



Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting, Friday 21 May 2021

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair

Author

Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date

02 July 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 21 May 2021, 10.00am 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
	Amy Lamb	Business Planning Manager
	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
Social Work England staff in attendance	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
	Greg Lawton	Head of Data Protection and Information Governance
	Hannah Brown	Head of Quality Assurance
	Ioana Roberts	Regional Engagement Lead East
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	Morwenna Foden	Head of Strategic Engagement
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal
	Rachel McAssey	Head of Registration
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement
Sponsor Team:	Tracy Watterson	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Louise Woodward	Department for Education (DfE)
	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Christopher Pawluczyk	Professional Standards Authority
	James Wilkinson	Unison
	Kelly Hannah-Rogers	Unison
Staff Observers:	Chelsea Moffatt	Triage and Investigations Officer, Social Work England
	Ciara Perera	Lead Investigator, Social Work England
	Jade Taylor	Professional Case Examiner, Social Work England
	Katia Vandenbroucke	Lawyer, Social Work England
	Rosie Hancock	Senior Lawyer, Social Work England
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead
Apologies:	n/a	

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. It was noted that Ann Harris had declared a new interest as Non-executive director with Defence Business Services and that Mark Lam had declared new interests for this financial year as Group Chair with Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust and a Director with UCL Partners. The Executive Office Lead confirmed that the register of interests had been updated accordingly.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paper 01

2.1 The minutes of Friday 26 February 2021 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log

3.1 The Chair reviewed the actions from the previous meeting.

4. Chair's Report - verbal

4.1 The Chair reported he had meetings with our Sponsor Team and the Chief Executive. He had met with Executive Directors and discussed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work specifically. Alongside his Regional Engagement Lead 'buddy', he had met with social workers on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE) scheme in Middlesbrough. He planned to shadow a cohort from this group for the next 12 months.

4.2 The Chair had also met with the Chief Social Worker for Children and along with the Chief Executive met with representatives from the union Unison. Regular meetings with Unison had been agreed.

4.3 The Chair commented on the success of Social Work Week and thanked board members for their contribution. He reported that he had attended the Remuneration Committee on 4 May 2021.

5. Chief Executive's Report

Paper 02

5.1 The Chief Executive highlighted that:

- The performance data showed positive progress in performance in all stages of the Fitness to practise process. In March we had received the highest monthly number of new concerns about social workers since becoming regulator.
- Ahmina Akhtar had recently been appointed as our first Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Ahmina was previously our Regional Engagement Lead Yorkshire and Humber.
- The transition to a new technology supplier for our core operating system, Forge, had gone well.
- Planning had continued on how we will move to a more blended approach to office/home working as restrictions ease.
- The meeting with the new Commissioner for Children in England had been rescheduled, all other meetings attended since the last Board meeting were listed in his report.

5.2 It was noted that following our discussions with the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), an agreed position on our Voluntary Removal process had been achieved. Voluntary Removal would be reintroduced back into our Fitness to Practise service.

5.3 The Chief Executive reported that following a period of ongoing engagement with Accepted Outcomes process in Fitness to Practise the Authority will be publishing a report on their review of the closed cases from 2020. The publication of the report may be in late May or early June. It was noted that Social Work England would be submitting a formal response to the DHSC consultation 'Regulating healthcare professionals, Protecting the Public', also noted was the launch by the DHSC of the independent review of the number of healthcare professions regulators which is due to report by the end of the year. The Chief Executive confirmed that the report of Accepted Outcomes will be circulated to the Board along with our response for context.

5.4 In response to a query from a member of the Board relating to a self-assessment that may have been completed in relation to the overall performance review of Social Work England currently being conducted by the PSA, the Executive Director, Fitness to Practise said that Internal Quality Improvement audits completed by the Internal Quality Assurance Team were assessed against the PSA standards. In addition, a formal self-assessment of progress will be completed using the benchmark of the first performance review from the PSA. There has been and would continue to be regular ongoing engagement with the PSA as part of the overall annual review process.

Action: Chief Executive to circulate the PSA report on Accepted Outcomes and our response.

5.5 The Board social worker shadowing programme was discussed. It was agreed that this should be re-instated once restrictions eased. The Chair recommended that when it is possible to have physical meetings again, he would like to have Board meetings in different regions aligned to the REL Team and have engagement sessions the afternoon and evening before the meetings as was originally planned.

Action: The Executive Office Lead to support the Chair and Chief Executive in re-instating regional engagement opportunities and shadowing programme with Regional Engagement Leads once it is safe and appropriate to do so.

6. Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report ...Paper 03 and Annexes 03a-03d

6.1 Ann Harris, Chair of ARAC reported there had been a very productive meeting on 30 April.

6.2 The Financial Control Handbook was now ready for implementation with training planned in advance of the internal audit Follow Up in the autumn. The Head of Finance and Commercial confirmed that training would start in June and the internal audit follow up was planned for September.

