

Social Care Council Board Meeting
Confirmed Minutes
2:00p.m on Wednesday 19th June 2024
Hybrid meeting - MS Teams and Council
Suite 1 & 2, James House, Belfast

Present:

Gerard Guckian, Interim Chair Sarah Browne, Board Member Roslyn Dougherty, Board Member David Hayes, Board Member Jacqueline McGarvey, Board Member

In Attendance:

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Social Care Council
Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation & Standards, Social Care Council
Rita McCullagh, Head of Strategic Communications & Engagement
Anne McGlade, Research Lead, Social Care Council
Helen McVicker, Head of Fitness to Practise, Social Care Council
Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Business Services, Social Care Council
Rebecca Smyth, Business Support, Social Care Council
Maureen Martin, Business Support, Social Care Council

Observer(s):

Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer – via MS Teams Shauna Carberry, Board Apprentice

Apologies:

Paul Martin, Chair Catherine Maguire, Head of Workforce Development, Social Care Council

Formalities				
Item	Agenda			
1.	Welcome and apologies			
1.1	The Deputy Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that it was the final meeting for Board Apprentice, Shauna Carberry, as the placement year has ended.			
	Ms. Carberry highlighted the placement as a very positive and informative experience and noted that she has given excellent feedback on her experience to the Boardroom Apprentice scheme. The Deputy Chair extended the appreciation and best wishes of the Board and senior team to Ms Carberry.			
1.2	Congratulations were extended from the Board to Professor David Hayes on assuming the position as Chair of BASW N.I.			
1.3	The Deputy Chair noted that he would continue to stand in for the Chair as long as is required and on behalf of the Board and senior team, sent best wishes to Paul Martin for a speedy recovery.			
1.4	The Deputy Chair advised that the Confidential Board session would be held directly after the substantive Board meeting with Board members only in attendance.			
2.	Declarations of Interest			
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest for note.			
3.	Board Minutes – Paper A1 for approval			
3.1	Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 24th April 2024			
3.1.1	The minutes of 24 th April 2024 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record subject to any amendments received.			
3.2.	Action List and matters arising			
3.2.1	All actions arising from the Board meeting of 24th April were reviewed and noted as complete:			
	Action 6.1 - The Head of Business Services confirmed that an invitation to a Managers Leadership network session will be sent out to Board members in the Autumn.			
	Action 12.1 – Registration KPI target will be discussed under agenda item 8.			
3.3	Board Annual Self-Assessment _ Paper A2 – for approval			
3.3.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the draft Board Annual Self-Assessment for review and approval and noted the overall assessment 'Green'. No new actions were identified on the Action Plan and the Board were invited to consider this further.			

	The Board approved the draft Annual Board Self-Assessment.		
4.	Deputy Chair's Report - verbal		
4.1	The Deputy Chair noted that his update had been covered under agenda item 1.		

Business Briefings

5. Chief Executive's Report – Paper B for information

5.1 The Chief Executive advised that the report outlined key activity undertaken during the period mid-April to mid-June 2024.

Key highlights from the Chief Executive's report were noted as follows:

1. Investors in People – Platinum Award

The Chief Executive reported that the Senior Leadership Team and Head of Business Services had attended a ceremony hosted at the Crowne Plaza to formally receive the Platinum Investors in People Award and the Gold Health and Wellbeing Award. The organisation is one of only four organisations in Northern Ireland receiving the Platinum award and the only HSC body to receive the Platinum award. It was shared that the Platinum award is held by only and is among 6% of global IIP employers around the world.

In celebration of the achievement of the award, a group of staff from across all teams, along with the Senior Leadership team and the Deputy Chair, met with the Permanent Secretary for a photograph on 10th May.

Board members commended the contribution of the whole organisation in achieving the Platinum award which they considered as reflective of the leadership and excellence across all levels.

Investors in People have invited the Social Care Council to apply for UK employer of year and there are a range of award categories for submissions. The Senior Leadership Team have approved submission of a creative application which will be taken forward in collaboration with the Communications team.

2. All Staff Team Building event

An all staff team building event with Arts Care was held and received very positive feedback from staff. The event allowed staff an opportunity to celebrate the IiP Platinum award and a collective collage created on the day will be displayed in the office once it is available.

3. External Engagement

The Chief Executive has attended a range of external engagement events and meetings.

