

Social Care Council Board Meeting
Confirmed Minutes
10:00am on Wednesday 22 June 2026
Council Suites, James House

Present:

Gerard Guckian, Interim Chair
Bria Mongan, Board Member
Carol Diffin, Board Member
Colin Reid, Board Member
Colm Donaghy, Board Member
Denise Hunt, Board Member
Fred Smyth, Board Member

In Attendance:

Tracy Reid, Chief Executive, Social Care Council
Catherine Maguire, Interim Co-Director of Regulation and Standards, Social Care Council
Declan McAllister, Director of Registration & Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Rita McCullagh, Head of Strategic Communications & Engagement, Social Care Council
Anne McGlade, Social Care Research Lead, Social Care Council
Helen McVicker, Interim Co-Director of Regulation and Standards, Social
Care Council
Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Corporate Services, Social Care Council
Hollie Bishop, Secretariat, Social Care Council
Maureen Martin, Secretariat, Social Care Council

Observer(s):

None

Apologies:

Lorraine Conlon, Government Liaison Officer

Formalities

Item	Agenda
1.	Welcome and apologies
1.1	The Acting Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as listed above.
2.	Declarations of Interest
2.1	There were no Declarations of Interest to note.
3.0	Minutes and Matters Arising
3.1	<i>Minutes of the previous meeting of 25th March 2026 – Paper A for approval</i>
3.1.1	The minutes of 25 March 2026 were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record.
3.2	<i>Matters Arising</i>
3.2.1	There were no Matters Arising for note.

Chair and Chief Executive Reports

4.	Acting Chair's Report – verbal
4.1	It was noted that this is the final Board meeting for the Interim Board Chair and thanks were extended to Board members, the Executive team and staff for support and contribution during the Chair's tenure <u>Appointment of Substantive Chair</u> The substantive Chair's position has now been filled and while a formal public announcement has not yet been made, the anticipated start date is 1 September 2026. It was further noted that a handover meeting will be arranged in advance of the commencement date. <u>Ministerial Engagement with ALB Chairs</u> Members noted recent engagement between the Health Minister and Chairs of Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). Discussions were broadly aligned across all organisations, with key headline matters including: • Financial position and savings requirements • Findings of the Muckamore Abbey Review Report <u>Muckamore Abbey Review Report</u> Members noted the publication of the Muckamore Abbey Review Report on 18 June 2026. The Board acknowledged the report as a challenging and distressing document, particularly in relation to the findings of institutional abuse, and recognised that appropriate time will be required to fully consider the implications for the sector and the Social Care Council.

	It was agreed that the report recommendations will be systematically considered, with a focus on: • Learning from the report's findings • Strengthening regulatory practice • Improving conditions and support for registrants • Enhancing the organisation's role in advocating for vulnerable service users <u>Board Acknowledgements</u> The Chair formally acknowledged and thanked members who, since the previous meeting, have taken up roles as Committee Chairs.
5.	Chief Executive's Report – Paper B for information
5.1	The Chief Executive presented her Board report which outlines risks and activity undertaken during the period 25 March 2026 – 16 June 2026. The Chief Executive drew the Board's attention to key events/meetings and activities summarised as follows: • Sustained demand and capacity pressures within Fitness to Practise (FtP) and Committee; • Meeting of 10 June with the Permanent Secretary in relation to financial pressures and the Fitness to Practise/Committee challenges; • Investors in People reaccreditation Platinum reaccreditation has been achieved following assessment. The assessor's visit aligned with the April staff Town Hall with discussion focused on the 'Being Open' and 'Being Human' frameworks. The next full assessment is due in March 27. • The Board had approved a request last year to pause the Post Registration Training Learning (PRTL) audit process to create capacity to scope alternative options. There were no clear recommendations indicated from the work undertaken and the PRTL audit process will be reintroduced from July 2026. A project plan will be developed to consider longer-term options and a full report will be brought for Board consideration in March 2027. • The Chair of the Northern Ireland Degree Partnership is standing down from their role at the end of August 2026 and a recruitment process for a one-year post is commencing. The Senior Leadership team are working with the current NIDSWP Chair to review and update governance and reporting arrangements and a recruitment exercise for a permanent position will be undertaken once the review is completed. • The Chief Executive has raised a query with the Office of Social Services (OSS) regarding the release of the draft Landscape Review report, which

