



**Social Care Council Board Meeting**  
**Unconfirmed Minutes**  
**10.00a.m on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023**  
**Shared Conference Room**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Floor James House Belfast**

**Present:**

Paul Martin (CHAIR)  
Sarah Browne, Board Member  
Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member  
Gerard Guckian, Board Member  
David Hayes, Board Member

**In Attendance:**

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council  
Rita Lewtas, Head of Communication & Strategic Engagement  
Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council  
Anne McGlade, Research Lead, Social Care Council  
Helen McVicker, Head of Fitness to Practise, Social Care Council  
Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation & Standards, Social Care Council  
Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Business Services, Social Care Council  
Hollie Bishop, Business Support, Social Care Council  
Maureen Martin, Business Support, Social Care Council

**Department of Health – attended 10:00 – 11:00a.m**

Peter May, Permanent Secretary  
Aine Morrison, Chief Social Work Officer  
Peter Toogood, Deputy Secretary Social Care Policy

**Observer(s):** Alan Ritchie, Participation Partnership member

**Apologies:** Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member

Catherine Maguire, Head of Workforce Development, Social Care Council  
Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer

**Formalities**

Item	Agenda
1.	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>
1.2	The Chair noted apologies received from Jacqui McGarvey, Catherine Maguire and Lorraine Conlon.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest for note.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Permanent Secretary Address</b>
3.1	<p>The Executive team delivered a presentation on the ambitions and work that will underpin the delivery of the Strategic Plan over the next four years. It was noted that the strategic priorities and work of the Social Care Council are closely aligned with those stated in the DoH Business Plan. Council Officers reflected a positive relationship with OSS colleagues, with a focus on collective and collaborative working. The Social Care Council is working with the DoH to support the workforce in the current challenging environment, and is continuing to achieve good outcomes with reduced funding.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that Anne McGlade has now transferred from SPPG into the Social Care Council as Research Lead. The main focus of the Research Strategy is building capability and evidence gathering to support practice within the Social Work workforce.</p> <p>It was noted that a proposal paper to establish a Strategic Research and Evidence Partnership is on the agenda for Board approval.</p>
3.2	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services delivered a presentation on the Registered Social Care Workforce in Northern Ireland.
3.3	<p>The Chair highlighted that the Social Care Council Engagement Strategy is in the final stages of development and noted that the Permanent Secretary had referenced the importance of engagement at the recent NICON meeting.</p> <p>Joint Chair and Chief Executive introductory meetings with ALB colleagues at RQIA, Safeguarding Board N.I and Children's Court Guardian Agency for N.I have been scheduled for completion by the end of December.</p>
3.4	<p>Members engaged in discussion with the Permanent Secretary and department colleagues about the work of the Council within the strategic context of social work and social care. The Permanent Secretary recognised the contribution of the Social Care Council in supporting shared agendas,</p> <p>and commended the organisation on the consistent positive feedback across the sector, collaborative working and system leadership as well as achievement of the liP Gold awards which could be considered an indicator of good internal health.</p>
3.5	<p>The Chair thanked the Permanent Secretary and departmental officials for attending and it was agreed that a follow up visit would be arranged in due course.</p> <p>The Permanent Secretary and colleagues left the meeting at 11: 00a.m</p>
<b>BREAK 11:15 – 11:30a.m</b>	

