

Title: Chief Executive’s Report

Date: 24th April 2024

Presented by: Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive

ACTION REQUIRED

This Paper is	For Information
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SUMMARY

This report outlines key activity undertaken during the period December 2023 and March 2024

BACKGROUND

The report gives an overview of the delivery of business to support registrants and stakeholders.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

None

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Continued active engagement with all stakeholders to ensure the Social Care Council's business activity reflects the needs of the social work and social care workforces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS AND/OR LINKS HERE

Appendix I - CEO’s report

Appendix I

Chief Executives Report

Board Meeting: 24th April 2024

This brief report covers the period December 2023 to March 2024

1. Internal Matters

1.1 Investors in People

I am pleased to report that following our Investors in People (IiP) assessment in March we have been awarded the Platinum IiP Award. This is the top-level award within Investors in People with a very small percentage of IiP accredited organisations achieving this level. This award recognises the work that everyone in the organisation does to ensure we invest in our people. We were also assessed for the IiP Health and Wellbeing award and retained the Gold Award. However, we have been encouraged to re-submit for assessment within this business year as we were only a few points off the Platinum Award. We will be attending the IiP award ceremony in Belfast on the 19th June and we will be arranging a celebration with staff and will develop a communications strategy to promote our award.

2.2 Leadership Programme

We have successfully completed our Leadership Programme that we have collectively run over the last year. The Programme consisted of leaders across the organisation (from team leader level to CEO) and was focussed on Compassionate and Collective Leadership based on the work of Michael West. We concluded our programme with a 'masterclass' with Michael West and will now discuss with our leaders the next steps in our leadership development work.

2.3 James House

We celebrated our one-year anniversary in James House on the 6th February. The office environment is becoming more established and we have worked to bring our branding, outlining our purpose and values, into the office through the use of graphics and photography. We continue to do pulse surveys to check staff's views of the office environment and hybrid working. Following a recent survey, we have reconfigured some of the space introducing more desks and creating a more user-friendly collaborative space.

2.4 People Plan

We have commissioned a company called Happy Raspberry to assist us with the development of a People Plan to support the Council's Strategic and Business Plans, in particular looking to future activity. The work will review the skills and capacity

deficits within the Council and seek to produce a forward-looking plan. The plan will also take account of succession planning. While it is understood that the financial position is extremely challenging, it is important to undertake this exercise to identify the resources the Council will need to meet the requirements of its statutory functions going forward. When completed the report will come to the board for discussion.

2. External Engagement

Meetings and Events

During this reporting period I have been engaged in a number of strategic meetings and presentations:

2.1 Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF)

The SCCF has met on 2 occasions since my last report (December 2023 and March 2024). The Forum continues to progress the work within the 8 workstreams. The SCCF has agreed a delivery plan for 2024/25 focusing on 3 strategic themes:

- Building a Sustainable Workforce
- Improving Commissioning and Contracting Arrangements
- Developing Improved Partnership Working

The SCCF is also working on a report of their first year of operation and the DoH have developed a webpage which will include this report, the SCCF Terms of Reference and other agreed papers.

2.2 Fair Work Forum (FWF)

A facilitated workshop was held in December 2023 to reconvene the FWF. The workshop consisted of all of the existing members of the FWF and concluded with the agreement that the initial focus of work would be to develop a financial case for increasing social care workers' pay to the Real Living Wage. It was agreed that Peter Toogood, DoH would Chair the FWF. The Director of Ulster University Economic Policy Unit has agreed to provide advice to members in the development of the case for pay. The DoH are now seeking an economist to assist with writing the case.

2.3 Political Party and Stakeholder Engagement

The Chair, Paul Martin, had agreed that along with the CEO he would undertake a series of meetings with Political Parties and key stakeholders to inform them of the work of the Council. These meetings were planned and commenced in advance of the return of the Assembly. The Chair asked that I and SLT continue with the meetings when he unfortunately had to take some time out due to ill-health. The series of meetings have now concluded and were successful in updating both Political Parties and stakeholders about the role and work of the Council, and in particular our work in

supporting the reform of adult social care and the children's services review. We met with all of the Political Parties and the following Stakeholders:

