

Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting
Friday 23 October 2020, 10.30 am, by Videoconference

Board Members:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair
	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Non-Executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-Executive Director
	Dr Helen Phillips	Non-Executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-Executive Director
	Mark Lam	Non-Executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Social Work England staff in attendance	Alex Hayward-Miller	MI Analyst
	Alison Edbury	Governance Manager
	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Berry Rose	Head of Triage and Case Progression
	Emma Mortlock	HR Business Partner
	Greg Ross Sampson	Assistant Director, Corporate
	Ioana Roberts	Regional Engagement Lead East
	Jane Marr	Senior HR Business Partner
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	Philip Bowden	Head of Adjudications
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal
	Philippa Geddes	Regional Engagement Lead South West
	Richard Simpson	Interim Head of Finance
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement
	Tracy Watterson	Executive Director, People and Business Support
Guests:	Anne-Marie Glover	Social Work England National Advisory Forum (NAF)
	Moira Chalmers	Real World HR
Sponsor Team:	Louise Woodward	Department for Education (DfE)
	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
	Tom Sutton	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
	Representative	NAVIGO Health and Social Care CIC
	Jack Harrison	Participation Officer, Social World England
	Julie Campbell	Regional Engagement Lead London, Social Work England
	Will Grayson	Good Governance Institute
Minute taker:	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
Apologies:	Baroness Tyler of Enfield	Non-Executive Director

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair, Lord Patel welcomed Board members, guests and observers to the meeting and noted apologies.
- 1.2 The Governance Manager has updated the Register of Interests. No further declarations were received.

2. Regional Engagement Update: Social Work Week 2021

- 2.1 The Regional Engagement Lead East, Regional Engagement Lead South West and the National Advisory Forum representative presented the plans for Social Work Week 2021. The Board's involvement and support was invited.
- 2.2 The Board acknowledged the scale of ambition, innovation and timeliness of the initiative and asked for support from the Departments to secure a ministerial presence in Social Work Week 2021. The Board asked to be kept informed of developments and how they will be involved.

Action: Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement to keep the Board updated on developments in relation to Social Work Week 2021.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 3.1 The Minutes of the last meeting, Friday 18 September 2020 **were approved as a correct record.**

4. Matters Arising and Action Log

- 4.1 The Chief Executive said the call for evidence on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Regulation of Professions had been completed and will be sent next week. All other actions were updated at the meeting or were in progress with the target date.

5. Chair's Report - verbal

- 5.1 The Chair reported that he had attended the recent DfE Arms Length Body's (ALBs) Chairs meeting and had presented on the work of Social Work England with particular reference to our approach to working in collaboration across the social work sector.
- 5.2 The Chair and the Chief Executive had attended meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive of the General Osteopathic Council discussing matters relating to professional regulation. They also met with the Presidents of the Association of Directors for Social Services and the Association of Directors for Children's Services, discussing matters relating to social work and highlighting the importance of social workers completing their renewals registration and CPD. The impact and challenges of working during Covid-19 had also been discussed.

A planned meeting with the Chair of Ofsted, week commencing 26 October 2020 was also noted.

- 5.3 The Chair reported that he had met with non-executive Directors to discuss re-appointments. **The Chair's update was noted by the Board.**

6. Chief Executive's Report

- 6.1 The Chief Executive noted his report comprised 4 sections, (6a) a summary section to be presented by the CEO, (6b) a Q2 performance report on the business plan and key KPIs presented by the Executive Directors, (6c) the Q2 Finance Report presented by the Interim Head of Finance and (6d) a People Report presented by the Executive Director, People and Business Support.
- 6.2 He highlighted from the summary report the ongoing response to Covid-19 including Social Work Together, the temporary registration of social workers that have left the register, and the ongoing collaboration with the sector in assessing and responding to the impact of the pandemic on providing social work services. The Board discussed the impact of a further Covid-19 lockdown and the difficulties faced by staff. The Board noted the importance of supporting staff wellbeing, in particular staff who may be living alone.
- 6.3 Also noted were the preparations for a no deal Brexit and the potential for a short consultation on the necessary amendments to the rules. The Board discussed the impact of a no deal Brexit on the sector. The Chief Executive explained that he did not think there would be a significant impact on the social work profession. As of the 23 October, the number of applications to the register from the European Economic Area (EEA) was 65.

Action: The Chief Executive to update the Board on consultations for rule amendments.

- 6.4 The Chair noted the revised format for the reports and welcomed the assistance from the Good Governance Institute and invited feedback from Board members – this was generally positive.
- 6.5 The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his report . **The report was noted by the Board**

7. Business Plan 2020/21 – Quarter 2 Performance Report

- 7.1 Members of the Board acknowledged that while a great deal of work had gone into the Q2 report and it was reassuring to see the level and quality of information available to the management team, for the Board the balance of insight over information was still not quite right. Acknowledging that this is work in progress, the Board, going forward, would welcome more insight with focused information. It was agreed that the development of a management information dashboard should continue and that a ratings system could be used to focus attention and articulate insight better. It was also noted that matters in relation to Fitness to Practise contained in the report would be addressed at agenda item 7.

7.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that renewals were just about on target at 49,500, and 41% of the social workers registered have submitted CPD.

7.3 In relation to the report on registration, the Board asked about the time taken to answer emails and about the level of complaints. The Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal explained that the volume of emails was exceptionally high due to renewals and efforts had been made to triage the emails. The complaints largely related to social workers having been removed from the register for failure to pay their direct debit; difficulties in creating an online account; and where registration had been refused due to ineligibility. In answer to a query relating to the impact of a social worker failing to complete CPD, he informed the Board that the completion of CPD is a requirement of the registration renewal process and social workers would have a 21 day period following the renewal deadline at 30 November to complete any outstanding requirement for CPD. After 21 days, if CPD has not been completed without a clear explanation, they would be removed from the register, but can be restored. If there are clear, valid reasons, they would be registered with conditions to complete CPD.