6.3 The Legal Services Business Case (ref. Annex 03a) had been reviewed by ARAC and was recommended for approval. This investment was essential to fulfil our Fitness to Practise regulatory role. The business case was discussed by the Board and approved. It was agreed

that further work on a more blended model for legal services, building in house capacity would be developed as an overall strategic approach.

Decision: The Legal Services Business Case was approved by the Board.

- 6.4 Haines Watts had completed 3 internal audit reports (EQA and Registration and Register received substantial assurance, and Risk Management, adequate assurance). They had provided the Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report and had prepared the 2021/22 internal audit plan.
- 6.5 The Board noted that there had been little impact of COVID-19 on audit delivery. The limited assurance outcome for the Budgetary Control audit was explained by the ARAC Chair in relation to the maturity of the organisation and therefore a Follow Up audit had been planned.
- 6.6 The Chair noted the positive outturn with the substantial assurances achieved. The ARAC Chair reported that the Committee were happy with the balance of corporate and regulatory functions in the 2021/22 internal audit plan and recommended the plan for approval to the Board.

Decision: The internal audit plan 2021/22 was approved by the Board.

- 6.7 **The Board approved the recommendation from ARAC to extend the internal auditors contract and to align it with financial years.**
- 6.8 The Anti-fraud and Whistleblowing policies had been reviewed. The Data Protection Officer's Annual Report and the annual Corporate Feedback and Complaints Report **were both noted by the Board.**
- 6.9 The ARAC Chair noted she would be attending the Department for Education ARAC Chairs meeting and she would report back on this. The Chair of the Board gave his thanks to the Committee.

Action: ARAC Chair to update the Board on the outcomes from the ARAC Chairs meeting.

7. Performance Reporting

Paper 04a

- 7.1 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement outlined the work with Audit Risk and Assurance Committee members to review performance reporting. The new template had been used to report on Quarter 4 2020-21 performance against that year's KPIs except for Fitness to Practise, where the new set of KPIs were used as they more clearly explained the performance developments.
- 7.2 The Board discussed performance reporting and that whilst not ideal to change KPIs in one area in a final quarter there was a rationale. It was argued that dual reporting for performance management for Quarter 4 2020-21 may have provided for greater transparency. Although it was noted the overall performance for the year to 31 March 2021 would be captured in the annual report and accounts report which was due to presented to the next ARAC and Board meetings.

Registration

8.1 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal noted UK application processing had continued to improve and whilst responding to calls and emails was steady through this period, the KPI in this area remained challenging. He noted that the advice and enquires service, covers calls relating to the whole organisation not just registrations, in that context it is important to review capacity within the 'digital by design' approach, reducing the number of calls by building self-service capacity for transactions. This included improvements to our guidance and website information. The team were preparing for their busiest time with UK graduate applications expected from June 2021 and the registration renewal period from 1 September to 30 November and responsiveness across all forms of communication remains a priority.

8.2 The Board discussed the call response times and resources within the Registration function. The Chief Executive reported that resources were monitored closely to ensure balance across business functions; he anticipated that the planned Forge development would help to alleviate the pressure on the advice service. Recruitment was planned and qualitative analysis work was underway to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of calls being received.

Fitness to Practise (FtP)

8.3 The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise reported that the mitigations that had been implemented to deal with the backlog in the triage service had started to realise significant improvements in March for case load progression and this had been sustained. In the last quarter, there had been a reduction of 140 cases, case investigations outcomes had doubled and a monthly average of 14 hearings were concluded, which was more than double the completion rate for the previous quarter.

8.4 The Executive Director said he was seeking to sustain this progress and consolidate this level of productivity further into Quarter 1 2021-22 and beyond and concluded that although it was still early, there was positive improvement and he was encouraged with last quarter performance.

8.5 The good progress was noted by the Board and thanks were passed on to the FtP team. The Board discussed the format of the report and it was agreed that in future, performance reports should include the previous quarter for comparison. The measurement of quality and the impact of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was also discussed.

Action: ELT to ensure future performance reports include previous quarter comparators.

Social Work Profession and the People we work with and for

8.6 The Executive Director, Strategy Policy and Engagement highlighted the key outputs including a number of firsts. The firsts were the 'Social Work in England' report which had been well received, Year 1 CPD validation with sector consultation now launched, Social Work Week staged in March which had been a great success, the evaluation would be presented later in the meeting. The Board noted that they had received the CPD research report and consultation proposals but did not have the opportunity to comment prior to publication. It was agreed that the consultation workstream was an important area and aligned with future plans concerning the Board and its Committee structure. This would be

discussed at a future meeting. It was agreed that the consultation timeline for the year ahead would be shared with the Board.

Action: Chair to discuss Board and Committee structure at the next strategy planning day.

Action: Executive Director, Strategy Policy and Engagement to share the consultation timeline for the year ahead with the Board.