<b>4.</b>	<b>Board Minutes – Paper A for approval</b>
4.1	<i>Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 5th July 2023</i>
4.1.1	The minutes of 5th July 2023 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Matters Arising - Registration Risk Assurance</b>
5.1	<p>The Director of Registration &amp; Corporate Services gave a verbal update on actions taken to resolve the Registration Risk Assurance matter presented at the previous board meeting.</p> <p>It was confirmed that registration telephone calls and email levels have returned to business as usual. A number of additional actions have been captured in a development plan to support long term management of the risk including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with Trust Governance leads to work on supporting registrants to maintain registration;</li> <li>• Introduction of Clear Accept which will allow Direct Debit fee payment and is in the final stages of approval;</li> <li>• Launch of a Social Care Council App which will facilitate online fee payments and reminders;</li> <li>• Review of Registration application pathways.</li> </ul> <p>The Socrates Improvement Board is responsible for oversight of the development plan.</p>
<b>Business Briefings</b>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Chair's Report</b>
6.1	<p>The Chair gave a brief update on the following key activity since the last Board meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of NICON Chairs meetings have been held with the Permanent Secretary in attendance with discussion mainly focused on current financial challenges and pressures;</li> <li>• Welcomed Anne McGlade, Research lead at the Social Care Council;</li> <li>• Meeting with Peter Toogood –focused primarily around the interface between the Social Care Council and the Department of Health. It was noted that the final draft of the Partnership Agreement is in on the Board agenda for approval;</li> <li>• Attended the launch of the social care campaign at a supported living facility, The Hearth L'Arche, Belfast. The Chair recorded formal appreciation to the Communications team and all other teams involved;</li> <li>• Work is underway with the Chief Executive to produce a briefing for political parties on the work of the Social Care Council and to provide</li> </ul>

	<p>information on the social care and social work sectors. The draft briefing will be shared with the Board. It is intended that engagement will take place in the coming months with Health Policy representatives in the parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attended a joint Chair and Chief Executive meeting with RQIA. An additional meeting is to be arranged to discuss a proposal for a meeting of joint Boards. The Chief Executive has agreed to attend an RQIA facilitated workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> November with guest speakers from the U.K and Republic of Ireland. The workshop discussion will focus on how the system can support 'speaking up' and develop a 'being open' culture.</li> </ul>	
7.1	<p>The Chief Executive advised that the report outlined key activity highlights for the reporting period July - September 2023.</p> <p>The Chief Executive noted the following key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barbara Campbell has been appointed to the post of Chair of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP);</li> <li>• An evaluation of the overall social care campaign will be brought back to the Board by the Head of Strategic Communications &amp; Engagement;</li> <li>• Appendix 2 – Strategic Positioning and Influencing table which was completed as part of a benchmarking exercise against the DoH Business plan and maps out work across the Senior and Workforce Development teams around strategic positioning of the organisation.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report.</i></b></p>	
8.	<p><b>Consultation on Recommendations of Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in Northern Ireland - Paper C for information</b></p>	
8.1	<p>The Chief Executive confirmed that the consultation document on the Review of Children's Social Care Services is now available with a closing date for responses by 1<sup>st</sup> December.</p> <p>Key areas of impact for the organisation will be extracted from the document for consideration at the Board strategic session on 25<sup>th</sup> October which will inform the response to the consultation.</p> <p>A joint PiP and Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) workshop has been scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> November to examine the impact of the recommendations in relation to social work education and training, and agreed views will be factored into the final response.</p>	

