

**RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE PARTNERSHIP:
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**First version
April 2025**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) is responsible for the regulation and registration of the Social Work and Social Care workforce in Northern Ireland and is established under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 as a non-departmental body, sponsored by the Department of Health (DoH). To discharge its functions effectively, the Social Care Council has established a number of Partnerships to engage its key stakeholders in the development and delivery of its business.

1.2 The Research and Evidence Partnership was established by the Social Care Council in 2024 as a Committee of the Board.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of the Research and Evidence Partnership is to support the Council in undertaking its responsibilities in relation to research and evidence in professional social work and social care services to support better outcomes for practitioners, service users and carers in Northern Ireland.

3. SCOPE

3.1 The Research and Evidence Partnership will have oversight of and will provide advice to the Council on matters relating to the Social Work and Social Care Research agenda in Northern Ireland.

3.2 The Research and Evidence Partnership will encourage, promote and support Social Work and Social Care research and research-related activity at a strategic level.

3.3 The Research and Evidence Partnership will encourage, promote and support the building of research skills and capability within the Social Work and Social Care workforce.

3.4 The Research and Evidence Partnership will influence and guide how member organisations provide a research and evidence base for Social Work and Social Care including practitioners, managers, academia, statutory sector organisations, community and voluntary sector organisations, private sector organisations, people with lived experience and carers in Northern Ireland.

3.5 The Research and Evidence Partnership will facilitate and encourage the participation in research of both people delivering, and those in receipt of Social Work and Social Care.

3.6 The Research and Evidence Partnership will have an overview of research and evidence activity of relevance to Social Work and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

3.7 The Research and Evidence Partnership will develop a revised Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy and Implementation Plan for approval by the Board.

3.8 The Research and Evidence Partnership will identify the strategic research and evidence priorities for Social Work and Social Care to

inform decision-making and the conduct of research related initiatives.

3.9 The Research and Evidence Partnership will advocate for resources to be made available to meet identified priorities. It will take responsibility to report any gaps or deficits.

3.10 The Research and Evidence Partnership will work with all of the Board's Partnerships and other relevant external partnerships in undertaking these responsibilities.

4. SHARED VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The Research and Evidence Partnership will operate in accordance with the following agreed values and principles;

4.1 Compassionate and collaborative leadership - nurturing a culture of partnership inclusion and belonging by fostering positive relationships between professionals and other individuals and other partnerships.

4.2 Common purpose - an understanding of a common purpose and overarching goal and be committed to the outcomes, however incremental, and remain committed to the long-term goals identified even when things are not going to plan.

4.3 Valuing each other - understanding each other's strengths, expertise, roles and responsibilities - to provide a clear focus and greater effectiveness and efficiency.

4.4 Modelling and nurturing a culture of curiosity - a willingness to admit to uncertainties and the rights of individuals and families and communities to be engaged in research to help resolve these uncertainties.

4.5 Being open, honest and transparent - creating a safe and trusting space for open and frank conversations and holding each other to account.

4.6 Effective and accessible communication - appreciate that others may not have the same understanding of professional language and terms and may interpret abbreviations differently.

4.7 Modelling inclusion and diversity - that reflects the equal value of all membership ensuring also that participation of members who bring a lived experience are supported and recognised for their contribution.

4.8 Respecting confidentiality and integrity - in how we work within the partnership accepting that at times discussions about research and data will need to remain in confidence.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The Research and Evidence Partnership will consist of representatives from government departments and other relevant research constituencies, senior representatives from higher

education institutions, health and social care, justice, education and voluntary and private sectors; service users and carers and the professional body for social workers and social care workers in Northern Ireland. These will be sought from representatives at Chief Executive/Director and Dean level, or equivalent for those with lived experience of using services.

5.2 Membership of the Research and Evidence Partnership will be endorsed by the Board. The Chair will keep the membership under review and may invite other parties to participate in the Partnership as necessary and appropriate.

5.3 The Chair of the Research and Evidence Partnership is a member of the Board appointed by the Chair of the Board. The Co-Chair is appointed by the members of the Partnership and approved by the Board.

5.4 One third of the full membership will constitute a quorum for meetings.

5.5 The Chair, and Co-Chair and members of the Research and Evidence Partnership are required to participate in an annual review, to support the Terms of Reference.

5.6 Membership list

The membership list is available on the Social Care Council website at <https://niscc.info/committees-and-partnerships/>.

6. FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

6.1 The Research and Evidence Partnership will meet four times per year. Additional ad-hoc meetings (and/or representation at other Social Care Council events) may also be required. Members are required to liaise with the Chair or the Social Care Council's Business Team in advance if they are unable to attend a meeting for any reason.

6.2 The Social Care Council will support the arrangements for the Research and Evidence Partnership meetings by providing the secretariat who will arrange for the distribution of agendas, papers and taking a note of meetings. The Director of Regulation and Standards, or a nominated deputy, will directly support the Chair in the management of the Partnership.

6.3 Decision-making by the Partnership will be on the basis of consensus. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, a final decision will be made by the Chair. The expectation is that intervention by the Chair in these circumstances will be exceptional.

6.4 At any meeting of the Partnership a quorum is required for the purpose of decision making. The quorum will ensure a representative spread of the partnership.

6.5 A quorum of members must be present throughout the meeting. Should the Chair declare that there is not a quorum, any decision shall be deferred to the next ordinary meeting, unless the Chair indicates that an earlier meeting is required.

7. REPORTING, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

7.1 Minutes of the Research and Evidence Partnership will be forwarded to the Board meeting following each Partnership meeting. As a formal Committee of the Board, minutes of the Partnership meetings will also be published on the Social Care Council website.

7.2 Members of the Research and Evidence Partnership will be required to comply with good governance practice in their undertakings with the Social Care Council, attending relevant training sessions as required and working collaboratively with the Social Care Council and other Partnership members.

7.3 The Terms of Reference for the Research and Evidence Partnership will be reviewed by the Board and Partnership Members on an annual basis as part of their programme of work, including an assessment of the extent to which the Partnership is complying with its scope and purpose as set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above.

8. ENDORSEMENT

8.1 These Terms of Reference were approved by the Research and Evidence Partnership on 02 April 2025 and agreed and endorsed by the Council on 30 April 2025.