

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Participation Partnership

Confirmed Minutes
Wednesday 11th December 2024
VOCO Hotel, Belfast







11th December

Members at the meeting:

Sarah Browne (Chair, Board Member)
Rita McCullagh (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement)
Alan Ritchie (Co-Chair)
Mandy Cowden (Professional Advisor)
Andre McKeown (Evaluation Manager)
David Gillen (Member)
Ronnie Patterson (Member)
Anne Mallon (Member)
Declan McAllister (Interim Chief Executive)
Gerard McWilliams (Member)
Grace Price (Member)
Joanne Sansome (Co-Chair)
Susan Croy (Cedar Foundation)
Rebecca Smyth (Note Taker)

Apologies:

David Hayes (Member, Board Member)
Nicholas Campbell (Graphic Designer and Animator)
Gerard Forrestal (Member)

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| 1. |  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Welcome and Apologies</h2> | <p style="text-align: center;">apologies</p>  |
| 1.1 | <p>Sarah Browne welcomed members and Rebecca Smyth to the meeting as note-taker on behalf of The Social Care Council (SCC).</p> <p>Sarah noted apologies from Nicholas Campbell, David Hayes and Gerrard Forrestal, who is returning to the Partnership.</p> | | |
| 2. |  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Previous Meeting's Minutes – Paper A, Minutes from previous meeting of 17th September 2024</h2> | |
| 2.1 | <p>In relation to the minutes of the previous meeting of 17th September 2024, Declan McAllister suggested an amendment to Item 7.1 to “The group agreed the TOR’s for approval by the Board at their next meeting.”</p> <p>The previous minutes from 17th September 2024 were signed off and agreed by everyone. The actions were closed from the previous meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Rebecca Smyth to close the action list from the previous meeting for bringing to the Board meeting on Friday 13th December 2024.</p> | | |
| 2.2 | <p>Ronnie Patterson thanked the group for changing the meeting dates to Wednesdays, which are more suitable for him.</p> | | |
| 3. |  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Matters Arising</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">3.1. Update on the Social Care Collaborative Forum and Fair Work Forum</h3> <h3 style="text-align: center;">3.2. Update on the Mobile App</h3> | |
| 3.1 | <p>Declan McAllister updated on the progress of the Social Care (SC) Workforce Strategy. The Level 2 certificate in Safe and Effective Practice for Social Care is ready to launch and the pilot has been completed with organisations. The Social Care Workforce Strategy is being launched on Thursday 12th December 2024 at Long Gallery, Stormont. The launch involves practitioners who have completed the certificate. They will be awarded their certificates at the launch to mark the start of work to embed the new qualification within the workforce. Funding from the Department of Health (DoH) has been approved to pay for up to two Social Care Practitioners places in every social care organisation to complete the certificate. Information on how to apply for this funding went out on Tuesday 10th December 2024.</p> <p>Declan updated that the Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF) have met as a leadership group. Declan has taken over the Co-Chair role from Patricia Higgins, alongside Peter Toogood. They have met with 1 Workstream Chair and are in the process of meeting with the remaining 7 Chairs to see how they are progressing. The Workstreams include unpaid carers, the workforce, care</p> | | |

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| | <p>homes, older people, and commissioning, with the launch of the strategy coming out of a Workstream.</p> <p>In relation to the 8 Workstreams of the SCCF, Gerard McWilliams queried how delays that have affected progress for some of them would be addressed. Declan advised that the DoH have had to move resources whilst they deal with the COVID inquiry, which is a priority and which has added to some of the delay.</p> <p>Grace Price queried how social workers are employed to manage homelessness. Declan added that 47 social workers and a number of social care workers have indicated on their registration that their employment focus is within the work focus area of homelessness.</p> <p>In relation to the Fair Work Forum (FWF), Declan shared that this is focused on the terms and conditions for SC workers in the non-statutory sector. There are currently 40,583 SC practitioners on the register which is a 9.5% increase from last year. It is important to publicly acknowledge the value and benefit of SC on the ground. The FWF is a collective group which is working on developing a business case to the Assembly which will provide economic options for approval that enables organisations to pay SC workers the National Living Wage. A FWF survey has been shared with employers and providers as part of this work, and this information will help inform the business case.</p> <p>Sarah queried how many registrants are actively working in SC, as some may have left the register. Declan advised that a SC worker must have an employer attached to their registration account so that when they come to renew their registration, SCC know if they have left their employer or the register. If a registrant leaves employment, the employer can now input their leave date, and new SC employers can add registrants which improves accuracy of the register. Employers have a requirement to maintain their register of employees, which is enforced and inspected by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).</p> <p>Members discussed various challenges faced by SC registrants, including the impact of training, their family time and the difference between services for rural versus city service users, particularly around travel time and transport access for health care.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>Declan McAllister updated on the development of the mobile app for registration. The first phase will go live at the end of January 2025 to allow people to manage their registration, with the other phases launching over the next 6 to 8 months.</p> |