	<p>It was proposed that Eilis McDaniel, Director of Childcare and Family Policy, Department of Health should be invited to attend the Board strategic session on 22<sup>nd</sup> November for in person feedback on the consultation.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b>  <b><i>The Board noted the Consultation on Recommendations of Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.</i></b></p>	<b>Chief Executive</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Business Performance Report for Month 5 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 - Paper D for information</b>	
<b>9.1</b>	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services noted the following key highlights as outlined in the Business Performance Report for the reporting period to 31 August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Report and Accounts laid in the NI Assembly and published on the website;</li> <li>• Development of ‘Raising Concerns’ policy for staff;</li> <li>• Investors in People workshop towards reaccreditation in Spring 2024;</li> <li>• Reapproval of Ulster University Approved PiP Programmes;</li> <li>• Social Care Career Framework development work for the Level 2 Certificate in Safe &amp; Effective Practice pilot;</li> <li>• Initiation of the IMPACT project to improve care worker well-being;</li> <li>• Hosted first meeting of the Communications workstream for the Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF);</li> <li>• Social Care Council co-chaired with DoH for the inaugural meeting of the Adult Social Care Workforce Workstream of the SCCF;</li> <li>• Review of the Social Care Lunchtime Seminars with 95% positive feedback from participants</li> <li>• 64 Fitness to Practise referrals received and triaged within 3-day KPI target;</li> <li>• Social Care Making a Difference campaign closing activities, including BBC news story featuring a care worker in Radius Housing;</li> <li>• Information sessions promoting registration, regulation, standards and development with new registrants/employers;</li> <li>• Online engagement to welcome new social work students ‘Class of 2023’;</li> <li>• Engagement at Community Renewal careers events to engage young people not in education/employment;</li> <li>• Witness surveys for the review of online/in person hearings and committees delivered;</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness to Practice Referrer surveys for review of Standard of Acceptance guidance delivered;</li> <li>• Development of the registration portal service to create 'My Learning' for Post Registration Training and Learning;</li> </ul> <p>The Director of Regulation &amp; Standards noted that the Fitness to Practice Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have reverted to a Green RAG rating. The Fitness to Practise team are working with Committee colleagues to process the continuing significant level of Fitness to Practice referrals received.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Business Performance Report to 31 August 2023.</i></b></p>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Financial Performance Report to 31 August 2023 - Paper E for approval</b>	
<b>10.1</b>	<p>The Director of Registration &amp; Corporate Services spoke to the Financial Performance Report and drew attention to the following key matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional non-recurrent revenue allocation has been received in relation to HSC Pensions increase in Employer contributions;</li> <li>• The closing position at month 5 is showing a year to date surplus of £90k with a potential end of year break-even position of £8k;</li> </ul> <p>He also indicated that Board approval is being sought for the short-term appointment of agency support staff to maintain resource within the Communications, fitness to practice and Business Support teams. A number of vacancies have arisen as colleagues are leaving to take up external employment and it is expected that the recruitment exercises to backfill the posts may take approximately 3 months to complete;</p> <p>Millennium House dilapidations - an initial assessment of dilapidations by the Department of Health Estates estimated a dilapidation cost of £138k in 2016 and a follow-up assessment by an independent assessor indicated an estimated figure of £117k in March 2023. During negotiations the landlord presented a figure of £468k due to a clause in the lease which allowed the landlord to seek reparations to take the internal refurbishment completed by the Social Care Council in 2001 back to the building shell. The Department of Health Estates department have given assurance that this figure is appropriate and costs have been agreed with the Director of Estates. Additionally, legal advice has been provided by the Social Care Council's solicitor and a deed is being drawn up to arrange for costs to be paid. The</p>	

	<p>Department of Health has agreed to review the Social Care Council's financial position in December/January to address the £300k pressure and have requested the implementation of savings efficiencies to offset the cost. If the required surplus cannot be achieved an additional non-recurrent allocation of up to £300k will be provided by the Department to cover this cost. It was noted that the accounts from October onwards will reflect the associated financial deficit until the allocation is released in January 2024.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) confirmed that the ARAC has recognised the dilapidations financial pressure is in place and reflected on lessons learned. The Committee agreed that the Social Care Council were reliant on legal and departmental solicitor advice in 2005 when the original lease was agreed. A full copy of the lease should have been appended and knowledge of the clause would have allowed for appropriate planning and costs to be accrued accordingly.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved short term appointment of agency support.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Financial Performance Report to 31 August 2023</i></b></p>	
<b>Governance</b>		
<b>11.</b>	<b>Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023-verbal update</b>	
11.1	<p>The Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Committee gave a verbal update on the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> October and highlighted the following key matters;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mid-year Assurance Statement reports on the control divergence around Millennium House dilapidations which the Committee has discussed in full;</li> <li>• Internal Audit Risk Management report - satisfactory assurance was given with some recommendations including a more detailed Risk Register and individual controls and assurances to be RAG rated;</li> <li>• An audit finding reflected that 93% staff have not refreshed Risk Management training. The Internal Auditor agreed with ARAC members that it is acceptable for Risk Management training to be renewed every three-years instead of annually.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board noted the verbal update on the Audit &amp; Risk Committee meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023.</i></b></p>	
11.2	<i>Risk Progress Report - Paper F for approval</i>	
11.2.1	<b><i>The Board approved the Risk Progress report.</i></b>	



