

# Northern Ireland Social Care Council Participation Partnership

**Confirmed Minutes**  
**Tuesday 17th September 2024**  
**James House / Hybrid MS Teams**




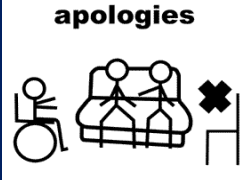


**September**  
**17th**

Members at the meeting:

Sarah Browne (Chair) (Board Member)  
Anne Mallon (Member) - online  
Gerard McWilliams (Member)  
Declan McAllister (Director of Registration and Corporate Services)  
Alan Ritchie (Co-Chair)  
Joanne Sansome (Co-Chair) - online  
Grace Price (Member)  
Rita McCullagh (Head of Strategic Communication & Engagement)  
Nicholas Campbell (Graphic Designer and Animator)  
Declan Beare (Note Taker)

Apologies:


David Hayes (Member)  
Ronnie Patterson (Member)  
Mandy Cowden (Professional Advisor)  
David Gillen (Member)  
Andre McKeown (Evaluation Manager)  
Susan Croy (Cedar Foundation)

1.		<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
1.1	Sarah Browne welcomed everyone and noted apologies from David Hayes, Mandy Cowden, Andre McKeown, Susan Croy, David Gillen and Ronnie Patterson.		
2.		<b>Previous Meeting's Minutes arising – Paper A, Minutes from previous meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> June</b>	
2.1	Previous minutes from 4 <sup>th</sup> June signed off and agreed by everyone. Actions closed from previous meeting.		
3.		<b>Matters Arising</b> <b>a. Social Care Collaborative Forum</b> <b>b. Update on the Social Care App</b>	
3.1	<p><b>a.</b> Declan McA updated on the progress of the Social Care Collaborative Forum. This forum delivers work through seven workstreams. Declan provided update on some of the workstream work and reflected the work of the Social Care Workforce workstream who have shared a workforce strategy in draft. It is hoped this will launch in December 2024.</p> <p>Declan reflected on the Social Care Data workstream which he co-chairs and the progress made along with a short update on the Social Care DOH Fair Work Forum. Gerard sought clarification on the survey and what it would mean for workers and it was outlined that this survey would assist in the preparation of a business case for Assembly approval to improve the pay, terms and conditions for social care practitioners.</p> <p>Anne queried about work regarding the Personal Assistants, however Declan reflected that the Fair Work Forum is only focused on registered social care workers at present, but the wider social care sector would be considered as part of the Social Care Collaborative Forum work.</p> <p>Gerard and Declan then raised issues around the Care Home workstream and the large number of rescheduled meetings. Declan stated that both the Co-Chairs of the Social Care Collaborative Forum are meeting with the chairs of each workstream to understand the progress and the barriers each are facing.</p>		
3.2	<b>b.</b> Declan McA provided an update on development of the Social Care App for registration. Some parts of the app development are complete and these sections are being tested by our staff. There are some functions on the app that		

are not complete and this is being followed up. The app is in a form that can be downloaded to your phone now, but it's still at a very early stage and will be shared with everyone in this group when it's more complete.

Declan advised that introduction of the new Encompass system is rolling out across the Health and Social Care Trusts. South Eastern Trust and Belfast Trust have now moved to the new system. This system will connect up the Health and Care records of all Northern Ireland citizens. Information about Encompass has been shared with this group. Gerard added that people can download an app called 'Mycare' on their phone to check their medical records now.

**4.**



**Chair's Update**  
**a. Update on Social Work Awards**

4.1 Sarah was delighted to announce the Social Work Awards are now going ahead but not until next March 2025 and will be hosted by the Western Trust. Patricia Higgins launched a video online to encourage Social Workers to submit their nominations.

In response to a query from Joanne Sansome as to whether a member of the judging panel could make a nomination, any queries can be directed to the dedicated support email: [businesssupport@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:businesssupport@niscc.hscni.net)

Andre McKeown has also created a FAQs document so staff can get back with an answer to your queries promptly. Nominations for the Social Work Awards close 20 October 2024.

