



Social Care Council Board Meeting
Confirmed Minutes
10:00am on Friday 13th December 2024
Shared Conference Room,
James House, Belfast

Present:

Gerard Guckian, Interim Chair
Sarah Browne, Board Member
Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member
Professor David Hayes, Board Member
Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member via MS Teams

In Attendance:

Declan McAllister, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council
Catherine Maguire, Interim Co-Director of Regulation and Standards, Social Care Council
Rita McCullagh, Head of Strategic Communications & Engagement, Social Care Council
Helen McVicker, Interim Co-Director of Regulation and Standards, Social Care Council
Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation & Standards, Social Care Council
Sandra Stranaghan, Interim Head of Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Andriana Alkiviadou, Business Support, Social Care Council
Andre McKeown, Business Support, Social Care Council

Observer(s):

Pauline Coulter, Department of Health
Karen Harvey, RQIA (item 7 only)
Suzanne Cunningham (item 7 only)

Apologies:

None

Formalities

Item	Agenda
1.	Welcome and apologies
1.1	The Interim Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that no apologies had been received.
1.2	The Interim Chair thanked members for accommodating a change of date at such short notice to facilitate attendance at other key meetings.
2.	Declarations of Interest
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest to note.
3.1	Board Minutes –for approval
3.1	<i>Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 9th October 2024</i>
3.1.1	The minutes of 9 th October 2024 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record.
3.2	Matters Arising – Licence James House
3.2.1	<p>The Interim Chief Executive informed members of the changes to the licence at James House as agreed by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAO have agreed as part of the end of year investigations for the Report to Those Charged with Governance that the Social Care Council holds a lease agreement not a licence for James House. • Work is now ongoing with LPS to commission an independent evaluation of James House allocation under IFRS16. Upon receipt of the evaluation, engagement will take place with NIAO to confirm they are content with any proposed adjustments. • The Department will need to consider the provision of the additional cover for the Social Care Council as well as the Children's Guardian Agency who are in the same position with annual accounts and reports still not signed off. This work will hopefully be completed in January 2025 in advance of the Audit Committee Meeting on 12th February 2025. • It is not anticipated there will be any change to the revenue cost, however the capital allocation for the management and accounts presentation will increase.
4.	Interim Chair's Report – verbal
4.1	<p>The Interim Chair noted the following key updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a good response to the non-executive recruitment. Shortlisting has been confirmed for 6th January 2025 with interviews

	<p>projected to take place in February.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NICON 2024 was a positive experience with a challenging theme entitled “Grasping the Nettle”. There has also been a clear reset with the Health Minister to relaunch the Bengoa approach to health and social care transformation which was supported by Prof. Bengoa at an event in the La Mon Hotel in early November 2024. • The launch of the Social Care Workforce Strategy reflects the systems leadership role of the Social Care Council and promotes the social care workforce as a key part of Health and Social Care delivery.
4.2	<p>The Interim Chair noted that this will be the last Board meeting for the Director of Regulations and Standards in advance of her retirement later this month. He acknowledged her hard work, vision and tenacity in driving the PiP Framework or the Post-Qualification Framework and every other success throughout her work with the Social Care Council. Members wished Marian all the best in her retirement.</p>

Business Briefings

5.	Interim Chief Executive’s Report – for information
5.1	<p>The Interim Chief Executive advised that the report outlined key activity undertaken covering the period October to December and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This period saw the launch of the Social Care Workforce Strategy as well as the Care in Practice Framework. Looking forward to supporting the ongoing work as these two projects roll out across the sector. • Mindful of resources going forward as the Social Care Council moves into the new year and towards achieving breakeven at the end of the financial reporting period on 31st March 2025.
5.2	<p>The Interim Chief Executive noted the privileged opportunity to step into the interim role and expressed thanks to the Board for their confidence and the wider interim team and staff for their support in taking up the position, and the arrangements that are now in place to support delivery of the Social Care Council statutory responsibilities.</p>
5.3	<p>The Board noted the Chief Executive’s Report.</p>

Business Matters

6.	Collaborative Working – RQIA and Social Care Council presentation on Joint Working
6.1	<p>The Director of Regulations and Standards presented on the Joint Working with RQIA with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication across the system and workforce regulation is key to