11.3	<i>Report to those charged with Governance- Paper G for approval</i>	
11.3.1	<p>The Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee presented the Report to those charged with Governance for Board approval. It was confirmed that the 2022 – 23 financial statements have been certified by the Comptroller&amp; Auditor General without modification.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Report to those charged with Governance</i></b></p>	
12.	<b>Mid - Year Assurance Statement - Paper H for approval</b>	
12.1	<p>The Chief Executive confirmed that the Mid-Year Assurance Statement had been considered by Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee with no additional comment.</p> <p>The Chief Executive reported that the increase in dilapidations costs is the only divergence noted in the Statement and recommended the Mid-Year Assurance Statement for Board approval.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Mid-Year Assurance Statement.</i></b></p>	
13.	<b>Partnership Agreement – Paper I for approval</b>	
13.1	<p>The Director of Registration &amp; Corporate Services presented the final draft of the Partnership Agreement which has been agreed following consultation with the Board and Department of Health Sponsor Branch.</p> <p>The latest changes are reflected in the tracked copy of the Agreement and the Board were asked to consider and agree the following:</p> <p>2.2 - an additional paragraph inserted in relation to supporting the DoH on the delivery of the Transformation agenda;</p> <p>2.3 – updated wording to reflect that for the purposes of Whole of Government Accounts the Social Care Council no longer qualifies as a Minor status body and Annual Accounts are consolidated into the DoH Sponsor Body financial accounts.</p> <p>Accountability arrangements for the Chair – the Board discussed and amended the proposed form of wording at paragraph 16.2 to reflect the correct line of accountability with DoH Sponsor Body. Consistency of language throughout document to be checked.</p> <p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services stated that the final version of the Agreement will be shared with the DoH Governance Unit before being sent to the Department of Finance for final sign off.</p>	



