Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting
Friday 26 February 2021

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
The Chair

Author
Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date
21 May 2021

Reviewed by
The Chair

This paper is for
Decision

Associated Strategic Objective
SO9: We will establish robust infrastructure, systems and processes that promote trust and confidence.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite
N/A

Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting for approval
Friday 26 February 2021, 10.30am via 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
	Baroness Tyler of Enfield	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Social Work England staff in attendance (for items):	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
	Greg Ross-Sampson	Assistant Director, Corporate
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Registration, Education Quality Assurance and Legal
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement
	Tracy Watterson	Executive Director, People and Business Support
Sponsor Team:	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
	Tom Sutton	Department for Education (DfE)
	Louise Woodward	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Holly Bontoft	Head of Legal, Social Work England
	Jack Harrison	Participation Officer, Social Work England
	Jillian Brannan	National Advisory Forum
	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
	2 Representatives	Unison
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead

1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair, Lord Patel welcomed Board members, guests and observers to the meeting.

1.2 The Chair asked if there were new interests to be declared. Ann Harris declared that she had resigned from the position of Chair with Dunstable and District Citizens Advice.

Action: Executive Office Lead to update the register of interests

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting — Paper 1

2.1 The minutes of Friday 18 December 2020 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log — Paper 2

3.1 The Chair reviewed the action log. His reports would continue to be verbal to allow for timeliness of reporting. Claire Tyler had met with Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement regarding the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Mental Health Act reforms and had discussions with the Regional Engagement Leads.

4. Chair's Report - verbal

4.1 The Chair reported he had meetings with our Sponsor Team, and along with the Chief Executive and Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement, had met the new Permanent Secretary to discuss issues relating to the social work profession and the challenges presented by the pandemic. The Chief Executive and Chair had met with the new Chair of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel as well as the Good Governance Institute. With the support of four of our Regional Engagement Leads, the Chair had engaged with 300-400 frontline social workers. He had also attended briefings on the proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act and the government's draft white paper for reform of the NHS in England.

4.2 The Chair had signed off both our first Social Work in England: First Reflections report and our Statement of Intent: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. With regards to the potential for the development of a pilot project supporting people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background taking on non-executive board roles, he had met with the Seacole Group, Cabinet Office and DfE and would continue to work on developing a project with their support. The Chair thanked Ann Harris who had helped with developing a joint project between us and the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) – the Chair had circulated a note on this to Board members.

5. Chief Executive's Report — Paper 3

5.1 The Chief Executive highlighted the following areas:

- the programme for Social Work Week (8-12 March 2021) had been well-received and over 14,000 places booked for the events

- Recent structural changes to the FtP team were now bedding in and additional resources have been applied. Close monitoring would continue.
- The temporary register would undergo a review in due course.
- We were midway through our first annual performance review with the Professional Standards Authority.
- A new supplier for Forge, our CRM system, development had been identified following a procurement process with authorisation for expenditure on the agenda.
- All the meetings attended since the last Board meeting were listed in his report.

5.2 The Chief Executive highlighted contributions towards key policy areas; Independent Review of Children's Social Care; Standards in Education and Training for Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Approved Mental Capacity Professional (AMCP); reforming professional regulation through the White Paper for the Health and Care Bill; and the post qualifying landscape for social work.

5.3 The Board discussed the impact of COVID-19 upon social workers and any links to the numbers of concerns raised about social workers. The Board noted the risk associated with a new supplier for the ongoing development of the Forge system and asked that the risk register be updated accordingly.

Action: Chief Executive to ensure the risk concerning Forge supplier transition is updated on the corporate risk register

5.4 The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his report. He thanked Board members for their support for Social Work Week and noted that the Board should keep a focus on numbers of FtP concerns, the continued impact of the pandemic and the Forge supplier transition.

6. Quarter 3 Performance Reports

Performance Report: People and Business Support — Papers 4a – 4d

6.1 The Executive Director, People and Business Support highlighted the increased sickness absence over the last quarter. Further analysis showed this was caused by a small number of prolonged absences that were stress-related and in one case, work-related stress. Support plans were in place including phased return to work and manager and HR support. The Executive Director also noted the risks we carry of losing fixed term contract people to permanent posts elsewhere. The Board were informed that the new corporate system, Enable, was at a critical stage of development.

