



Social Care Council Board Meeting
Unconfirmed Minutes
10.00a.m on Wednesday 6th December 2023
Shared Conference Room
4th Floor James House Belfast

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council
Rita McCullagh, Head of Communication & Strategic Engagement
Anne McGlade, Research Lead, Social Care Council
Catherine Maguire, Head of Workforce Development, 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

Observer(s):

Shauna Carberry, Board Apprentice via MS Teams

Apologies:

Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member
David Hayes, Board Member
Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer
Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council

Formalities

Item	Agenda
1.	Welcome and Apologies
1.2	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as outlined above. It was noted that the Board Apprentice had joined the meeting via MS Teams call.

2.	Declarations of Interest
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest for note.
3.	Board Minutes – Paper A for approval
3.1	<i>Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 11th October 2023</i>
3.1.1	<p>The minutes of 11th October 2023 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Apprentice to be added to the attendance list as an observer • reference at 15.3.1 to reflect that the Professional in Practice workshop had taken place on 6th September.
3.2.	Action List and matters arising
3.2.1	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>13.1 The Chief Executive agreed to follow up, with DoH to finalise the Partnership Agreement.</p>
3.2.3	<p>The following actions were noted as closed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>14.1: closed - Terms of Reference for Strategic Research & Evidence Partnership - for presentation at Board meeting of 24th April 2024.</i> • <i>15.4.1: closed - key messages of Social Care and Social Work Registrants' Forums to be provided to the Board - on agenda at item 14.</i> • <i>15.4.2: completed - I Letter sent to the Department of Health to request approval around proposed changes to the Registrants' Forum arrangements.</i> •
4.	Chair's Report - verbal
4.1	<p>The Chair gave a brief update on the following key activity since the last Board meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NICON Conference The Chief Executive had been a guest presenter for two well received sessions. The conference and plenary sessions reflected the positivity of delegates in relation to activity and challenges in driving change forward despite the current financial pressures being experienced across the health sector. The Chair confirmed that formal thanks have been sent to Heather Moorhead, NHS Confed for a successful conference. • NICON Chairs session – attended by Permanent Secretary and noted as a positive session. • Joint Chair and Chief Executive meeting with the Safeguarding Board N.I (SBNi)

	<p>The meeting focused primarily on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services report by Professor Ray Jones. Joint Chair and Chief Executive meeting with RQIA</p> <p>The main focus of the meeting was discussion on the potential for joint working and meaningful engagement with service users and carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Chair and Chief Executive meeting with Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland (previously NIGALA) <p>Noted as a positive meeting with open and transparent discussion on current pressures. A follow up meeting has been proposed for the New Year to explore joint working opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film screening, Queens Film Theatre <p>The Chair and Executive team attended the film premier of '<i>Where there's a will, there's a way</i>', which captures the conversation between Joanne Sansome and Professor Joe Duffy about Joanne's personal journey as a disability activist and academic. The film was presented by the Social Care Council in partnership with the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queens University Belfast. The film will be posted on the Social Care Council's YouTube channel and website in due course. The Chair recorded formal thanks to all involved in the production of the film and for facilitating arrangements on the day of the event. Particular thanks were given to Alison Shaw, Engagement Officer and to members of the Participation Partnership for their support in the production of movie.</p> <p><u>Upcoming activity:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting is arranged with HSC Leadership Centre to discuss a governance and leadership programme to support Non-Executive Directors within the HSC. The programme will be primarily focused on the development of an induction programme which will support the high number of new appointments.
Business Briefings	
5.	Chief Executive's Report – Paper B for information
5.1	<p>The Chief Executive advised that the report outlined key activity highlights for the October and November 2023 reporting period.</p> <p>The Chief Executive noted the high level of external engagement through workshops, meetings and events. In particular she noted the Social Care Collaborative Forum's leadership workshop and the upcoming Department of Health workshop to discuss the social care Fair Work Forum.</p>