4. All Party Group (APG) on Skills

The meetings of the All-Party Group on Skills are now on hold until after the upcoming election.

5. Research and Evidence Partnership Stakeholder event

Board member, Professor David Hayes, and Anne McGlade, the Social Care Research Lead, hosted a successful Research and Evidence Stakeholder event on 16th May to explore to explore the establishment of the Research Partnership. Professor Hayes has agreed to chair the Research Partnership with a report being brought to the Board in due course. Feedback from the event will be collated and used to assist in the establishment of the Research Partnership.

The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report.

Governance

6. Business Plan 2024/25 – Paper C for approval

- 6.1 The Director of Registration & Corporate Services sought Board approval for the Business Plan 2024/25. The second draft of the Business Plan incorporates comments received from Sponsor Branch and Board members since the last presentation in April. A full list of all amendments to the Plan was provided and included:
 - Uptake of the Social Care App by March 2025 target has been increased to 20% of the Register;
 - Page 9 Developing capability of the workforce. This has been reworded to 'We want to ensure that we use our knowledge of the workforce and the analysis of our data to shape learning and development in the future;
 - Page 11 reworded to 'Contribute to the development of cultural sensitivity in the social care and social work workforce through the promotion and development of learning resources by March 2025';
 - Page 12 consideration will be given to what the State of the Nation report on social care will be called.

The Board agreed that the Business Plan on a page was a useful quick reference tool and the full report comprehensively captures and summarises a wide range of activity and information.

The Board approved the Business Plan 2024/25.

7. Subcommittees

7.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the Remuneration Committee of 12th June 2024 – Paper D for approval

7.1.1 It was agreed that the Remuneration Committee minutes would be discussed in the confidential session of the Board meeting. 7.2 Draft unconfirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee of 12th June Paper E1 for approval 7.2.1 The Deputy Chair advised that an Extraordinary ARAC meeting had been convened before the Board meeting today to consider and approve the Report to Those Charged with Governance as it had not been available for the meeting on the 12th June. Key matters discussed at the ARAC meeting of 12th June were noted as follows: The Governance Statement was confirmed; The draft Annual Report and Accounts are on the Board meeting agenda and were commended to the Board; BSO General Annual Report was reviewed; Risk Register was reviewed and two new risks identified and will be presented for Board approval; End of year Audit report; Board Self-Assessment and review; Procurement report reviewed and assurance can be given to Board that the Social Care Council complies with all procurement and Direct Award Contract regulations; The Board approved the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting of 12th June 2024. 7.3 Draft Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee - Paper E2 for approval 7.3.1 The Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference were reviewed and it was agreed that they will be reviewed every 2 years going forward instead of annually. Board members agreed that the Terms of Reference review period for other committees should be checked to ensure compliance with Internal Audit recommendations. ACTION: Director of Registration & Corporate Services The Board approved the revised draft Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. 7.4 Risk Progress report – for approval 7.4.1 The Director of Registration & Corporate Services brought to Board members' attention that the Board have set the strategic risks and recommended the addition of two additional strategic risks that would form part of organisation's risk map. Risk 1 - Climate Change The risk reflects the impact of failing to deliver positive changes to reduce the

impact of climate change and further action will be in line with Department directives. It was agreed that the Risk Management Committee would look again at the IMPACT assessment on the risk. A Climate Change workshop for the Board is planned for the Autumn 2024.

Risk 2 - Changes at senior leadership and Board level

This risk has been escalated from an operational to a strategic risk as two out of three members of the Senior Leadership team will retire by the end of the year and currently there are three Board vacancies. The Head of Business Services is working on a sustainable succession plan which will be shared with the Board.

The Board noted the two additional risks to the Risk Register.

7.5 Internal Audit of Board Effectiveness – Paper F for note

- 7.5.1 The Director of Registration and Corporate Services presented the Internal Audit of Board Effectiveness Report. The Board:
 - Noted the progress being made in relation to the two Priority 2 recommendations;
 - Noted the progress being made in relation to the Priority 3 recommendations; and
 - Considered whether the current frequency of Board meetings meets their needs. Best practice suggests monthly meetings and the Board currently meet four times a year in public/open session and have a number of additional strategic sessions including sitting on a range of other Board sub Committees and Partnerships. Decision: The Board agreed to maintain the current Board schedule;
 - The Board noted the action on inclusion of a review of actions as a standing item to agendas for ARAC and Leaders in Social Care Partnership;
 - Frequency of review of the Terms of Reference for the Leaders in Social Care Partnership, Participation Partnership and ARAC should be considered - discussed at agenda item 7.3.1.