	<b><i>The Board approved the final draft of the Partnership Agreement.</i></b>	
<b>14.</b>	<b>Proposal to Establish a Strategic Research &amp; Evidence Partnership – Paper J for approval</b>	
14.1	<p>The Director of Regulation &amp; Standards presented Paper J for Board approval for the establishment of a Strategic Research and Evidence Partnership within the Social Care Council. The paper outlines the rationale for the Partnership, the infrastructure for governance, accountability and reporting arrangements which align with other Partnership structures.</p> <p>The following key discussion points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed Strategic Research and Evidence Partnership will sit well within the overarching agenda for the development of the social work and social care workforce, and practice improvement;</li> <li>• The Social Care Research lead will re-engage with the Research &amp; Development office in relation to potential resource to support this piece of work and NIHR to be approached regarding other available funding opportunities;</li> <li>• The Board requested further consideration to be given to the proposed name of the Partnership;</li> <li>• It will be important to consider Board vacancies and appointments in relation to support of a newly established Partnership with additional role and remit.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that the Terms of Reference and the agreed proposed Partnership name will be brought back to the Board for final approval.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b></p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the establishment of a Strategic Research &amp; Evidence Partnership.</i></b></p>	<b>DoR &amp; S</b>
<b>Subcommittees</b>		
<b>15.</b>	<b>Partnership Committee Minutes</b>	
15.1	<i>Leaders in Social Care Partnership update from meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023 - verbal for information</i>	
15.1.1	The Chair of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership gave a verbal update from the meeting of 10th October and noted the following key matters:	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services delivered a presentation on social care registration data which was well received.</li> <li>2. An update was given on the Social Care Collaborative Forum. Many of the Partnership members are already engaged either with the work of the Forum or workstreams. Partnership members would like a more collaborative approach next year on consultation on maximising potential around winter pressures but acknowledged time constraints this year.</li> <li>3. An update was given on the Social Care campaign.</li> <li>4. Paul Rooney, Professional Advisor delivered a presentation on the Workforce subgroup and the work in progress regarding the social care career framework.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Leaders in Social Care Partnership draft update from the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023</i></b></p>	
15.2	<i>Participation Partnership draft unconfirmed minutes of 12th September 2023- Paper K for information</i>	
15.2.1	<p>The Chair of the Participation Partnership gave an overview of key highlights from the last meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September and noted the attendance of the Board Chair:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A progress update was given on the Social Care Collaborative Forum and the Social Care App</li> <li>2. Feedback was received from members on areas of involvement across the organisation.</li> <li>3. Main focus of the meeting was to review the Communication and Engagement plan from the perspective of a service user and carer. It was proposed that it may be useful to look at other forums that may have broader service user and carer engagement and this action will be progressed at the next meeting in December.</li> <li>4. An update was given by the IMPACT project lead on the 1 second network phase around the wellbeing of care workers.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Participation Partnership draft unconfirmed minutes of 12th September 2023.</i></b></p>	
15.3	<i>Professional in Practice meeting of 6th September 2023 verbal update for information</i>	
15.3.1	<p>The Chair of the Professional in Practice (PiP) Partnership gave a verbal update on the meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023.</p> <p>The following key highlights were noted:</p>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Strategic workshop looking at futureproofing Professionals in Practice to be arranged.</li> <li>2. A workplan will be developed and brought to and the Partnership for approval.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>The Board noted the verbal update on the meeting of the Professional in Practice of 6th September 2023.</i></b></p>	
15.4	<i>Registrants' Forum Review Progress - Paper L for decision</i>	
15.4.1	<p>The Director of Regulation &amp; Standards thanked colleagues for their contribution to the completion of the review of the Registrants' Forum 2022/23. Paper L presents the outcome of the review and outlines the review process and activities and includes a summary of findings. It also outlines options, with a preferred participatory model option identified for consideration and sets out next steps for new arrangements being put in place.</p> <p>The review confirms that the Registrants Forum in its current form does not reflect or capture how the Social Care Council engages with registrants and that the absence of the Forum has not impacted on engagement activity.</p> <p>Three options were presented for consideration:</p> <p><i>Option 1.</i> Re-establish the Registrants' Forum as it is currently constituted as a Board committee.</p> <p><i>Option 2.</i> Stand down the Registrants' Forum indefinitely and engage with registrants using existing engagement tools.</p> <p><i>Option 3.</i> Replace the Registrants' Forum with two executive led groups; a Social Work Registrants' Forum and a Social Care Registrants' Forum, separate Terms of Reference, and opportunities for joint meetings and collaboration. The Forums will report directly to the Board and updates on key messages and activity will be provided by the Director of Regulation and Standards as executive lead.</p> <p>It was agreed that departmental approval will be also sought as the Registrants' Forum was initially set up under their direction.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved option 3 - to replace the Registrants' Forum with two executive led groups; a Social Work Registrants' Forum</i></b></p>	

	<i>and a Social Care Registrants' Forum</i>	
<b>Closing Formalities</b>		
<b>16.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
16.1	There were no further matters discussed.	
<b>17.</b>	<b>Dates of next meetings</b>	
17.1	<p>The Board noted the following key meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Strategic Session - Wednesday 22 November 2023</li> <li>• Board meeting - Wednesday 6 December 2023</li> <li>• Board Strategic Session - Wednesday 14th February 2024</li> </ul>	

Approved by:

Signature:      Date of approval:

## **ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>NEW ACTIONS 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>PROGRES S</b>
14.1	<i>Terms of Reference for Strategic Research &amp; Evidence Partnership and agreed proposed Partnership name to be brought back to the Board for final approval</i>	<b>Director of Regulation &amp; Standards</b>	<b>Open</b>
15.4.1	<i>Updates on key messages and activity of Social Care and Social Work Registrants' Forums to be provided to the Board</i>	<b>Director of Regulation &amp; Standards</b>	<b>Open</b>
15.5.1	<i>Formal letter to be to the Department of Health to request approval around proposed changes to the Registrants' Forum arrangements</i>	<b>Chief Executive</b>	<b>Open</b>