	<i>The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report.</i>
6.	Registration: Data and Evidence Presentation – for information
6.1	<p>The Chief Executive shared a presentation on Registered Social Care workers in Northern Ireland with the following key points. The presentation had been prepared and delivered at the last Leaders in Social Care Partnership meeting by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services. Members noted the increase in the social care part of the Register of 2% over the last 2.5 years, and a growth of 6.7% between September 2022 and September 2023. The analysis also reflects that the largest workforce age bracket is between 20-29 years which provides opportunity to build a sustainable workforce.</p> <p>Following discussion of the presentation the following actions were agreed:</p> <p>Action: The Chief Executive agreed to bring a progress report on the work of the Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF) workstreams to the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Action: It was agreed that the Chief Social Work Officer and Deputy Secretary of Social Care Policy should be invited to attend the April Board meeting.</p>
7.	Social Work Education and Training Regulation report - Paper C - for information
7.1	<p>The Director of Regulation introduced the Social Work Education and Training Regulation report which covers the period 2022-2023.</p> <p>The Head of Workforce Development gave an overview of key highlights in each section of the report and identified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reporting period is related to a period of transition for a post pandemic business year; • 2% increase from last year of social workers for age profile of 60+ • University admission committees will continue to monitor the downwards trajectory of social work degree applications and this is reflected also in applications from mature students. The cost of living crisis and the cost of higher education may be contributing factors in the decrease in applications. There is significant government investment in apprenticeships and Open University courses in Scotland and England however Apprenticeship Levy funding is unavailable in Northern Ireland; • 164 social workers received Professional in Practice awards in 2022 which is an increase on the previous year of 35% and has returned to

	<p>pre-covid levels. 949 social workers have partial achievement of awards and the PiP team are actively engaging with social work registrants to encourage completion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report details outcomes of two Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) audit points in June and December 2023. Those who were selected for audit have been informed that submissions can count towards PiP award requirements; • Online training options to be explored as there is a move away from traditional learning and development activities; <p>There has been a significant increase in internationally qualified social workers post Brexit with the majority of applications submitted from North America.</p> <p>The Chief Executive noted that the report reflects growing intelligence that the Council is developing about the social work workforce, which can be shared with Department of Health working groups and workstreams to inform decisions about recruitment and retention, and education and training.</p> <p>The Chair and members thanked all those who contributed to a comprehensive and informative report.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Social Work Education and Training Regulation report.</i></p> <p>Action: The Social Work Education and Training Regulation report to be published on the Social Care Council website.</p>
Governance	
8.	Unconfirmed minutes of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting of 4th October – Paper D for approval
8.1	<p>The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee gave a verbal update on the meeting of 4th October and highlighted the following key matters;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mid-year Assurance Statement reports on the control divergence around Millennium House dilapidations which the Committee has discussed in full; • 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; • 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

	<p>three-years instead of annually;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARAC endorsed the Risk Management Strategy; • It was agreed that at minimum, an annual Complaints report will be brought to ARAC for review and the frequency may be increased to 6 monthly reporting should there be a significant surge in complaints. <p><i>The Board approved the Audit & Risk Committee minutes of the meeting of 4th October 2023.</i></p>
9.	Equality & Disability Action Plans - Paper E for approval
9.1	<p>The Head of Business Services spoke to Paper E and gave an overview of key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current 5-year Equality & Disability plans expired at the end of March 2023. The BSO Equality Unit led a 13-week consultation between April and July 2023; • The Social Care Council participated in the consultation and engaged with the Board, Participation Partnership members and staff as well as attending several consultee engagement events. • The new Equality & Disability plans set out deliverables for the next 5 years and combine outstanding actions with new actions. • A piece of work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) led by the Social Care Research lead will be undertaken; <p>Upcoming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 review exercises of Section 75 data in relation to Fitness to Practise and uptake of social care and social work training to be completed; • Race equality training for staff to be completed this year; • British Deaf Association • 2 annual staff awareness days arranged by the Equality Unit which are open to Board and Participation Partnership members; • The disability work placement scheme will recommence. <p>A final copy of the Equality and Disability plans will be shared on the Social Care Council website and an annual progress report will be brought to the Board for information.</p> <p>The Equality and Disability Plans will be sent to the Equality Unit subject to Board approval and both plans have been equality screened.</p> <p>ACTION: The February Board strategic session will focus on a more detailed</p>