4.2 Sarah informed the Social Care Campaign was launched at an event in the Long Gallery at Stormont on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The event involved social care workers who had been featured in the social care stories for the campaign, as well as service users and carers. The Health Minister spoke at the event and thanked social care workers for the valuable work that they do.

Rita advised the Social Care Campaign launch was a success, with a special mention for Gerard who spoke very well at it as one of our guest speakers. Rita also went on to thank Grace, Alan and Anne for recording the podcast.

'Why Social Work: How to become a Social Worker?' is the latest podcast released and there are two further to release over the coming months.

Rita informed the group that we have received funding to cover our podcasts next year and put a call out to the group to share ideas of what could be covered.

4.3	Impact Assembly UK are establishing another network to explore social care improvement projects. Information has been shared. Declan reported that Mairead Harkin will be representing us on the Technology IMPACT project.
4.4	<p>Sarah asked the members if there were any other days would suit for the Participation Partnership to have their meetings because Ronnie Patterson could not attend on Tuesdays anymore. Monday or Wednesday suggested as the best options for everyone.</p> <p>Action: Declan B to send out a Doodle Poll to let everyone put in their availability.</p>



5.	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Co-Chairs Update</b></p>
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5.1	<p>Joanne updated on Strategic Advisory Group for social work. The group meets on 18 September and the agenda will include Review of the Social Work Degree and student placements. Work is underway to have the student placement options ready for December/January time.</p> <p>Joanne explained that she will be working with Professor Joe Duffy from Queens University for a project based in America to get service users and carers as social work educators. This includes developing a guide on involvement which will be used in 500 universities across America.</p>
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5.2	<p>Alan commented on the excellent delivery of the Social Care Campaign launch which he had recently attended. The event supported key messages promoting the important work carried out by the social care workforce.</p> <p>Alan reported that he has been invited to attend Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) meetings. It was noted that these meetings and some of the Social Care workstreams seem to be more discussion based and Alan recommended that the processes should be simplified and more action and outcomes focused.</p>
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6.	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Members Updates</b></p>
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6.1	<p>Gerard advised that he was involved with the Social Work engagement programme for the revised Registrants' Forum. The workshop held in June was extremely informative and well received.</p> <p>Gerard is also doing a lot of work with the Open University (OU) around the degree in Social Work to explore how more applicants can be attracted to the course.</p>
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	<p>Gerard is also involved in a lot of work around the Special Olympics and Winter Games, which are also linked to the University.</p> <p>Gerard suggested a planned coffee morning, with an invitation extended to social carers, social workers and nurses to allow an opportunity for joint learning and sharing experiences across multi-disciplinary teams.</p>
6.2	<p>Grace Price highlighted the need for more focus and support around homelessness and other underlying mental and physical challenges as this is a significant worsening issue which does not seem to have been addressed. Declan advised that the Council are supporting Gerry Skelton with his Homelessness Awareness Campaign event on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024.</p> <p>It was noted that more could be done around young students being prepared for homelessness and self-harm issues to which Joanne stated that there has been practical work around this for new students with practice placements forming 50% of the degree.</p> <p>Grace noted the importance of recognising the person presenting as homeless and avoiding preconceived perceptions.</p>
6.3	<p>Anne reported being involved with work at the Queens School of Nursing and Midwifery. The next meeting is 26<sup>th</sup> September.</p> <p>Anne also queried the fact that the key worker for her daughter in the Southern Trust is a nurse, yet this person covers the role previously by a social worker. Anne queried if your key worker is not a Social Worker and there is a complaint made, would it be a whole different issue? There is a concern about the overlap between roles now.</p>
7.	 <p><b>Terms of Reference Paper B – Final Draft for Agreement</b></p>
7.1	<p>Sarah reported that the Operational Participation Partnership meeting on 2 September discussed the Terms of Reference for the Participation Partnership. This was circulated to the group in advance. The group agreed the TOR's for approval by the Board at their next meeting.</p>
8.	 <p><b>Break</b></p>
	<p>Participants had their break.</p>

9.