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| 4. |  <p style="text-align: center;">Chair's Update</p> |
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| 4.1 | Sarah updated that the Public Appointments Unit (PAU) are recruiting for several vacant posts for Non-Executive Members with the SCC. Interviews should take place in the New Year. |
| 4.2 | <p>Sarah shared that the launch of SC Workforce Strategy is taking place on 12th December 2024. This was not included on today's agenda to allow for the launch, and a representative from Workforce Development (WFD) will be invited to the March meeting to present to the group on this.</p> <p>ACTION: Rebecca Smyth to add discussion of Social Care Workforce Strategy launch to agenda for Monday 3rd March 2025.</p> <p>ACTION: Rebecca Smyth to invite Workforce Development representative to next meeting to present on Social Care Workforce Strategy.</p> |
| 4.3 | <p>The group discussed alternative dates for the March and June Participation Partnership meetings. Monday 3rd March 2025 and Wednesday 11th June 2025 were agreed as suitable dates.</p> <p>ACTION: Rebecca Smyth to issue new meeting invites for Monday 3rd March 2025 and Wednesday 11th June 2025.</p> |

Co-Chairs Update

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5.1. Update on student placement options

5.2. Update on Homelessness Awareness Panel event on 2nd December 2024


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| 5.1 | <p>Alan Ritchie shared that he is involved in the Impact Assessment and is attending the launch of the SC Workforce Strategy in Stormont.</p> <p>He is working on the Social Work (SW) Awards submissions with a meeting taking place in early January 2025 to finalise shortlisting.</p> |
| 5.2 | <p>Joanne Sansome updated that the Homelessness Awareness Panel event which took place on 2nd December 2024 (organised by Gerry Skelton), was very interesting. Homelessness is embedded in many aspects of SW, and needs to be more embedded in the education of SW at Assessed Year of Employment (AYE), Post Qualifying (when students specialise) and Undergraduate levels.</p> <p>Gerard McWilliams noted the impact of homelessness on mental health and the need for signposting, research and encouraging social workers to look at the research model.</p> <p>Members discussed the need to shed a light on hidden homelessness and the need for specialised training for social workers in the areas they focus on, such as learning disabilities and autism. Joanne noted that specialised training is part of the final year of the Undergraduate degree, with David Gillen adding that training is mandatory in SW teams. At Queen's University, Belfast, there is a 2-</p> |