The Board noted the Internal Audit of Board Effectiveness,

8. Business Performance Report - Month 1 2024/25 - Paper G for information

- The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Month 1 Business Performance Report and noted the following key highlights:
 - 12/12 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are rated green;
 - Customer engagement and satisfaction remains high with customer

- survey reporting 96% customer satisfaction with the service provided through the registration helplines/emails
- Key feedback from customers is in relation to telephone waiting time and a project is underway to engage with a call centre for support. Additional ways to improve the self-service element of the online system are being explored including development of a Registration App. The registration application pathway will also provide an additional contact channel for registrants who require support.

The Deputy Chair commented on the significant level of business reflected in a very positive report and in particular noted the green KPIs. It was suggested that the KPIs may need to be reviewed in due course to ensure they remain robust and challenging.

The Board noted the Month 1 Business Performance report.

9. Indicative Budget Profile 2024/25 - Paper H for review

- 9.1 The Director of Registration & Corporate Services shared the Indicative Budget Profile for Board approval and highlighted the following key information:
 - The budget is based on a verbal assurance from the Director of Finance at the Department of Health that the Social Care Council will be provided with a 'Flat Cash' budget;
 - The fee income budget position has been set at £1.697M as per 2023/24 end of year position, and based on the trend in register numbers
 - Revenue Resource Limit is set at £2.5million
 - Recurrent Social Work Research post funding of £123k
 - Pay Award uplift of £170k
 - Disbursements for management to relevant organisations of £195.5k
 - Anticipated Non-Pay budget position of £1.38million
 - Projected £10k surplus subject to maintaining expected fee income

The Department of Health allocation letter will be shared with Board members on receipt. ACTION: Secretariat

The Board approved the Indicative Budget Profile 2024/25.

10. Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 – Paper I for approval

The Deputy Chair gave Board members an update on the Report to Those Charged with Governance.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) has confirmed that as there were no audit findings identified in the Report to Those Charged with Governance, an unqualified audit opinion would be recommended to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The External Auditor has confirmed that the uncorrected misstatement would be removed from the report following clarification on the reclassification by the Head of Client Accounting

Subject to Board endorsement, a signed copy of the Annual Report and Accounts will be returned to NIAO. It is expected that the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General will sign off the Annual Report and Accounts in the first week of July and the certified Accounts will then be returned.

It was noted that the introduction to the Annual Report is by the Chair however the Deputy Chair will add his signature to the report in the absence of the Chair.

The Deputy Chair reported that Lesley Mitchell (co-opted ARAC member), had also commended colleagues on an unqualified opinion on the accounts and highlighted that it was uncommon to have a Report to Those Charged with Governance with no findings. BSO Finance and all teams were commended for supporting the overall financial management and contributing to the yearend breakeven position.

The Chief Executive gave particular recognition and thanks to the Director of Registration & Corporate Services for managing a challenging budget across ten allocation letters and multiple non-recurrent funding pots.

Following Board review, the following amendments to the Annual Report were requested:

- Page 77 amend from two to three vacant Board positions
- Page 82 amend to four Participation Partnership meetings

The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts subject to the above amendments and any additional amendments received from Board members this week.

11. Fitness to Practise Governance

- 11.1 Annual Report on Fitness to Practise Paper J for approval
- 11.1.1 The Head of Fitness to Practise spoke to the report and sought approval for publication on the Social Care Council website. The report provides an overview of Fitness to Practise activity during the business year 2023/24 and sets out the numbers, types and outcomes of cases examined.

The following key highlights were noted:

- There has been a 10% increase in referrals with a subsequent impact on the Committee function which has also reported a 17% increase in activity. This is in line with projections in the previous business case to the Department of Health and will be kept under review;
- Fieldfisher, a law firm with expertise in workforce regulation, has once again been commissioned to undertake an independent audit of Fitness to Practise processes and outcomes, focused primarily on consensual disposals. The report is due in July and will be brought to the Board to provide an additional level of assurance.