6.2 The Board discussed the support that was in place to maintain workforce wellbeing especially in consideration of direct and indirect COVID-19 impact. The Board discussed the tension between managing the payroll budget and losing continuity if people on fixed term contracts left. Andrew McCulloch offered help offline in support of a healthy workplace.

Action: The Executive Director, People and Business Support and Andrew McCulloch to meet

Performance Report: Strategy, Policy and Engagement

6.3 The Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement highlighted key activity from the last quarter:

- More than 14,000 tickets had been booked for Social Work Week; the activity had been co-produced with the National Advisory Forum.
- The communications team had recently won the Government Communication Service ‘campaign of the month’ award for the CPD campaign.
- The policy team had developed a consultation programme for 2021 and Board members were asked to input into the pre-consultation work.
- Work was underway with the DfE and DHSC on a project that aimed to streamline the post qualification landscape.
- The equality, diversity and inclusion work had benefited from expertise of a Professional Associate and recruitment was underway for a Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The Executive Director said this was an area of significant focus for us and she asked for support and suggestions to help us achieve our ambitious plans.

6.4 The Chair and Board members congratulated the team on winning the campaign of the month.

Action: The Executive Director to keep the Board updated on the consultation programme

Regulatory Performance: Registration, Education Quality Assurance and Legal

6.5 The Executive Director, Registration, Education Quality Assurance and Legal reported that following a lessons learnt exercise, some changes were planned for 2021 renewals. There would be an increase in staff resource and improvements made to guidance and processes. The planned development in the Forge system would create efficiencies. Consultation on amended Registration Rules, processes and guidance in advance of the UK’s exit from the European Union took place in December 2020 as well as work with other European regulators including CORU, Republic of Ireland. From 1 January 2021, all applicants with a qualification gained outside the UK would now apply through the same, international route, noting some limited exceptions. We had completed our first annual monitoring return for social work courses. The reapproval of courses would start in September 2021.

Regulatory Performance: Fitness to Practise

6.6 The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise provided an update. The 15-point plan had been delivered, except for the Forge developments that would follow on. Improved productivity was emerging at the triage stage and the caseload was starting to stabilise, even though numbers of concerns raised remained high. Additional case examiners recruitment was planned to increase capacity. Productivity at the hearings stage had increased steadily since the new process for remote hearings was launched in October and was expected to meet targeted levels by the end of March 2021. Remote hearings had resulted in a higher level of part-heard hearings than expected. A new KPI would be introduced to monitor and improve the rates of adjournments for scheduled hearings.

6.7 The Board noted that further refinement of the performance data would enable a better focus on the overall route map. Board members offered to work offline with the Executive Director ahead of the next meeting.

Action: The Executive Directors and Board members (ARAC) to work offline on metrics and route map

6.8 The Chair acknowledged the work that had been undertaken in our regulatory functions and he thanked the Executive Directors, and their colleagues.

Corporate

6.9 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement presented the Business plan update. The Board discussed the need to align areas of business progress reporting with the operational performance report dashboards.

7. Finance and commercial update Paper 5

7.1 The paper presented by the Head of Finance and Commercial summarising the latest Management Accounts up to 31 January 2021 **was noted by the Board.**

8. Financial expenditure for authorisation Paper 6

8.1 The Chief Executive presented the paper. He said further development work was required for our Forge system in key areas that would create significant administration efficiencies. The supplier contract value was for £3.1m for two years commencing on 1 April 2021. In line with our Scheme of Delegation, the expenditure authorisation was put to the Board.

8.2 The Chair said that members of the Board and ARAC had reviewed the business case. Mark Lam offered assurance from an IT perspective.

Decision: The expenditure was authorised by the Board

9. Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report Paper 7a

9.1 The ARAC Chair provided a summary of the internal audits completed by Haines Watts:

- Fitness to Practise received our first substantial assurance. This was a comprehensive audit and it reported positively on systems and processes.
- The Budgetary Control outcome of limited assurance had not been a surprise considering the change of staff, structure, and impact of COVID-19. However, the auditors highlighted that recommendations led by the Head of Finance and Commercial were well underway. A follow up audit was scheduled.
- Adequate assurance was received for the Performance Data Reporting. The further work required should provide a greater analysis of data for the Board.