	is intended to be considered at the September Board Strategic session, subject to its availability. • A statement was issued in response to racist attacks on social care and social work staff. It was noted that the Social Care Council has previously worked with the Department of Health to address racism, which remains an ongoing concern. A further statement will be issued at the Social Care Making a Difference campaign launch on 24 June, reiterating support for international staff and committing to engagement over the summer with providers and staff significantly impacted by the recent riots. • The Health Minister has confirmed his attendance at the 'Social Care - Making a Difference' campaign launch on Wednesday 24 June at Beech Hall Day Centre. • Accountability Meeting with Permanent Secretary – 20 July 2026 • Members were encouraged to attend the Professional in Practice (PiP) Awards on 22 September 2026. On behalf of the Senior Leadership team, the Chief Executive thanked the Interim Chair for his dedication and support over the course of his appointment. The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report.
Business Matters/Governance	
6.	Audit & Risk Assurance Committee
6.1	The Committee Chair presented Papers C1 & C2 - Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes of the 6 May and 16 June 2026 meetings for Board approval. Decision: The Board approved the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes of the 6 May and 16 June 2026 meetings.
6.2	The Committee Chair presented Paper D - Draft Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for Board approval The Director of Registration & Corporate Services confirmed that all outstanding actions have been completed since the ARAC meeting on 16 June. The Chair of ARAC recommended the RTTCWG to the Board for approval. Decision: The Board approved the Report to Those Charged with Governance.
6.3	The Committee Chair presented Paper E- updated ARAC Terms of Reference for Board approval.

	The Committee had reviewed and approved the following Terms of Reference amendments updated in line with National Audit Office guidance: • An emphasis on the independent assurance role of the Audit Committee • Inclusion of cyber expertise at meetings where necessary • An additional point on conflict of interest and best guidance • Good practice guide statement included for effectiveness and review The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every 12 months going forward. Decision: The Board approved the updated Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.
7.	Annual Report & Accounts 2025/26 – Paper F for approval
7.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the draft annual report and accounts to Board for any final comments. He confirmed that NIAO had taken ARAC through the detail of the draft report to those charged with governance and confirmed that at this point the accounts will be certified with an unqualified audit opinion. The Chair of ARAC recommended the annual report and accounts to the Board for approval. The Board approved the Annual Report & Accounts 2025/26.
8.	Extraordinary Remuneration Committee Minutes of 29 May 2026 – Paper G for note
8.1	The Chair advised that the Remuneration Committee had been convened to consider the appeal options around the Korn Ferry final determination. Members were provided with background context regarding the review of the Chief Executive post and the associated Korn Ferry report. The Board noted the Extraordinary Remuneration Committee Minutes of 29 May 2026.
9.	Financial Performance Report – Month 2 – Paper H for approval
9.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Month 2 Financial Performance report for Board review and approval. He outlined to members that Month 2 accounts had only been prepared on Friday 19th June but that it was important that the latest financial position was before the Board today for scrutiny. Members were also alerted to an error in relation to Senior Executive pay expenditure in Table 1. as the initial budget figures provided by BSO did not include National Insurance costs. The overall budget position has therefore moved from a deficit of £214k to a deficit of £278k. The year to date position is reflecting a deficit of £8k and a forecasted deficit