	discussion of the Equality and Disability Plans.
Business Matters	
10.	Quarter 2 Business Performance Report – Paper F for approval
10.1	<p>The Director of Regulation & Standards presented the Quarter 2 Business Report for Board approval and invited questions by exception from members.</p> <p>The following key highlights were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work will commence in the new year on the 2024 /2025 Business Plan • The report outlines the range of activity across each of the strategic themes and provides assurance that business progress is on target against KPIs and the Business Plan. • A paper will be brought to the Board on KPI tolerances following consideration by the Senior Leadership team; • Improved customer feedback from surveys has been received and data will be triangulated with complaints data and feedback. <p>The Board and Senior Leadership team acknowledged the significant increase in the Communication’s team workload and recognised the high level of output delivered by a small team.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Quarter 2 Business Performance Report.</i></p>
11.	Financial Performance Report at 31st October 2023 - Paper G for approval
11.1	<p>In the absence of the Director of Registration & Corporate Services, the Chief Executive spoke to the Financial Performance Report and drew attention to the following key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A year end compliant break-even position of £17k remains forecast with no concerns on the Month 7 closing position raised by the Director of Registration & Corporate Services. • The dilapidations cost has now been established and the pressure has been registered and accepted by the DOH • The report narrative details variance analysis and assurance the continued monitoring on the financial position will continue on a monthly basis. • The year to date position on registration fee income was noted and will continue to be monitored. <p><i>The Board approved the Financial Performance Report to 31 October 2023</i></p>
Subcommittees	
12.	Professional in Practice update on meeting of 29th November - verbal

12.1	<p>The Chair of the Professional in Practice (PiP) Partnership gave a verbal update on the meeting of 29th November 2023.</p> <p>The following key highlights were noted:</p> <p><i>The Board noted the verbal update on the meeting of the Professional in Practice of 29th November 2023.</i></p>
13.	Leaders in Social Care Partnership minutes of meeting of 10th October 2023 – Paper H for information
13.1	<p>The Chair of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership presented the minutes of the meeting of 10th October and highlighted the following key matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services delivered a presentation on social care registration data which was well received. 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. 3. An update was given on the Social Care campaign. An evaluation of the campaign will be brought back to the Board for information by the Head of Strategic Communication & Engagement 4. Paul Rooney, Professional Advisor delivered a presentation on the Workforce subgroup and the work in progress regarding the social care career framework. <p><i>The Board noted the Leaders in Social Care Partnership draft minutes from the meeting of 10th October 2023</i></p>
14.	Update on the Registrants' Forum review - verbal update
14.1	<p>The Director of Regulation & Standards confirmed that the Chief Social Work Officer has verbally approved the direction of travel for the Registrants' Forum and formal endorsement from the Department of Health in response to a recent letter seeking approval is awaited.</p> <p>A request for Expressions of Interest for participants from the social care sector has been circulated.</p> <p>Planning of an internal staff workshop in January 2024 was agreed along with follow up with executive staff around their involvement in engagement going forward.</p>

	<p>Two external workshops with social work and social care participants are to be arranged with the aim of co-designing a participatory model for each forum. It is expected that the two new models should be established by the new business year.</p> <p>Board member, Jacqui McGarvey was recognised for her contribution in taking forward the review of the Forum.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the update on the Registrant's Forum review.</i></p>
15.	Update on the Participation Partnership - verbal
15.1	<p>The Chair of the Participation Partnership reminded members that the minutes from the September meeting had been noted at the October Board meeting. The next Partnership meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 12th December.</p> <p>The main focus for the Partnership has been on the production of the film which had been discussed in more detail under Chair's Business.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Participation Partnership update.</i></p>
Closing Formalities	
16.	Dates of next meetings
16.1	<p>The Board noted the following key meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Strategic Session - Wednesday 14th February 2024 • Board Meeting – Wednesday 24th April 2024
17.	Any Other Business
17.1	<p>There were no further matters discussed. The Chair thanked Board members for their engagement and commended the Executive team and staff for their efforts and achievements during 2023. .</p>
	Meeting closed.

ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST

ITEM	NEW ACTIONS 6th December 2023	OWNER	PROGRESS
3.2.1	<i>The Chief Executive agreed to follow up, with DoH to finalise the Partnership Agreement.</i>	Chief Executive Officer	Open
6.1a	<i>A progress report on the work of the Social Care Collaborative Forum workstreams to be brought back to next Board meeting</i>	Chief Executive Officer	Open
6.1b	<i>Deputy Secretary Social Care Policy, and Chief Social Work Officer to be invited to April Board meeting</i>	Secretariat	Open
7.1	<i>The Social Work Education and Training Regulation report to be published on the Social Care Council website</i>	Head of Communication & Strategic Engagement	Open
9.1	<i>Review of Equality and Disability plans to be added to agenda for February Board Strategic session</i>	Head of Business Services	Open