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| | <p>hour lecture focusing on children in care. Grace Price noted that social workers can face homelessness in any field they work in.</p> <p>Mandy shared that the Degree is designed to provide generic training – after which social workers can develop into specialist areas throughout their career. There is an expectation within the SCC to focus on continuous learning - which would include keeping their knowledge on key areas, such as homelessness up to date.</p> <p>Declan reflected that he opened and closed the Homelessness Awareness Panel event organised by Gerry Skelton and remarked on Gerry’s commitment and support for this work over the years. On behalf of the Partnership, a number of members presented Gerry with a small token of appreciation as this was his last event. Declan stated that all of the Homeless Awareness Panel event presentations and links to associated evidence and research is not available on the SCC website and a link has now been issued through the Council’s social media channels.</p> |
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| 6. |  <p style="text-align: center;">Members Updates</p> |
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| 6.1 | <p>Gerard shared that he is involved with SCC research on views of SC from the service user’s perspective and where he fits as a member of the group. Declan referred to the work being carried out around the Registrants Forum and questioned if we need to do something in parallel with SC and SW. Gerard added that the SC workforce is a priority and there is a need to reshape the model through linking in with service providers and best practice.</p> |
| 6.2 | <p>a. Susan Croy updated that three members of the User Forum delivered disability awareness training to Causeway Coast and Glens Council.</p> <p>b. Cedar Foundation has retained Investors in People Platinum and the group congratulated this achievement.</p> <p>c. Susan and the User Forum are involved in the development of a toolkit, alongside Cedar Foundation Board Member Dr Jean Daly-Lynn (Ulster University). The toolkit aims to help those with lived experience get involved with the learning experiences of the students. It breaks down many barriers to inclusion, and looks holistically at supporting safe and resilient involvement.</p> |
| 6.3 | <p>Anne Mallon shared that she is focusing on work to review issues impacting on allowances for family carers – including those whose allowances were cut if they worked more than 16 hours. Declan updated on a joint statement around the economic value of paid and unpaid SC which has been provided to the DoH. This will hopefully be discussed at the SC Workforce Strategy launch to focus on the value of unpaid carers and improve public recognition of the cost of paid and unpaid care. Declan referred to the Good Jobs Bill by the Economy Minister, which focuses on enabling unpaid carers to have allowances.</p> |

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| 6.4 | <p>David Gillen updated on the data and impact assessment work he is involved in within children’s care, which helps people appeal when they have not received care or respite they are entitled to.</p> <p>David also acts as a professional supervisor for AYE staff in private residential children’s homes. In his experience, these new social workers need further training and support in this field. Mandy shared that the SCC have published guidance for employers on this topic. Best practice indicates that AYE staff should be part of an established team where they are shadowing experienced social workers. There is a workstream lead by the DoH which is reviewing what is required to resource safer staffing to manage caseloads.</p> |
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| 7. |  <p style="text-align: center;">Break</p> |
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| 7.1 | Participants moved on to Item 8 due to timing. |
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| 8. |  <p style="text-align: center;">Campaigns update 8.1. Update on all campaigns and feedback on areas missed</p> |
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| 8.1 | <p>Rita McCullagh provided a verbal update on the public facing campaigns from DoH and the funding received for these. She asked Rebecca to email the presentation to members.</p> <p>There are two funding pots from the DoH for public facing campaigns - SW promotion funding and SC promotion funding. The SW promotion has two campaigns; the “Yes To SW campaign” which runs from Autumn to the end of January every year, and World SW Month in March. The SC “Making A Difference” campaign runs from June to September. It encourages people into SC and recognises the contribution of the workforce. Service user families and carers are important and the focus in this campaign is on real life stories. These campaigns are delivered jointly by the SCC Communications Team and WFD Team, with engagement through the SCC digital channels and platforms. This work is in addition to the core Comms work.</p> <p>Rita updated on the OASIS planning model, which sets out objectives, audience insight, strategy/ideas, implementation and scoring/evaluation of all Comms activity. The Comms Team deliver campaigns through assets in house, podcasts, public relations and digital campaigns and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>There is £9500 to promote the Degree in SW (coordinated by Tricia Devlin (SCC)) and March awareness campaign. The March Awareness Campaign comes under this and focuses on what can be changed within SW.</p> <p>The SC campaign has its Terms of Reference (TOR) agreed within the SCCF and receives a £25,000 budget which has remained the same for 3 years. Agnes</p> |
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| | <p>Lunny (Head of Communications, Northern Health and Social Care Trust) is the Chair of the SCCF Communications Workstream. Sarah Browne is also a member of this workstream.</p> <p>Ronnie Patterson suggested that Rita link in with Sam Humphries at Stricklands Care Village and Julie Ann Skinner at YMCA Bangor to hear the stories of service users within these organisations as part of the Comms programme.</p> <p>There is a 4-year evaluation of the SC campaign over the next 5 to 6 months to compare the campaign across regions and Rita will keep the group updated on this.</p> <p>Susan queried the link with schools around careers. Rita advised that there is a lot of work being done to support careers teachers. There is very little resource provided for careers service in schools. The SCC supports the annual careers teachers conference and provides an outreach service directly to schools through a letter and flyers to promote SW. There is also an email platform for schools, and SCC representatives attended the Schools Summit in October 2024 where the stand was popular and lots of schools were represented.</p> <p>Declan added that his first public outing as the Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was at a SW Student open day at the Southern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust and he was amazed by the number of young people coming forward interested in SW and SC. Susan queried other routes into SW, i.e. through apprenticeships, and Rita shared that there is active engagement with students within HSC and other Allied Health Professions (AHPs).</p> <p>ACTION: Rebecca Smyth to email Rita McCullagh's Campaigns presentation to all members.</p> <p>ACTION: Rita McCullagh to link in with Sam Humphries (Stricklands Care Village) and Julie Ann Skinner (YMCA, Bangor) to collaborate on sharing service user's stories.</p> |
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| 9. |  <p>Update on Social Work Awards</p> |
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| 9.1 | Mandy had already discussed the Social Work Awards with members. All the entries have been received and checked. Copies are being sent to the panels and this work should be completed in the next week. |
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| 10. |  <p>Update on Social Care Council Senior Leadership Team interim arrangements (Corporate and Profession)</p> |
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| 10.1 | <p>Declan updated members on the interim arrangements at the SCC. He has been appointed as Interim CEO. Recruitment for the permanent post will take place in the New Year. Marian O'Rourke is retiring from her post as Director of Regulation and Standards on 31st December 2024. Helen McVicker (Head of Fitness to Practise) and Catherine Maguire (Head of Workforce Development) will be job sharing Marian's role on an interim basis as Co-Directors of Regulation and Standards.</p> <p>In support of these interim arrangements, Tricia Devlin (Professional Advisor) will provide support for the Head of Workforce Development role and Gillian McAuley (Professional Advisor) will support the Head of Fitness to Practise role. There will be 1 whole time staff member recruited to cover the vacancy within their professional adviser roles for approximately 12 months. It is hoped that the permanent appointments will be in place by December 2025. Sandra Stranaghan (Head of Business Services) will provide interim cover for the Head of Corporate Services role.</p> |
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| 10.2 | Sarah wished members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. |
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| 11. |  <p style="text-align: center;">AOB:</p> |
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| 11.1 | None. |
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|  | Dates of proposed meetings: |
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| Next meeting: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday 3rd March 2025 • Wednesday 11th June 2025 |
| Approved by: | Sarah Browne |
| Signature | <i>Sarah Browne</i> |
| Date of Approval | 3 rd March 2025 |

