speaking at Queen's University School of Nursing event and also recording the Care to Chat podcast in April. |
| 5.2 | Gerard updated on the work involving members in the Social Care Council IMPACT network. The group had been looking at social care worker wellbeing, recruitment and retention. This phase of the project has completed and recommendations compiled to inform future development in this area. |
| 5.3 | <p>Gerard noted also being involved in the Open University Social Work Degree course (K1355). This included providing service user expertise to review the teaching and content, which will be used in regular improvement and help to ensure it prepares students for practice. Gerard has also been doing work with the South Eastern Trust designing a Carers Directory for anyone who needs to access support services across NI. A video has been released for people to view - Gerard will share this with all. ACTION</p> <p>Gerard also has ongoing work with the Local Engagement Partnership, which includes activities to encourage more service users to participate in this HSC network.</p> |
| 6. |  <h3>Members Updates</h3> |
| 6.1 | Alan was part of the recording for Care to Chat podcast with Anne, Grace and Wendy Austin |
| 6.2 | Alan joined online at the IMPACT regional events. Part of what this network does is to look at how innovative practice identified locally can be applied on a regional basis. There are some wonderful ideas and examples of innovative practice, but it is difficult to see how some of these will be transferrable because they have been developed to meet a local need. Alan also informed the group that he continues to keep an eye on progress with the review of Muckamore hospital and the ongoing work to place people in new homes outside of the facility. |
| 6.3 | <p>Susan reported being at a launch event for Mobility Foundation rural transport service. This service now covers a lot of the Western areas of Northern Ireland, providing convenient and more transparently priced transport services.</p> <p>ACTION Susan will send a link to this project for Declan Beare to share with all members.</p> |

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| | <p>Susan also noted a project she has worked on with the Consumer Council, and Stena to develop a training video for staff giving guidelines on working with people who have disabilities. Two members from Cedar were involved in developing this guidance.</p> <p>Susan reported that a new book, 'Becoming brave together' has been published, which shares the experiences of mothers who are doing 'extreme caring'. Susan has shared this with the team at Cedar and next steps are to raise awareness among Occupational Therapists and social workers who are involved in support services for families of children and young people who have complex care needs.</p> <p>Susan is also involved in a Social Work Quality Improvement project, involving a group of 54 participants including nurses and social workers. This project aims to help professionals to think differently and look through the lens of a service user.</p> |
| 6.4 | <p>Maria has been involved in the Queens University School of Nursing conference, which was delivered in partnership with service users and carers. The event showcased co-production. It was a great opportunity to share the work we have done in Queens University. People from Department of Health and Assembly Members attended. This sent a strong message out to organisations that co-production is the way forward.</p> <p>Maria advised that she will be stepping down from the Participation Partnership to let her balance the demands of her role as a carer as well as keeping business work going on. Maria expressed her sadness at leaving the Social Care Council after over 20 years of involvement. Working with the Council has always been very important to Maria and has provided many opportunities to influence the Participation agenda. Sarah and Declan expressed their appreciation for her efforts and it is hoped that Maria will be able to join the Long Gallery Social Care event and say a farewell in person to Social Care Council staff.</p> |
| 6.5 | <p>Joanne is working with the Social Care Collaborative Forum. She has also been working with Tricia and the project team on the Review of the Degree in Social Work. The review team report will be finalised over the summer and shared with the Board and Partnerships in September/October. Joanne also reported collaborating with Queens University, Belfast Met and OU around teaching on the Degree in Social Work.</p> |
| 6.6 | <p>David reported his continued involvement with Queens University in terms of trauma informed experiences. He co-facilitates workshops and has participated in role plays for student teaching along with Ciaran Traynor (social work trainer) and has received good feedback from these sessions.</p> <p>David added that he is concerned about the lack of 'trauma informed training' for student Social Workers. This means they could qualify and in practice before they first encounter situations that can cause trauma and may not recognise it. Joanne advised the Review of Degree has looked at resilience for this. David is worried about the massive lack of understanding in organisations</p> |

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| | <p>especially employers. A lot of organisations claiming to be trauma informed, but they are not practising this. David mentioned there are a number of legal cases in progress against the Health Trusts that are challenging decisions made about care for people. Some of these decisions have been made on the basis of financial restrictions or on the lack of available services locally. This is highlighting a need for the Department of Health to meet with HSC Trusts to review the impact of decisions made in care provision. Money spent on legal fees and cases would be better used elsewhere.</p> |
| 7. | <div>  <div> Vice Chair Appointments </div> </div> |
| 7.1 | <p>Co-chair appointments – The Council is appreciative of Anne and Gerard's commitment to their roles as the first Co-chairs of the Partnership. Their appointments were extended for a year previously and it is now time to offer this opportunity to other members who would be prepared to take on the role. Co-chairs would need to be available to take part in a meeting with Sarah, Declan and Mandy a few weeks before each Partnership meeting to plan the meeting and discuss agendas etc. Alan and Joanne volunteered to take on the Co-chair role</p> |
| 8. | <div>  <div> Break </div> </div> |
| 9. | <div>  <div> Annual Report - Participation Partnership Chapter </div> </div> |
| 9.1 | <p>Andre advised members that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 is now in the final stages of review. This report includes a report from the Participation Partnership to reflect on the work that they have been involved in throughout this year. The draft Participation Report was shared with members, asking them to review the report, check it reflects their activities correctly and to advise if there is anything missing that needs added.</p> |
| 9.2 | <p>Achievements already included in the report are members involved in external PPI forums. Involvement in student education, practice learning and role plays will also be recorded. Joanne's film has been featured – including a link to the film on the Council website. Promotion of this film and the topic of disability activism has been so successful with more people still discovering the film. Ronnie requested including the MAC, film on the Pathways to Employment programme which he has been involved in.</p> <p>ACTION Andre to follow up with Ronnie to get wording for the report to promote the MACS' film and will include a link to the film.</p> |