7.4 The Board discussed policy performance and highlighted the need to keep mental health and mental health capacity on the agenda and to ensure the new arrangements for the Best Interest Assessors is implemented. It had been highlighted in policy issues from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and others, whether mental health legislation was to be made available. The Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Engagement reported that meetings had taken place with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), CQC and others to discuss mental health and mental health capacity. Information had been presented to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and it was noted that a response from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act (the Wessely Report) was expected in December 2020.

7.5 In response to the report on information technology, the Chair raised the issue of cyber-attacks and the level of security within the Social Work England system. The Assistant Director, Corporate reassured the Board that while no system is 100% secure, significant measures are in place across all systems. **The Q2 Performance report was noted by the Board.**

8. Financial Report to end of September 2020

8.1 The Interim Head of Finance introduced the report. The management accounts to the end of September 2020 showed an underspend of £1.2m, due mainly to an underspend on travel and subsistence costs and the alignment of recruitment activity in the first part of the year. The budget has been reprofiled to forecast a year end under spend of £200k, including increasing capacity in Fitness to Practise and the implementation of the corporate system.

8.2 The Board welcomed the clear approach to the report. The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee noted that the financial scheme of delegation would be discussed at the next ARAC meeting and reported to the Board in December.

8.3 The Chair thanked the Interim Head of Finance for the report. **The report was noted by the Board.**

9. People Report to end of September 2020

9.1 The Executive Director, People and Business Support noted that due to Covid-19, significant adjustments had been made to working practices, with a sustained focus on ensuring that staff are safe in the office and at home. She highlighted how the Learning and Development team have supported staff engagement and reported on the procurement of a new corporate system to replace current system arrangements that are proving less than effective.

9.2 The pay and reward business case, agreed by the Board in July is currently with the Minister for final approval. A proposal for the review of the pension scheme would be brought separately to the Board for consideration with a view to submission to the department in due course.

9.3 The Chair thanked the Executive Director, People and Business Support for the report. **The report was noted by the Board.**

10. Fitness to Practise in Focus

10.1 The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise (FtP) introduced the report which was the first of the 'in focus' type reports that will be presented to the Board on occasion. The report provided a focussed review of operational performance since the beginning of the year including how the service has adapted during Covid-19.

10.2 The Head of Triage and Case Progression reported that Social Work England had taken over 1545 cases from HCPC on 2 December 2019 and by early October 2020 had received 1594 new referrals. The number of new referrals received had been higher than the original forecast and this had impacted on the resourcing of the service. A review had been completed and a number of initiatives and new resources are now in the process of implementation which would address the high number of cases in triage and investigations and bring overall performance closer to the anticipated KPIs by the end of the financial year.

10.3 Board members welcomed the paper and the detail it provided on matters within the FtP process. They also raised concerns about the level of cases in triage and investigations and requested a clearer indication of the 'route to green' on the impact the new initiatives would have and over what period. The Board also discussed the possible reasons behind the increased referrals. The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise stated that at this stage there was nothing to suggest any link to Covid-19 and that no particular theme was emerging other than the newness of the organisation and the fact that one concern could relate to a number of social workers.

10.4 The Board asked for a progression plan to include KPIs to enable the Board to monitor progress and give a clear reflection on external communication and internal challenges. The Board offered support to address the risks and issues referenced in the report.

Action: Fitness to Practise to develop a progression plan to enable the Board to monitor progress.

10.5 The Head of Adjudications summarised the progress of the Case Examiners. A steady increase in referrals to the Case Examiners had been seen due to legacy cases progressed by Investigators. The number of decisions made in the case examiner function had doubled in Q2. 30% of decisions had been referred to hearings and 34 accepted disposal decisions had been made. Physical hearings had been impacted by Covid-19 and all hearings were remote. Forty cases had been scheduled for hearings between November 2020 and March 2021. The Board welcomed the progress made in Hearings and asked for a further update at the February 2021 Board meeting.

Action: Update on Hearings at February 2021 Board meeting.

11. Workforce and Talent Management Framework, Phase 1

11.1 The Executive Director, People and Business Support introduced the update. Moira Chalmers, Real World HR provided a summary of the report. **The report was noted by the Board.**

12. People Engagement Action Plan

12.1 The HR Business Partner and MI analyst gave a summary. The engagement survey conducted in May had created a baseline. All Executive Directors have been given their directorate results and action plans are in place. The survey will be conducted annually starting in February with two pulse surveys to take place in other parts of the year.

12.2 The Board welcomed the positive results received from the survey and it was suggested that staff should be asked what they think the results mean and how they could be involved in developing future action plans.

13. Board Forward Look

13.1 The Board agreed the rescheduled dates in November and December 2021.

Action: Governance Manager to confirm proposed new dates as soon as possible.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

14.1 Friday 18 December 2020.

Meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

To Note: Summary of Actions

1. Executive Director, Strategy Policy and Engagement to keep the Board updated on developments in relation to Social Work Week 2021.
2. The Chief Executive to update the Board on consultations for rule amendments.
3. Fitness to Practise to develop a progression plan to enable the Board to monitor progress.
4. Update on Hearings at February 2021 Board meeting.
5. Governance Manager to confirm proposed new dates for Board meetings in late 2021 as soon as possible.