In response to a query from a Board member on failure to register cases, the Head of Fitness to Practise advised that the majority of these applied in social care and gave assurance that management of these cases is continuously evolving. Going forward this will be managed within the Registration function as the registration of social care workers is the responsibility of employers.

The Board agreed that the report was comprehensive and accessible and agreed that it could be published on the Council's website.

The Board approved the Annual Report on Fitness to Practise.

- 11.2 Review of Hearings Report Paper K for approval
- 11.2.1 The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Review of Hearing Report for Board approval.

The Report has been based on the outcomes of surveys with a range of stakeholders, a literature review on the approach of the Courts and other healthcare regulators, and on legal advice obtained. It was jointly drafted by the Head of Committee Services, the Head of Fitness to Practise, and the Evaluation Manager with external advice from the Centre for Effective Services on the delivery of hearings in a post Covid environment.

In order to ensure continued delivery during the pandemic, the default position for all proceedings was delivery online via Zoom, which enabled registrants to attend and participate. Following COVID 19 this report sets out the evidence based position for the Social Care Council on hearings delivery post pandemic.

The Hearings review identified important factors in regards to in-person Committees and hearings being more appropriate in certain circumstances.

In line with best practice cited by the Professional Standards Authority, the following recommendations were proposed for Board approval:

The introduction of a default position as follows:

- Online hearings for interim order review applications, fitness to practise hearings which occur as a result of criminal convictions or DBS barrings, uncontested interim order applications, preliminary proceedings which are considering allegations to decide on whether to transfer a case to the Fitness to Practise Committee and pre-hearing reviews.
- In-person hearings for fitness to practise hearings other than criminal conviction or DBS barring cases, contested interim order applications, substantive order reviews where the registrant wishes to give evidence / make submissions, registration hearings where an applicant wishes to give evidence or make submissions, and restoration hearings.

Any request by a registrant for a particular type of hearing will be given consideration and taken to the Committee for final decision unless contraindications are in place.

The above will be kept under review and will require amendments, under legal advice, to the Registration and Fitness to Practise Rules to allow for business to be conducted remotely business remotely as per legal advice.

The Deputy Chair and Board Apprentice commented that the Fitness to Practise Hearings review is reflective of considerations going on around court hearings.

It was agreed that it would be useful to share the report and outcome with the Skills for Care 5 Country Alliance and Directors of Fitness to Practise groups.

The Board approved the Fitness to Practise Hearings Review and recommendations.

- 11.3 Fitness to Practise Disclosure and Publication Policy Paper L for approval
- 11.3.1 The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Fitness to Practise Disclosure and Publication Policy for Board approval.

Board members were informed that the Policy was last presented three years ago and there have been a number of changes since with respect to how long information can remain on our website. Advice has been sought from legal services and the BSO Information Governance officer and consultation undertaken with the Participation Partnership group for service user and carer perspective. It has been assessed against similar policies adopted by other UK healthcare regulators, and covers all aspects of the circumstances in which a registrant's information will be published or disclosed.

The Board considered and approved the amendments to the Fitness to Practise Disclosure and Publication Policy.

Business Matters 12. **Partnership Committee minutes** 12.1 Leaders in Social Care Partnership meeting of 11th June 2024 - verbal update 12.1.1 As the minutes of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership (LSCP) meeting of 11th June 2024 were not available due to the short turnaround time, the Committee Chair gave a verbal update: • Attendance was lower than usual as this was the first in person meeting held since pre-COVID and may pose more difficulty for social care managers than attendance at an online meeting. It was agreed to further consider the use of in-person meetings. The Head of Strategic Communications & Engagement and Dr. Agnes Lunny, Positive Futures gave an update on the launch of the Social Care Campaign. The importance of balancing recognition of the value and work of the social care workforce alongside awareness of the financial and recruitment/retention challenges currently faced by the social care sector was acknowledged; The Chief Executive attended to deliver an update on the Social Care Collaborative Forum. Some of the LSCP members are involved with the Forum and there was a positive response to the update although some concerns were raised on recent meeting delays. The Chief Executive confirmed that programme management is now in place for the Forum and the seven workstreams and should address concerns raised. A workshop to identify priorities is planned in September in place of the Forum meeting; • The Head of Workforce Development shared an update on Care in Practice Framework which will be included in Department of Health Workforce Strategy; • Professional Advisor, Paul Rooney provided an update on the Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice, Apprenticeships and All-Age Apprenticeships which will be available for the Private, Voluntary and Community Sectors: • Workforce Engagement Officer, Mairead Harkin presented the Values Based Retention Toolkit which was well received.