	position of £241k. Members noted that clarification had been sought regarding a potential duplication of £8k within the staff training budget, and that the report would be updated accordingly once assurance was received from BSO Finance. Decision: The Board approved the Month 2 Financial Performance report.
10.	Proposed Savings Plan Update – Paper I for approval
10.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the updated Savings Plan for Board review and approval. The updated Savings Plan outlines a final set of actions to achieve a year-end breakeven position in response to a 5% recurrent revenue reduction in 2026/27. The Plan highlights the associated risks and potential impacts on the organisation and the wider sector, particularly in relation to the delivery of the core statutory function of regulation of the social work and social care workforce. The outcome of several submissions for Ministerial consideration regarding additional financial pressures linked to Fitness to Practise and Committee are awaited. The Chief Executive advised that she is satisfied that the Permanent Secretary is aware of the financial pressures on the organisation and the extreme level of potential risks within the Fitness to Practise function if additional funding is not approved. Following robust discussion, it was agreed that an updated Savings Plan based on the outcome of the Minister’s decision will be shared with the Board.
11.	Risk Progress Report – June 2026 – Paper J for note
11.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented an updated June Risk Progress report with an additional appendix on Fitness to Practise Business Continuity. High level risks highlighted: • Delivery of Fitness to Practise and Committee activity and impact of waiting list delays; • Security including cyber security risk reassessed as high level and mitigating actions added as an audit recommendation; • Resourcing to support Adult Social Care Reform – due to the non-recurrent funding position it is likely that there will be a reduction in funded activities to support social care reform in 2026/27. • Management of financial resources – Savings Plan discussed at agenda item 10. The Board noted the June Risk Progress report and Fitness to Practise Business Continuity report.

12.	Fitness to Practise Year End Accountability Report 2025/26 – Paper K for information and approval
12.1	Helen McVicker, Interim Director of Regulation & Standards presented the Fitness to Practise (FtP) Year End Accountability report for information and approval. The following key information was highlighted: • A 10-year FtP trend analysis was completed in 2022 and a 5-year trend analysis is planned for 2027 to support sector learning and resource planning. • During the 2025/26 period; ✓ 613 referrals were received and 55 non-registrant referrals recorded ✓ 1,278 active cases were managed by the FtP team ✓ 90% of cases were managed through FtP processes and the remaining 10% were progressed to Committee stage ✓ Committee outcomes: 22 removal orders and 8 suspension orders ✓ 72 active orders were in place at year end, representing an 89% increase • 11% increase in service user/carers referrals, mainly in social work and family and childcare cases. • There were disproportionately higher referrals from adult residential settings and recruitment agencies and lower referral rates from the statutory sector relative to the workforce size. • Key referral reasons include fraudulent references and professional decision-making challenges. • Ongoing engagement at regional, national, and international levels. • Continuing development of the FtP case management system and increased use of online referral portal. • Priorities going forward include business case development, exploring paper-based hearings, regulatory rules review, and website updates. The impact of Muckamore Abbey related referrals and the need for enhanced trend analysis and narrative were noted. Assurance on the robustness of FtP processes and thresholds was provided by completion of Fieldfisher external audit. The report will be published on the Social Care Council website subject to Board approval. Decision: The Board approved the Fitness to Practise Year End Accountability Report 2025/26.

13.	Business Performance Report- Month 2 KPIs – Paper L for information
13.1	The Director of Registration & Corporate Services presented the Month 2 Business Performance Report and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for information. Members were informed that Chloe McErlean has joined the Comms team on a 6-month placement from Ulster University. The placement has been a positive experience and Chloe has provided excellent support to the team and gained a broad range of experience. Members were informed that the Education and Training Accountability Report will be available for the September Board meeting. It was clarified that the red assessment level for KPI 7 reflects that no referrals were recorded during the reporting period and does not indicate a high level of risk. The Board noted the Business Performance Report – Month 2.
14.	5 Year Review of the Equality Scheme – Paper M for approval
14.1	The Head of Corporate Services presented the report on the 5 Year Review of the Equality Scheme for Board review and approval for issue to the Equality Commission. The previous review of the Equality Scheme was completed in June 2021 and the work was led by the Equality Unit in BSO alongside other Arms Length Bodies. Highlights from the review include: • The strength of collaboration across annual plans, training and the development of an Equality Portal • The work taken forward within the Social Care Council over the previous two years including workshops to look at equality, diversity and inclusion • Challenges in relation to regional policy screening Going forward: • Training for new Board members around the equality agenda • A new Disability Champion to be appointed at Board level • Improve lines of sight around equality and screening • Improve managers' understanding of their role in relation to equality particularly in relation to policy development or decision making • Appointment of a Disability Work Placement within the organisation is in progress