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| | <p>ACTION. Andre will update the report with comments from the discussion today and then share it with members via email for them to carry out a final review before this is presented to the Board at the end of June.</p> |
| <p>10.</p>  | <p>The future of Fitness to Practise hearings at the Social Care Council</p> |
| 10.1 | <p>Caroline from the Fitness to Practise team came to give a presentation on proposed changes the Council will be making to the processes used to plan and deliver Fitness to Practise hearings. Caroline explained that before COVID all the FtP hearings were delivered in-person at Millennium House, but during the pandemic they had to be delivered online. Currently, hearings are delivered in a range of ways; they can be in-person, online, or a hybrid of these as is required by those involved in the hearing. The focus is to ensure everyone is supported to engage in the hearing and that it is delivered in a way that is fair and appropriate to the circumstances of the case being heard.</p> |
| 10.2 | <p>This review of hearings was started almost a year ago with surveys sent out to people who had recently been involved in hearings (witnesses, solicitors, registrants, council staff and union representatives).</p> <p>The findings from the survey showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we need to be fair and have a flexible approach • hearings must continue to support public protection • communication needs to be easy for everyone • Time must be allowed for people to take breaks because being onscreen for a full day is tiring and people need breaks to help them stay focused. <p>The review has shown that registrants' attendance at hearings has not dropped despite having to move between in-person and online. The proposed approach for planning and delivering hearings is to use different delivery methods depending on the circumstances as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearings involving people with criminal convictions will be held online. This is because the facts of the case have already been assessed through the police and court systems. • Initial applications for Interim Suspension Orders will be held in-person but these can be held online if the registrant is not attending, • Review of existing Interim Orders will be held online • All other fitness to practice hearings will be held in-person (hearings are planned on the basis that the registrant will participate) |

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| 10.3 | <p>The group discussed the processes involved in delivering a hearing and making decisions on the sanctions that are applied to the registrants' social care registration. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panels are made up of three people (the Chair, a lay person and a NISCC registrant. The Chair is always a lay person). They can be appointed for a maximum of eight years. • The Committee is independent of the Social Care Council. They review all the evidence and have support from a Legal Adviser. The Committee makes the decision on what sanction must apply. • If a person is removed from the register (struck off) they cannot work in regulated social care anywhere in the UK. • Registrants will have the option of requesting an in-person or online hearing. The Council will be flexible and take account of the individual's support needs for them to engage in the hearing. |
| 10.4 | <p>In further discussions, Anne raised the issue about Personal Assistants not needing to register, which is a loophole around the government regulations. Susan queried border regions, if someone is barred from working in social care in NI, they can work just a few miles away if they live near the border. Declan confirmed that yes, unfortunately it could be possible for a person removed from the NI Register to work across the border because they are not regulated in the Republic of Ireland. The Department of Health is looking at what oversights can be applied to Personal Assistants as part of Adult Social Care Reform. They realise the risk ,but no decision has been made yet on the way forward.</p> |
| 10.5 | <p>Caroline shared a second presentation to show how the Council is updating its policies on information that is published about hearings and decisions. What we publish needs to be in line with the Human Rights Act and UK data protection laws. The Council website offers access for people to search the Public Facing Register. This lets people confirm if a person is registered and if they have been suspended or removed. All our hearings are public and the website has details of Interim Orders and Fitness to Practise decisions.</p> |
| 11. | AOB |
| 11.1 | <p>Mandy shared that the Council is hosting an AYE round table event and invited any available members to join the event.</p> <p>Ronnie introduced a film he helped develop with the MAC Pathways to Employment programme. Ronnie has progressed through this programme to become a member of staff at the museum, providing support for visitors to the gallery. This has proved a very positive experience for Ronnie and the MAC. Ronnie added that he wants to see the Department of Health employ more people with disabilities.</p> |



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| Next meeting: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17th September 2024 |
| Approved by: | |
| Signature | |
| Date of Approval | |

Annex I

Action List – date of meeting 4th June 2024

| Listing no. | Action | Due Date | Owner | Status |
|-------------|--|------------|------------------------|--------|
| 3.4 | Engagement strategy to be shared with members. | 30.06.2024 | Declan McA | Open |
| 4.1 | Meeting to be scheduled for members to review the Terms of Reference | 30.06.2024 | Declan B | Open |
| | Carers directory design video to be shared | 30.06.2024 | Gerard McWilliams | Open |
| 6.3 | Information on new transport service from mobility foundation to be shared | 30.06.2024 | Declan B Susan Croy | Open |
| | information to be shared with members about the new book launched, 'Becoming brave together' | 30.06.2024 | Susan/Declan B | Open |