9.2 The Chair of ARAC concluded that overall, the Board could be assured that the internal audits identified the right systems and controls were in place and there was a solid base from which the organisation could grow. Work is planned on an assurance framework and there was a process in place to track audit actions.

Action: Chief Executive to update on Assurance Framework at next ARAC meeting 30 April 2021.

9.3 The Board was informed that the format of the Data Protection Officer's report had been discussed and that a smaller group would be meeting to streamline the report.

9.4 The Chair thanked the ARAC Chair for her report.

10 Risk Appetite Statement and Corporate Risk Register Paper 7b and 7c

10.1 The Chief Executive noted that since the Board workshops in January 2021, members of ARAC had worked with Corporate team members on finalising the risk register and risk appetite statement. The Chair asked for the Board to approve the statement.

Decision: The Board approved the risk appetite statement.

10.2 The Chair of ARAC said the corporate risk register was on the right track. Some refinements and amendments were recommended including:

- reinstate the financial controls risk, as separate to financial sustainability
- provide a defined action with a defined end date for all mitigations

Decision: The Board approved the revised corporate risk register, subject to the refinements and amendments.

Action: Business Planning Manager to refine and amend the corporate risk register.

10.3 The Chair of ARAC suggested the Executive and Leadership Teams would benefit from management of risk training to support the embedding of risk management across the organisation.

Action: ARAC Chair to pass on risk management training organisation details

10.4 The Chair thanked members of ARAC and the Business Planning Manager for work on the risk appetite statement and the corporate risk register.

11. Draft Business Plan 2021 to 2022 Paper 8

11.1 The Chief Executive introduced the draft Business Plan and asked for feedback from the Board prior to its finalisation. The Board said they liked the style of the plan and recommended that:

- there was a joint statement by the Chair (reflective focus) and Chief Executive (future focus).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be linked to the *'I will…'* statements.

- A KPI for finance should be included.
- KPIs should be realistic and achievable within the timeframe of the plan.

11.2 The Chair asked for any further feedback via email to the Chief Executive and that final drafts of the business plan be shared before publication.

Action: Board members to email the Chief Executive with feedback
Action: The Chief Executive to share final drafts of the business plan before publication

12. Draft Budget 2021 to 2022 Paper 9

12.1 The Head of Finance and Commercial presented the budget. The ARAC Chair said she had discussed the budget pressures with the Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Commercial. The Chief Executive said that it had been challenging to set this budget and he welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Board for the year ahead. The budget encompassed planned expenditure in organisation development and an increased expenditure in Fitness to Practise, Registration and Education Quality Assurance. The Department for Education was willing to support the additional £900k of revenue expenditure as risk of overspend in their budget and that this would be reviewed quarterly.

12.2 The Chair asked if the Board would approve the proposed budget for 2021 to 2022.

Decision: The budget was approved by the Board

13. Board Workplan 2021 to 2022 Paper 10

13.1 The Executive Office Lead presented the workplan. The Board agreed the broad scope would enable forward planning with a balanced agenda where four meetings would focus on performance reporting and two meetings would be used for wider strategy and policy development. The Board also noted the need to include delegated authority matters at every meeting and that governance matters required ample time for discussion.

Action: Executive Office Lead to amend the work programme.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 21 May 2021 10.30 am.

Summary of Actions

1. Executive Office Lead to update the register of interests.
2. Chief Executive to ensure the risk concerning Forge supplier transition is updated on the corporate risk register.
3. The Executive Director, People and Business Support and Andrew McCulloch to meet to discuss workplace plans.
4. The Executive Director to keep the Board updated on the consultation programme.
5. Executive Director, Fitness to Practise and Board members (ARAC) to work offline on metrics and route map.
6. Chief Executive to update on Assurance Framework at next ARAC meeting 30 April 2021.
7. Business Planning Manager to refine and amend the corporate risk register.
8. ARAC Chair to pass on risk management training organisation details.
9. Board members to email the Chief Executive with feedback on the draft business plan.
10. The Chief Executive to share final drafts of the business plan before publication.
11. Executive Office Lead to amend the work programme.