- CEO Commissioner for Older People NI
- NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for NI
- The Mental Health Champion
- CEO NICVA
- Chair SOLACE (Society of Local Authority (local council) CEO's)

2.5 All Party Group on Skills

An APG on Skills has been established by Sorcha Eastwood MLA. The focus of the APG is on ensuring that skills development and supply is supported to ensure shared, inclusive prosperity and well-being across all parts of Northern Ireland. Social Care has been designated as the first skills area for review and the APG will engage with key sector organisations, skills and education providers as well as government departments and agencies to develop evidence-based proposals. The APG was launched at an event in Stormont on 11th April and I provided a presentation on the social care workforce, and skills developments and challenges. The Council is supporting the APG to ensure that they are able to engage with the range of stakeholders in social care.

2.6 Film - Where There's a Will There's a Way

On 1st December 2023 we were delighted to hold a screening in the QFT of the film made by Joanne Sansome and Joe Duffy: *Where There's a Will There's a Way*. The film is about Joanne's journey as a disability activist, and the recognition she has gained as a campaigner, educator and published social researcher. It captures conversations between Joanne and her friend and colleague, Professor Joe Duffy, and is an inspiring account of her journey to activism.

2.7 Research Conference

On 20th March we hosted the 11th Annual Social Work and Social Care Research Conference: *Collaborating to deliver safe and effective services: how research supports identity and addresses challenges?*

131 people attended the conference, including people from the UK, Ireland and the USA. There was a packed programme with 5 key note presentations, 32 oral presentations in the breakout sessions, and 10 poster presentations. Feedback has been positive and it is clear there is enough research material to consider holding a longer conference in the future.

2.8 Book launch: 'Decision Making, Assessment and Risk in Social Work'

On 5th March we hosted the launch of the international book *Decision Making, Assessment and Risk in Social Work*. Those at the launch event heard inputs from Professor Brian Taylor, who edited the book along with the Chief Social Worker, Aine

Morrison. As an international text, the book contains contributions from 20 countries. The Council has contributed 2 chapters to the book written by Marian O'Rourke, Catherine Maguire, Helen McVicker and Anne McGlade. A number of other NI social workers and academics have also contributed to the book. It is a seminal text which will aid academic teaching and be a very important reference text for social work students and social work practitioners.

2.9 World Social Work Day

I participated in an on-line Social Work England event which was a panel discussion of all of the UK social work Regulators on developing professional identity in social work. Also, I along with other staff attended a number of HSC Trust events to mark World Social Work Day.

To coincide with the events for World Social Work Day we launched our social work promotional campaign at the start of March. This was a digital campaign celebrating social workers and the role they play as agents of change and transformation in our community, and promoting the value of social work in our communities. The campaign also marked World Social Work Day by publishing a series of stories about social workers who have travelled different professional journeys.

3. Other Meetings Attended

3.1 During this period, I have also engaged in the following meetings:

- CEO Patient Client Council
- CEO Youth Justice Agency
- CEO NIPEC
- CEO Extern Organisation
- CEO's UK Health and Social Care Workforce Regulators Group
- Chair and Director BASW NI
- NI Social Work Leadership Network
- NICON Management Committee
- CEO's Small Regional ALB's group
- Skills for Care and Development UK and Ireland Alliance
- International Social Work Regulators Group
- Launch of Positives Futures Corporate Strategy
- CEF Leadership and Governance Conference

Meetings with DoH:

- Improvement and Transformation Advisory Board
- Social Work Workforce Implementation board
- Quarterly Chief Social Worker Forum
- SLT and DoH Officials Ground clearing meeting (pre – Accountability meeting)

Chair and CEO Meetings:

- Chair and CEO RQIA
- Chair and Director SBNI

Deputy Chair and CEO:

- Mid-year Accountability meeting DoH

3.2 Looking forward - upcoming meetings and events:

- As a member of the NICON Committee I will be meeting with the Health Minister, along with the Chair, vice Chair, and Director of NICON to discuss the work of NICON.
- I have been invited to speak at a conference in Oxford in July being hosted by Health Services Research UK. The topic will focus on social care and I will be joined on a panel with colleagues from the Scottish Social Services Council and the Care Council for Wales along with a social care representative from England.

Patricia Higgins

15th April 2024