	<p>safe and effective service delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing data intelligence and insights in a timely manner enables preventative approaches and early intervention. • Data sharing agreement and MOU is under review at present following a commitment to a bi-annual review. • Work has been undertaken to formalise the notification mechanisms of breaches of registration regulations through to RQIA. • We have joint responsibility for the Employer Standards under the legislation and this provides opportunity for joint messaging. need more focus and input. • Noted that HSC QI now sits within RQIA and this may present opportunities for joint initiatives.
6.2	<p>The Board welcomed the proposed joint working and initiatives, recognising the significant impact this relationship will have on the entire system.</p>
7.	<p>Social Work Regulation and Development of Education and Training Report</p>
7.1	<p>The Interim co-Director of Regulations and Standards presented the Social Work Regulation and Development of Education and Training report with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some final design edits and formatting to be completed once the report is approved before it can be shared • There is a clear increase in the number of newly qualified social workers and students on the register • The report reflected the significant regulatory work led by the workforce development team with the support of other functions in the organisation. This included the periodic review of the degree and the notable increase in PIP awards during the accounting period.
7.2	<p>Discussion took place regarding the importance of opportunities to share learning from the report. Additionally, members discussed the current pathways to qualification available and how the current options align with the DoH policy of a degree level qualification pathway.</p>
7.3	<p>Members approved the Social Work Regulation and Development of Education and Training report.</p>
8.	<p>Business Performance Report (Month 7 – October 2024)</p>
8.1	<p>The Interim Head of Corporate Services presented the Business Performance Report with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers the period April to October 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently developing a new draft business plan for 2025/26 which will be brought to the Board early in the new year for review • Work is ongoing to progress the next stages of the Strategic Plan • Majority of business objectives and KPIs are on target at this stage with exceptions for the development of the engagement strategy, an internal communications plan and the new registration app which have all been delayed with plans to have these launched or completed in quarter 4 of the year. • It continues to be a very busy period of time for all functions across the Social Care Council • Over 6000 calls or emails from registrants were managed in the period with around 800 applications and approx. 300 renewals managed per month. • Increased monthly customer service reports with a 97% satisfaction rate. • FTP Case management system went live at the beginning of November. • Fitness to Practise and Committee activity remains high with over 400 Fitness to Practise cases live on the system and Committee managing almost 40 committees to date this year. • Approximately 1380 responses received from the registrant survey for feedback to the Social Care Work Forum with the Employer survey due to close on the 10th January 2025. • SLT engaged staff through Happy Raspberry to develop a People Plan. This confirmed the thinking around pressures of work and resources but also how career development, succession planning and learning and development can be supported. A report on this will be presented to the Board in the new year.
8.2	Members noted the Performance Report
9.	Finance Report (Month 7 – October 2024)
9.1	<p>The Interim Chief Executive presented the Finance Report with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seventh allocation letter has been received to include funding for Fair Work Forum, Systems Leadership, Collaborative Forum and non-recurrent funding for Workforce development. Disbursements funding has been allocated and is being processed currently. • There is a surplus of £10 at the end of October. The forecasted Breakeven position is reporting a surplus position of £27k. Discussions and reviews are underway to make use of any available surplus before year end. • The Social Care Council has advised the DoH that no in-year slippages

	<p>will be identified as requested given the current financial position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Care Council has begun to draft a budget for the next 3-years with a hope that a flat cash budget will be provided although there is a potential that a 1% reduction or approx. £85k over 3 years will need to be implemented. The scenario planning clearly outlines the impact any budget reduction, or indeed a flat cash budget, will have given the increasing workload within Fitness to Practise, Workforce Development and the new Research and Evidence capacity. • It is estimated that an additional £105k in baseline would be needed to meet the increased demand and business deliverables. • Finance is now one of the highest risks within the Social Care Council.
9.2	The Board noted the Finance Report.
10.	Revised Registration Rules
10.1	The Interim Chief Executive advised members that the re-registration process has been stood down as of 12 th December and registration practices have returned to pre-Covid processes. This change has also been reflected in the registration rules where amendments are before the Board for approval.
10.2	<p>The Head of the Committee Team presented the revised registration rules with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a change to streamline Registration Rules in 2022 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the revised registration rules will revert back to pre-2022 processes. This 2022 change allowed registrants removed from the register for non-payment of fee to re-join the register using the fast tracked re-registration process. This re-registration process has now been removed under rule 13. • A new rule 18 has been included following the Review of Hearings which sets out the power to hold Hearings online. • Rule 3 has been amended to treat a notice of hearing emailed on the day the email was sent rather than the following business day. • This is a mini review to allow rule 13 to be approved by the Department of Health before a more fundamental review of the rules commencing in January.
10.3	The Board approved the Registration Rules amendments.
11.	Revised Standing Orders
11.1	The Interim Head of Corporate Services spoke to the Revised Standing Orders with the following highlights:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and framework for the operating arrangements for the organisation. Standing orders includes the Scheme of Delegation and Standing Financial Instructions. • Changes to the Standing Orders include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change of address to James House ○ Changes to the Registration Rules now these have been approved by the Board ○ Composition of the Board which now comprises of 8 members, previously 12 ○ Notice of meetings of the Board which were previously advertised in the main NI newspapers, this was costly and ineffective so notice of meetings is now only published online ○ The Registrants Forum has been replaced by two new committees accountable to the Senior Leadership Team which will focus on social work and social care ○ The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference indicate a membership of at least two Board members whereas the Standing Orders reference at least three, these have been aligned. ○ The Terms of Reference for other Committees listed in the Standing Orders will be updated for the Audit Committee, PiP, Participation Partnership and Leaders in Social Care Partnership
11.2	<p>Members approved the changes to the Standing Orders.</p> <p>ACTION: Changes to be made to the Standing Orders as agreed and the Chair to sign.</p>
Governance	
12.	Risk Progress Report (Month 7)
12.1	<p>The Interim Head of Corporate Services presented the Risk Progress Report with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal changes to the Risk Report since it was last presented to the Board in October. • The Audit Committee will meet in February 2025 to review any further changes to the risk register in advance of the next Board meeting in April. • There are 10 strategic risks on the register, the detail of which have been updated to reflect the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FTP Resourcing – there has been some difficulty recruiting additional temporary FTP officer support however a new start has been secured for early January 2025 ○ Changes at Board and Senior Level – updated the risk to reflect that the positions at Board level have now been advertised. It is