	Decision: The Board approved the 5- year Review of the Equality Scheme
15.	New Complaints Policy – Paper N for approval
15.1	The Head of Corporate Services presented the new Complaints Policy for Board approval. A new Model Health Complaints Handling Procedure has been introduced by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and a revised Complaints Policy has been developed aligned to this model. The Policy applies to complaints regarding staff, services, or service standards, and excludes matters relating to social workers or social care practitioners, which are managed under the Fitness to Practise process. Key changes include: ✓ reduced response time of 5 working days at first tier resolution stage ✓ the introduction of a second-tier internal resolution stage within 20 working days, aimed at improving transparency and supporting individuals raising concerns. It was highlighted that complaint volumes are low (approximately 15 per annum) and the majority are resolved within the shorter timeframe. Staff awareness sessions are scheduled, supported by internal procedures, and work is underway to improve accessibility through a redesigned webpage and development of an accessible version of the Policy. Following discussion, it was agreed that a benchmarking exercise against other regulators and trend analysis of complaints would be completed and a report brought back for Board information. ACTION Decision: The Board approved the new Complaints Policy.
Partnership Updates	
16.	Professional in Practise Partnership Update
16.1	The newly appointed Chair of the Professional in Practise Partnership, Bria Mongan gave an update on key matters and activity as discussed at the Partnership meeting of 3 June 2026. Minutes of the meeting will be presented at the October Board meeting. Key updates and discussion points were noted as follows: • The Committee discussed the strategic approach to membership in light of several longstanding members stepping down. • Work is underway to progress the assessment of practice teachers based

	outside of Northern Ireland to ensure these individuals can be assessed in line with Northern Ireland standards. • Education & Workforce Development (WFD) Report will be presented at the October Board meeting. • Discussion was held around the fluctuations in deferral rates and it was agreed that further analysis is required to better understand the underlying causes. • External Examiner's Report was presented to the PiP Committee and provides assurance around governance arrangements and the quality of the PiP framework. • Social Work Awards will be hosted by the Belfast Trust on 4 December 2026 and the closing dates for nominations is 30 June 2026. • Professional in Practise awards ceremony is scheduled for 22 September 2022 at La Mon House. The Board noted the Professional in Practise Partnership update on the meeting of 3 June 2026.
17.	Participation Partnership Unconfirmed Minutes of 8 June 2026 – Paper O for information
17.1	The Chair of the Participation Partnership presented the minutes of the Participation Partnership of 8 June 2026 and provided an overview of key matters discussed. The Board noted the Participation Partnership minutes of 8 June 2026
18.	Research and Evidence Partnership update – Paper P for information
18.1	Colin Reid, new Chair of the Research and Evidence Partnership presented the briefing paper and provided an overview of key matters discussed. The Board noted the Research and Evidence Partnership update.
19.	Leaders in Social Care Partnership Unconfirmed minutes of 19 May 2026 – Paper Q for information
19.1	Carol Diffin, the new Partnership Chair presented the minutes of the Leaders in Social Care Partnership of 19 May 2026 and provided an overview of key matters discussed. Amendment required to minutes – Colm Donaghy Board member to be added to the attendance list: ACTION The Board noted the Leaders in Social Care Partnership minutes of 19 May 2026

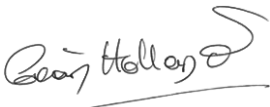
Closing Formalities

20.	Any other business
20.1	There were no further items raised under Any Other Business.
21.	Date of next meetings
21.1	• Board Strategic Session: 10:00a.m Wednesday 9 September 2026 • Board meeting – 10:00a.m Wednesday 14 October 2026 • Board Strategic Session: 10:00a.m Wednesday 25 November 2026

Approved by: Sean Holland, Chair

**Approved by new Chair following confirmation of accuracy by Board members present at the June Board meeting **

Date of approval: 14 October 2026

Signature: 

ANNEX 1 – ACTION LIST

ITEM	<i>NEW ACTIONS 22 June 2026</i>	OWNER	PROGRESS
15.1	Complaints benchmarking exercise and trend analysis to be completed and report brought back to the Board	<i>Sandra Stranaghan</i>	<i>Open</i>
19.1	Amendment to LSCP minutes - Colm Donaghy Board member to be added to the attendance list:	<i>Committee Secretariat</i>	<i>Open</i>