The Board noted the verbal update on the Leaders in Social Care Partnership meeting of 11th June 2024.

- 12.2 Participation Partnership unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of 4th June 2024
 Paper M for information

 12.2.1 The Chair of the Participation Partnership gave an everyion of discussion from
- 12.2.1 The Chair of the Participation Partnership gave an overview of discussion from the meeting of 6th June and highlighted the following key matters:
 - The Director of Registration & Corporate Services had attended to deliver an update on the Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF)..
 - Three members have been involved in the Care to Chat podcast where they shared their experience of engagement with social care;
 - An online meeting to review the Partnership Terms of Reference has been scheduled for 1st July;
 - Member updates showcased a wide range of activities undertaken. A short film on the MAC 'Pathways to Employment' programme was shown by member, Ronnie Patterson and the link to the film has now been incorporated into the Annual Report;
 - Maria Sommerville, a long serving member of the Partnership, has confirmed that she is stepping down after 20 years although will remain engaged with the organisation.
 - Joanne Sansome and Alan Ritchie were appointed as new co-chairs;
 - The Evaluation Manager attended to deliver an update on the Annual Report;
 - The Committee Manager attended to deliver a well-received presentation on the outcome of the Hearings Review and the update to the Fitness to Practise Disclosure and Publication Policy.

The Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Participation Partnership meeting of 4th June 2024.

- 12.3 Professional in Practice draft unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of 6th June 2024 Paper N for information
- 12.3.1 The Chair of the Professional in Practice (PiP) Partnership gave an overview of the meeting of 6th June 2024 and noted the following key highlights:
 - The External Advisors End of Year report and the 2023/24 PiP Business report have been appended for information;
 - The PiP Business Report was approved at the meeting, it was noted that the PiP Professional Advisor is on leave due to illness and whilst part time cover is in place, some areas of business may take longer to complete;
 - Clear parallels with Fitness to Practise reports were acknowledged in respect of the strategic priority of these statutory functions;
 - The majority of the PiP achievement relates to the specialist award and there is hope that an outworking of the Leadership Framework will be an increased uptake of strategic and leadership awards,
 - Important to be cognisant that workforce challenges including

- recruitment and retention may impact engagement with the PiP framework;
- Consideration is needed on how to better support and engage with the independent and voluntary sectors as currently 86% of the awards achieved were by Health and Social Care Trust staff.
- Anne McGlade, Research Lead delivered a presentation on the Research Partnership which generated a high level of interest given the inter-connectedness of research with the PiP agenda;
- The Director of Regulation & Standards had delivered an update on the implementation of the Leadership Framework;
- The PiP Awards ceremony is scheduled for 25th September, invitations have been issued to Board members. The full day event will provide an opportunity for award recipients to showcase their learning and development journey with a lens on leadership. Arts Care will contribute to the programme with a focus on the theme of leadership.

The Board noted the draft unconfirmed minutes of the Professional in Practice meeting of 6th June 2024.

Closing Formalities				
13.	Any Other Business			
13.1	The Head of Strategic Communications & Engagement confirmed that invitations have been sent out to Board members for the Social Care Campaign launch event at the Long Gallery, Stormont on Monday 22 nd July.			
14.	Dates of next meetings			
14.1	The Board noted the following key meeting dates:			
	 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee - 10:30a.m Wednesday 2nd October 2024 			
	 Board meeting - 10:00a.m Wednesday 9th October 2024 			

Approved by: Gerry Guckian, Interim Chair

Signature:

Date:9th October 2024

ANNEX 1 - ACTION LIST

ITEM	NEW ACTIONS 20th June 2024	OWNER	PROGRESS
7.3.1	Terms of Reference review period for other committees to be reviewed to ensure compliance with Internal Audit recommendations.	Director of Registration & Corporate Services	Open
9.1	The Allocation letter from the Department of Health to be shared with Board members on receipt	Secretariat	Open