8.7 It was noted that meetings had been held with the Chief Social Worker for Adults. Further work had progressed on approved mental health professionals, regional engagement workshops had taken place with social worker employers regarding FtP and through our Head of EDI and our Professional Associate a new workstream on EDI and anti-racism in social work was underway with the Principal Social Worker Network. The Executive Director reported that we have just been shortlisted in the 'Best Internal Communications During the COVID-19 Pandemic' category for Communicate Magazine's internal communications and engagement awards.

8.8 The Board congratulated the team on the award shortlisting and the proactive work on EDI.

Education and Training

8.9 The Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal said there had been one inspection during the quarter and the analysis of the first full year of monitoring was completed. This report of the annual monitoring was included in the board pack and is an agenda item. The 3-year approval cycle would begin in September.

Our Organisation

8.10 The Executive Director, People and Business Support highlighted that a higher number of leavers was due to the end of a number of fixed term contracts. Churn in registration and advice was partly due to the success of individuals in gaining promotion elsewhere in the organisation and that registration and advice can often be seen as a gateway into the organisation. The high percentage of fixed term contracts in the organisation were primarily in FtP where capacity had been increased to deal with the higher caseloads.

8.11 After an intensive programme of development, the new corporate system 'Enable' had been launched as planned on 1 April.

8.12 The Board enquired about how COVID-19 had impacted on our people and what support was provided. The Executive Director outlined a number of wellbeing initiatives and manager supports and offered to bring an overview report to the Board later in the year.

Action: Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare an overview people report for the Board for later in the year.

9. Finance and commercial report

Paper 05

9.1 The Head of Finance and Commercial reported that due to good budgetary management across the organisation, the full year net expenditure in the management accounts up to 31 March 2021 had ended close to budget, revenue being £9k higher than budget (capital figure also)

9.2 The ARAC Chair confirmed this as a good outcome for year end.

10. Social Work Week Evaluation

Paper 06

10.1 The Head of Strategic Engagement and the Regional Engagement Lead (East) presented the findings from the evaluation of Social Work Week. The presentation included evidence of how each of the 4 objectives had been achieved, the scope of the programme, including the funded events, overall level of engagement, the opportunity cost and impact for Social Work England following the programme launch.

10.2 The Chair thanked the presenters. The Board considered the evaluation and noted that Social Work Week was an excellent programme delivered within the challenging context of the pandemic. The Board was interested to hear more about the cost benefit analysis that would be used to inform future events.

Action: Head of Regional Engagement to forward on any further evaluation of Social Work Week to the Board.

11. Education Quality Assurance Monitoring Report

Paper 07 and annex 07a

11.1 The Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal set out the purpose of and findings from the report. The broad findings would inform the reapproval process.

11.2 The Board discussed the report findings, the approach to quality of assessment and the strategic relationship between EQA to Fitness to Practise.

11.3 The Executive Director said that the EQA, student registration and learning outcomes are current workstreams that were being aligned into an overall strategic framework for Education and Training which will be brought to the Board for further discussion. It was confirmed that Board members with a particular interest would be engaged in the development of the strategic framework.

Action: Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal to liaise with Jonathan Gorvin and other board members interested to support the development of the strategic framework for Education and Training.

12. Registration renewal process Year 1 learning

Paper 08

12.1 The paper set out the learning following the 2020 renewal process and learning was being used to prepare for the 2021 renewal process which would begin on 1 September 2021. There would be a temporary increase in the team capacity for the renewal period.

13. Any other business

13.1 The Chair provided an update on Board membership and recruitment. The Secretary of State for Education had advertised vacancies for 2 new Non-executive Directors. The length of term would be expiring for Baroness Tyler of Enfield and Dr Helen Phillips in August. Dr

Andrew McCulloch had been reappointed for a further 2 years on the Board and Jonathan Gorvin had been reappointed for a further 3 years.

13.2 The ARAC Chair noted the partnership work with Money and Pension Service (MaPS) and a range of other agencies working in Clacton. Partners could already see the value emerging from the work.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday 02 July 2021 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm

Summary of Actions

1. Chief Executive to circulate the PSA report on Accepted Outcomes and our response.
2. The Executive Office Lead to support the Chair and Chief Executive in re-instating regional engagement opportunities and shadowing programme with Regional Engagement Leads.
3. ARAC Chair to update the Board on the outcomes from the ARAC Chairs meeting.
4. ELT to ensure future performance reports include previous quarter comparators.
5. Chair to discuss Board and Committee structure at next Board strategy planning day.
6. Executive Director, Strategy Policy and Engagement to share the consultation timeline for the year ahead with the Board.
7. Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare an overview people performance report for the Board for later in the year.
8. Head of Regional Engagement to forward on any further evaluation of Social Work Week to the Board.
9. Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal to liaise with Jonathan Gorvin and other board members interested to support the development of the strategic framework for Education and Training.