	<p>hoped appointments will be made in early 2025. The current interim arrangements and plans to re-advertise the Chief Executive position have also been included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management of Financial Resources – recent submission of a return regarding in-year surplus and plans for the next 3-years of flat cash budget or 1% reduction have been included. • Operational risk include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ James House lease designation is still under review and is reflected as an end of year assurance risk ○ Maintaining Registration – issues had been reported at the October Board relating to dissatisfactory service delivery from ClearCourse. Following a meeting between SLT and the Chief Executive of ClearCourse there has been a significant improvement in engagement and quality of work however this remains under review.
12.2	The Board noted the Risk Progress Report
Partnership Committee Minutes	
13.	Extraordinary Remuneration Committee – 24 October 2024
13.1	The Chair spoke to the minutes of the Extraordinary Remuneration Committee on 24 th October advising that a meeting was called to confirm that no formal appointment had been made following the Chief Executive competition and that a new recruitment exercise would be established in the new year.
13.2	Members noted the minutes of the Extraordinary Remuneration Committee.
14.	Leaders in Social Care Partnership – verbal update
14.1	<p>Sarah Browne provided an update on the Leaders in Social Care Partnership with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workshop facilitated by Centre for Effective Services (CES) was held to review the Terms of Reference • Discussed how Leaders in Social Care Partnership can support the Collaborative forum • Beginning to look at what data sets are needed for social care in order to support the workforce and influence the sector • Looking at groups, stakeholders and representatives to engage with over the next 2-years • Will follow-up with CES to begin drafting a piece of work following the workshop to establish an action plan for the partnership and approve the Terms of Reference
14.2	Members noted the update

15.1	Participation Partnership – verbal update
15.1.1	<p>Sarah Browne provided an update on the Participation Partnership with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Terms of Reference were updated and approved • There were very active discussions at the most recent meeting with some queries raised about the standards being inspected by RQIA. • Conversations also focused on Homelessness following the Homelessness Awareness Event led by Gerry Skelton. Members suggested that social work students should attend Practice Development Days dedicated to Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness.
15.1.2	Members noted the Participation Partnership update
15.2	Participation Partnership Terms of Reference
15.2.1	Members approved the updated Participation Partnership Terms of Reference.
16.	Professional in Practice Partnership – Verbal Update
16.1	<p>Roslyn Doherty provided an update on the Professional in Practice Partnership with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last meeting was on 5th December via MS Teams • New external assessor Gloria Kirwan with experience of the Review of the Degree has taken up post within the Partnership • There were detailed updates from all routes presented at the meeting • There is an awareness that Gillian McAuley will be working part-time for Fitness to Practise which may impact upon the PiP team • The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in February • The Partnership is mindful of ongoing reform work given that all of the DoH reviews will have an impact on PiP and the development plan
16.2	Members noted the Professional in Practice Partnership update
17.	Research and Evidence Partnership
17.1	<p>Davy Hayes provided an update on the Research and Evidence Partnership with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been good progress in formally establishing the Partnership with thanks to Anne McGlade and Marian O'Rourke for providing guidance in this • The partnership will provide guidance to the Board on the Research Agenda for NI. • Work is underway to establish priorities, an agenda and potential funding sources. • There are approximately 40 members in the Partnership with an

	<p>extensive range of expertise and experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research Community, which will be a subgroup of the Research and Evidence Partnership, was established in 2019 and recently agreed to take on a subgroup role. This network will help influence the social work and social care research agenda. • The Chief Social Worker from the ROI attended the December meeting of the Research Community meeting. • The Partnership is working with Research and Evidence leads to bring focus to social work and social care research needs.
17.2	Members noted the Research and Evidence update.
Closing Formalities	
18.	Any other business
18.1	No other business
19.	Date of next meeting
19.1	The next Board Strategic meeting is scheduled for 10:00am on Tuesday 25 th February to review Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
19.2	The next Board meeting is scheduled for 10:00am on Wednesday 30 th April 2025.

Date of Board approval: **30th April 2025**

Signed by: **Gerry Guckian, Acting Chair**

Signature: 