



Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
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## Leaders in Social Care Partnership

25 September 2025 at 10am

### MS Teams

#### Confirmed

##### In Attendance

Sarah Browne, Chair  
Catherine Maguire  
Clodagh O'Brien  
Mervyn Bothwell  
Paul Rooney  
Amanda Williamson  
Tricia Devlin  
Rita McCullagh  
Denise Magill  
Bria Mongan  
Carol Diffin  
Jenny Johnston  
Kathryn Corkey  
Lorraine Corr  
Nigel Wilkinson  
Paul Roberts  
Jayne Wright  
Tina O'Reilly  
William Morrow (Rep of Alex Bunting)  
Natalie Whelehan  
Jo Browne

Board Member, Social Care Council  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Belfast HSCT (BHSCT)  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Northern HSCT (NHSCT)  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Triangle Housing  
Board member, Social Care Council  
Board member, Social Care Council  
Southern HSCT (SHSCT)  
Simon Community  
Connected Health  
Social Care Council (NISCC)  
Positive Futures  
Mindwise  
Extern NI  
Inspire  
CiNi  
Optimum Care Group

Note taker: Andriana Alkiviadou (Secretariat) Social Care Council (NISCC)

##### Apologies

Alison Simpson  
Claire Crawford  
Carina Boyle  
Alex Bunting  
Audrey Murphy  
Kelly Devlin

Extra Care  
South Eastern HSCT (SEHSCT)  
Western HSCT (WHST)  
Inspire  
MCare NI  
Cedar Foundation

Leslie-Anne Newton  
 Pauline Shepherd  
 Ryan Williams  
 Jude O'Neill  
 Tracy Reid

ARC  
 Independent Health & Care Providers  
 Connected Health  
 Inspire Wellbeing  
 Social Care Council (NISCC)

Item	Agenda
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>
1.1	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies as above.
1.2	The Chair also welcomed new members as below; Natalie Whelehan, Paul Roberts, Jo Browne and Lorraine Corr. She also welcomed 2 new board members, Bria Mongan and Carol Diffin and she informed members that Carol will permanently joining this partnership and Bria is attending as part of her Induction.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes from Previous Meeting</b>
2.1	Minutes from the 20 May 2025 were approved by members as accurate. These will be signed and published on the website.  She noted that the only outstanding item from last meeting is the ' <i>Social Care Still Matters</i> ' Report which is nearly completed and will be shared with members when finalised.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>
	There was one matter arising from the meeting in May.
3.1	<u>Terms of Reference – Next Steps:</u> Board accepted the revised Term of Reference which will be reviewed again in 2 years. The key strategic priorities going forward are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to agree a definition of social care</li> <li>• to support the Social Care Workforce Strategy</li> <li>• to explore how we share information with the wider social care sector</li> <li>• to influence evidence and data collection</li> <li>• to widen membership of the Partnership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> To form a subgroup to bring forward a definition which would be shared with the wider group and put forward to DoH for consideration.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Social Care Reform Programme – presented by PR and MB</b>
4.1	<b>Care in Practice Update</b> MB and PR provided an update on Care in Practice with key points as below; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Care in Practice interactive resource was launched in June 2025 and had 3598 active users since the launch. A mailer and posters are being sent to</li> </ul>