**Engagement Strategy and update on Social Care Campaign  
Paper C – Social Care Campaign Report**

9.1

Rita shared the latest engagement and progress work with the group reflecting on the recent Social Care Campaign work with an evaluation now underway to reflect on the Campaign and how it went.

Funding has been provided for the next Social Care Campaign and we want to focus on the Social Care Workforce as part of the Campaign development.

Gerard asked if he could get involved with looking at the other nations to see how they approach this Social Care work. Rita advised we are coming together to do a proposal of how the evaluation may run. We've got more work to do but we will definitely involve the Participation group in the future.

9.2

Rita informed the group on the development of the Engagement Strategy –

- **Registrants Forum** is progressing well and the Head of Fitness to Practise, Helen McVicker is the lead officer for the group. Joanne and Gerard attended the first workshop in June that was very useful. The second workshop will focus on establishing the new forum structure. Feedback from participants indicated that they would prefer interactive and purposeful meetings with actions completed during the course of the meeting.
- **Employer engagement** - work is underway to co-ordinate employer engagement and ensure that it aligns with the Business Plan and Strategic Plan.

10.



**The Business Plan 2024/2025  
Paper D – Plan on a page**

10.1

Declan provided an update on the 2024/2025 Business Plan which was shared previously. This plan is made up of 29 separate objectives for work that will be delivered by 31 March 2025. At this point, 22 of the 29 are on track with the remainder requiring additional actions to bring them back on track.

10.2

Declan reflected on a number of additional functions as follows:

- The number of people on the register continues to grow with a further increase of 1700 people this year.
- Fitness to Practise activity is still quite high, with around 200 referrals made to the team this year. A lot of the issues are around rough handling or behaviours in work. We know that key to minimising the number of fitness to practise issues is making people more aware of the values, standards and behaviours required of registered workers. Our

	<p>engagement work is helping raise awareness and we know that we need to get more people involved around regulation to increase understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anne McGlade, our Research Lead at the Social Care Council, is responsible for developing research for social work and social care in NI. Anne is leading on development of a Research and Evidence Committee which will report to the Board.</li> </ul>
10.3	<p>In response to a query, Declan advised that the Level 2 certificate is almost ready to launch. Although it will take time for the new certificate to become embedded it is expected that new social care workers will be required to complete this qualification as part of their induction going forward. Those who do not hold a social care qualification will also be encouraged to complete as part of their learning journey which can then be added to the registrant's CV.</p>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Progress on key Strategic work of the Council</b>
11.1	<p>Joanne announced that she had resigned from the Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF) after serving as a member for the last 15 months. Joanne had raised concerns that the voice of service users was not being heard effectively and that there had not been enough progress against the action plan during her tenure.</p> <p>Following a meeting with the SCCF Co-Chair it was agreed that Joanne should continue with work already being delivered for the Social Care Council on the Degree in Social Work with particular focus on the partnership work with Joe Duffy.</p> <p>Gerard also raised concerns, from a service user perspective, on the appearance of 'tokenism' in the SCCF and it was agreed that the Forum needs to focus on improving engagement with service users and carers representatives across all the workstreams as their input is invaluable.</p>
<b>12.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
	<p>Patricia advised of her intention to retire as Chief Executive effective from mid-October 2024.</p> <p>Patricia expressed her thanks to members for their commitment and commended the work and influence of the Partnership over the last 20 years. The Social Care Council were the first regulator to establish a forum for service users and carers and the longevity of the group speaks to the value of partnership working and good relationship building.</p> <p>Its longevity speaks volumes about the engagement and relationship. We wanted you to have a voice and to help us develop. Patricia thanked the group for their commitment and their hard work.</p> <p>On behalf of the Partnership members, Sarah expressed her thanks and well wishes to Patricia on her retirement.</p>





Next meeting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024</li></ul>
Approved by:	Sarah Browne
Signature	<i>Sarah Browne</i>
Date of Approval	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2024



Annex I

**Action List – date of meeting 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

Listing no.	Action	Due Date	Owner	Status
4.4	Doodle poll for future dates		Declan Beare	Closed