Annex I

Action List – date of meeting: 11th December 2024

| <u>Listing no:</u> | <u>Action:</u> | <u>Due Date:</u> | <u>Owner:</u> | <u>Status:</u> |
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| 2.1 | Rebecca Smyth to close the action list from the previous meeting for bringing to the Board meeting on Friday 13 th December 2024. | Friday 13 th December 2024 | Rebecca Smyth | Closed |
| 4.2 | Rebecca Smyth to add discussion of Social Care Workforce Strategy launch to agenda for Monday 3 rd March 2025. | Monday 3 rd March 2025 | Rebecca Smyth | Closed |
| 4.2 | Rebecca Smyth to invite Workforce Development representative to next meeting to present on Social Care Workforce Strategy. | Monday 3 rd March 2025 | Rebecca Smyth | Closed |
| 4.3 | Rebecca Smyth to issue new meeting invites for Monday 3 rd March 2025 and Wednesday 11 th June 2025. | As soon as possible | Rebecca Smyth | Closed |
| 8.1 | Rebecca Smyth to email Rita McCullagh’s Campaigns presentation to all members. | Monday 3 rd March 2025 | Rebecca Smyth | Closed |
| 8.1 | Rita McCullagh to link in with Sam Humphries (Stricklands Care Village) and Julie Ann Skinner (YMCA, Bangor) to collaborate on sharing service user’s stories. | Monday 3 rd March 2025 | Rita McCullagh | Closed |