	<p>Social Care organisations for information. Link to access here <a href="https://careinpractice.niscc.info/">https://careinpractice.niscc.info/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Care in Practice Framework has been shortlisted for the European Social Services Award. Call for votes will open on the 1 October and the link will be shared to members for support and dissemination.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> Link for voting to be shared with members once is open for voting. Members to share across their teams and organisations.</p>
4.2	<p><b>Qualifications Review</b></p> <p>MB shared a brief review of the qualifications as below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level 2 Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice has been available since September 2024. To date 82 people have completed the qualification. Awarding organisations have agreed to report uptake to the Council quarterly.</li> <li>- The qualifications review has progressed with the Level 5 Diploma review about to commence. It is anticipated that the review process will be completed and the full suite (levels 2-5) of qualifications available from September 2026.</li> <li>- Funding available for qualifications and training under the Training Support Programme has now been transferred to the Social Care Council on a trial basis (£200k). Applications to fund the level 2 Certificate will be prioritised along with training initiatives on the following themes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Dementia awareness.</li> <li>o Palliative care awareness.</li> <li>o Emergency First Aid.</li> <li>o Moving and positioning.</li> <li>o Trauma-informed practice.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Applications are out and closing date is the 17/10. See link <a href="https://niscc.info/funding-available-for-training-and-development-for-independent-social-care-sector-apply-now/">https://niscc.info/funding-available-for-training-and-development-for-independent-social-care-sector-apply-now/</a></li> <li>- A survey has been sent to all the registered social care practitioners in children services to understand their perspective and ensure that future development of the CiP Framework aligns with the development needs of those working in children's services. The Council appreciate the support of colleagues that have shared the survey and encourage others to do so. As response rates have been lower than expected the closing date has been extended to the 30 September 2025.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> PR to send the link to members for dissemination.</p>
4.3	<p><b>National Occupational Standards (NOS) Update</b></p> <p>MB shared a brief update on NOS with highlighted points as below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NOS review commenced at the beginning of 2025.</li> <li>- So far 147 NOS have been reviewed and upload under the Government website.</li> <li>- A consultation on changes has been shared and it is expected that the review will be finalised by the end of this calendar year.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Save the date for the next Social Care Manager Forum; 18 November in Armagh City hotel and 27 November in Dunsilly. For more information visit <a href="https://niscc.info/events/save-the-date-autumn-social-care-managers-forums-announced/">https://niscc.info/events/save-the-date-autumn-social-care-managers-forums-announced/</a></li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Social Care Children’s Reform Board update</b>
	<p>CM shared a brief update of the Children’s Social Care Reform Board (CSCRB) noting that due to the PiP Awards Ceremony being held on the same date a representative from the Social Care Council was unable to attend.</p> <p>The Board is now due to finalise their 5year strategic plan and this can be shared with members once is completed.</p> <p>The Chair is very keen to have a children’s representative as part of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Social Care Collaborative Forum – update</b>
	<p>Declan McAllister provided a written update highlighting key points as follow;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last meeting of the SCCF took place on Tuesday 10th June 2025.</li> <li>- The 2nd Annual Report was reviewed and is due for approval and publication at the next SCCF meeting on 30th September 2025.</li> <li>- Concerns have been raised around the changes in immigration policy and how this will impact on recruitment and workforce within the social care sector and the importance to ensure that the annual report of the SCCF reflects this.</li> <li>- A new 10-year strategic plan and a 3 year delivery plan has been prepared by the SCCF and it is due to approval at the SCCF meeting on the 30th September 2025. The strategic plan will provide a high-level road map for SCCF workstreams and will address the strategic priorities and actions to reform adult social care. It is noted that the strategic plan and delivery plan has been shared with Des Kelly and John Kennedy (co-authors of the Power to People Report) for their comment.</li> <li>- The SCCF have approved a collective model of involvement to ensure service users are actively engaged in the co-design of reformed social care in the future and a representative from the Patient Client Council has been invited to be a member of the SCCF. Training on the model will also be provided to each of the Chairs and co-chairs of the SCCF workstreams.</li> <li>- A separate group of the SCCF membership has also been completing work on the development of guidance on Anti-racism and anti-discrimination for Social Care employers. It is expected this guidance will be available to employers in the next few weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b>‘Making a Difference’ Campaign – Updates by RMcC</b>
	<p>RMcC shared a brief update on the campaign as below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The launch of the ‘Making the difference’ campaign took place on the 11 June in Omagh with the Minister attendance. It was a great event which showcased the importance of social care as an attractive career choice</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PR digital campaign ran through the summer that included digital and video stories that have been shared broadly on social media. RMcC thanked members for supporting the campaign by sharing on social media channels.</li> <li>- An evaluation of this campaign is in progress and will be shared with the partnership when a final report.</li> <li>- Social Care Collaborative Forum has requested 4-year evaluation of the work that is undertaken by the Communications this workstream. The evaluation is in process and should be completed by early in the new year. Both evaluations will inform campaigns in the future.</li> <li>- Members were invited to bring forward suggestions for future podcasts on social care.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> To share the survey report once finalised.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Members to suggest podcast topics to promote social care.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Fair Work Forum update</b>
	<p>DMcA shared a written update for the Fair Work Forum, highlighting the points below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The last meeting of the Fair Work Forum took place on the 21st August 2025.</li> <li>- The Fair Work Forum business case has shifted focus to the identification of the key benefits that a Real Living Wage sector will bring to patient outcomes.</li> <li>- The Minister is still committed to an annual investment of £50M for the Real Living Wage for the Non- Statutory Social Care Sector. The investment also includes costs to support travel for homecare social care practitioners, but does not cover holiday pay costs which are still required to be met by employers.</li> <li>- It is understood that additional investment will be made each year to cover the percentage increase in the Real Living Wage and work is being completed to put in place a method by which the increase to Real Living Wage has a robust payment mechanism to ensure all social care practitioners receive the increase across the sector.</li> <li>- It is understood that the process for final approval will be by the Dept of Finance for sign off and then to the Assembly for approval. The Executive Policy is that the Real Living Wage should be paid from the 1st September 2025.</li> <li>- The Forum are of the view that this will bring a level of certainty to the sector around the Real Living Wage and that it will be a lifetime of wage increase for some of our lowest paid social care practitioners.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Fitness to Practice 2024/25 Annual Performance report – update</b>

	<p>Nigel Wilkinson shared a power point presentation on an overview of fitness to practice activity for the year 2024/25. There was much interest in the data provided including the, nature and source of allegations, settings and sectors and how learning from FTP can be used to inform learning and development priorities in the future. The importance of triangulation with RQIA data and analysis was also noted.</p> <p>WM raised the issue of employer rigour in relation to character references and asked if the Council had a view on its relevance to FtP referrals. NW clarified that the character references are not required by the Council at the initial registration stage but may be considered as part of a FTP assessment.</p> <p>DM asked if CCTV in supported living could be used as evidence to support a referral or an investigation. NW advised that this could be taken in account, however there may be legal implications if the individual is not informed that there is a camera in place.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Slides and analysis of social care referrals 2012 – 2022 report to be shared with members.</p>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>Delegation of healthcare interventions for social care practitioners update</b></p> <p>CM shared a brief update on the Delegation of Health Care interventions to social care practitioners with key points as below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This work is currently led by NIPEC on behalf of the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO).</li> <li>- Following the update at the previous meeting the report has been completed and forwarded to the task and finish group chaired by NIPEC.</li> </ul> <p>Comments by members were noted as below;</p> <p>AW suggested a clear definition of social care could help to support transitions from Children’s to Adult Services.</p> <p>Members added that they weren’t aware of this workshop or invited. CM clarified that NIPEC issued invitations to the workshop and that some members of the partnership had been invited but not all had been able to attend.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> To remain a standing item of the agenda</p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>All Party Group (APG) Skills report update</b></p> <p>CM shared a brief update from the APG skills report as below; This APG on skills commenced in May 2024, was delayed by the election that year and recommenced in 2025. The APG will look at skills across a number of</p>

	<p>areas with social care being the first. The final report from the APG report contained 7 recommendations including the need for cross departmental working.</p> <p>Visit <a href="https://university.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland/our-work/policy-and-public-affairs/all-party-group-on-skills">https://university.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland/our-work/policy-and-public-affairs/all-party-group-on-skills</a> for more information.</p>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Members Updates</b>
	<p>Members shared updates of issue or news that are happening within their teams and organisations as below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update on 'real living wage' as this is only based in trust contracts This additional cost comes from the DoH rather than DoE and is focusing on adult services and not children. That will have an impact and challenges across sectors and the workforce.</li> <li>- KC noted that the Simon Community has launched a trauma informed workforce and would welcome support from other employers on this journey.</li> <li>- NW will share the survey with CiNI members to encourage uptake across the community and voluntary sector.</li> </ul> <p><i>No further comments/updates noted for this item</i></p>
<b>13.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
	<p>Call for National Institute for social care research.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Andriana sent this out to members for information.</p>
<b>14.</b>	<b>Dates of Next Meetings</b>
	<p>Tuesday 10 Feb 2025      10:00 am Online          Tuesday 19 May 2026      10:00 am Social Care Council, James House  <i>Schedule and calendar invites have already been sent out to all members</i></p>
	<p><b>Signed</b></p> <p><i>Sarah Browne</i></p>

**Action list – date of meeting 25 September 2025**

Listing no.	Action	Due Date	Owner	Status
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3.1	To form a subgroup to bring forward a definition which would be shared with the wider group and put forward to DoH for consideration.	By January	CM/SB	Open
4.1	- Link for voting to be shared with members once is open. - Members to share across their teams and organisations.	Once available	MB All members	Closed
4.2	To send the link of the survey to members for completion and dissemination.	September	PR	Closed
7	Members to suggest areas of interest for podcasts.	Anytime	All members	Open
7	To share the report from the survey once is finalised	TBC	RMcC	Open
9	To collate data on what work settings and/or sectors most referrals are coming from.	TBC	NW	Closed
9	FtP Slides and referral report to be shared with all the members.	September	Nigel Wilkinson	Closed
10	To keep the updates of the Delegation of healthcare interventions for social care practitioners as a standing agenda item.		Chair	Ongoing

#### Action list – date of meeting 20 May 2025

Listing no.	Action	Due Date	Owner	Status
9.1	To share the draft 'Social Care <i>still</i> matters' report to members to provide feedback on additions/edits required to reflect the focus of this partnership.	TBC	AMcK	Open