Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting
Friday 10 September 2021

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
Choose an item

Author
Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date
19 November 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 10 September 2021, 10.30am via videoconference

Board Members:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair
	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	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	Amy Lamb	Business Planning Manager
	Amy Soar	Head of Policy
	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
	Dan Racher	Head of Strategic Development
	Eleanor Poole	Head of Case Review
	Katie Newbould	Policy Manager
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Registration, 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:	Kate Phillips	Department for Education (DfE)
	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
	Susan Lennan-Spence	Department for Education (DfE)
	Victoria Cavolina	Department for Education (DfE)
Staff Observers:	Francis Edouard-Whittaker	Acting Case Examiner, Social Work England
	Hannah Appleyard	Case Review Manager, Social Work England
	Laura Mellon	Investigator, Social Work England
	Matthew Byng	Policy Manager, Social Work England
	Simone Ferris	Hearings Officer, Social Work England
Public Observers:	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	UNISON
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 recorded that Mark Lam had registered his new interests as Vice Chair with UCL Health Alliance, and Trustee with Hastings International Piano Competition and the register had been updated accordingly.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting — Paper 01

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on Friday 02 July 2021 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log — Paper 02

3.1 The Chair reviewed the actions from the previous meeting. Updates on the open actions were noted as follows:

- Regional meet and greet opportunities to be scheduled alongside Board meetings (action 4); Executive Office Lead to support the Chair and Chief Executive in re-instating regional engagement opportunities and shadowing programme with regional engagement leads (action 17); Chair to discuss Board and Committee structure at next Board strategy planning day (action 20): ***all of these actions would be discussed at the October awayday.***
- Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare an overview people survey report for the Board for later in the year (action 22): ***in progress for reporting at the November meeting.***
- Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Engagement to enable the Board's review and approval of the finalised AMHP and AMCP standards (action 29): ***work was in progress for the Board to review before publishing in time for the 21 January Board meeting.***
- Executive Leadership Team to conduct a 'what if' scenario relating to Employment Tribunal (action 31); Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the assurance framework map to include Board and ARAC in second line of defence and NAO in fourth line of defence (action 32): ***both actions were on target for reporting at the January meeting.***
- Executive Director, People and Business Support and Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal to consolidate the non-financial and financial delegations into one overall scheme of delegation (action 34): ***work was in progress as to how to best describe the different schemes; this would be aligned within the ongoing work on the assurance framework to be completed for the January meeting.***
- Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal and Executive Director, People and Business Support to lead the review of the draft Framework Document with ELT and circulate the Framework Document to the Board (action 35): ***the draft Framework Document had been discussed at the private Board Strategy meeting with forward actions agreed to meet the DfE timeline.***

4. Chair's Report - verbal

4.1 The Chair had met regularly with the Chief Executive since the last meeting and together they have had regular meetings with our partners and other sector professionals. As noted in the Chief Executive's report, the Chair had attended meetings with agencies and networks including The United Kingdom Acquired Brain Injury Forum. They also met with Social Work England panel Chairs and panel members as part of a listening exercise. The Chair thanked the partners who attended the meetings for their feedback and for the work they do with Social Work England. He noted the breadth of experience and expertise the partners bring to the organisation which can only enhance the quality of their decision making.

4.2 Working with Ann Harris, the joint strategic initiative with the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) had progressed well. Supported by the interim Chief Social Worker for Adults, on the ground research had been facilitated with the help of our Regional Engagement Lead (East) and Project Delivery and Business Improvement Manager. Roundtable discussions led by the Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement had also taken place. On completion, the outcomes would be presented in a full report.

4.3 In addition to the regular reports to the Sponsor Team, the Chair had been successfully reappraised by the DfE.

4.4 The Chair had contributed to the ongoing research and development of pre- and post-qualifying standards. This was supported by Felicity Allen, DfE, Chief Social Workers and involved the Executive Leadership Team and Strategy, Policy and Engagement team.

4.5 The Chair was involved in the recruitment process for two new members of the Board. The Chair noted his thanks to the National Advisory Forum (NAF) members who had contributed to that interview process - there views were very helpful and insightful. The decision on the Board appointments was to be announced by the Secretary of State.

5. Chief Executive's Report — Paper 03

5.1 The Chief Executive noted that following the last meeting the full Quarter 1 Performance Report had been reviewed by the Board and published in July. The report was included in the pack for this meeting for formal approval. The performance report for Quarter 2 up to 30 September would be presented at the November meeting.

5.2 The papers included interim updates on performance since the last quarter concerning Fitness to Practise (FtP), Registration and Advice, and CPD. In addition, the Chief Executive reported:

- The handover to the new supplier for Forge was working well; a future roadmap for priority areas of development was in place and this would be discussed at the October Board awayday and presented to ARAC in November.
- The new Education and Training standards came into force on 1 September 2021. The Education Quality Assurance team will be starting their cycle of inspections. A progress report would be provided at the next meeting.
- The annual renewal process for social workers opened on 1 September and would close on 30 November 2021. The process of renewal, including uploading CPD, was running smoothly. It was hoped there would be an increase in the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) data collected from social workers through the registration renewal process, though it was not mandatory for social workers to provide this data.

- The results of the survey undertaken in conjunction with the Principal Social Workers Network and the What Works Centre (WWC) on anti-racism in social work would be made available in October.
- The Fitness to Practise ‘upstreaming’ work was well underway.

5.3 The technical issues concerning the HR management system for Enable were discussed. The Executive Director, People and Business Support informed the Board that a lot of team time had been used to resolve the issue; all other aspects of the new system had been running smoothly.

5.4 The Board discussed the FtP upstreaming work. The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise reported that the ongoing programme of research into referrals, communications and partnership working was expected to deliver a positive impact on the service over the next 6 to 12 months.

6. Performance Report Q1 2021/22 Paper 04

6.1 The Quarter 1 report had been published in July, therefore the Chief Executive invited the Board to comment on excepted items.

6.2 The Board discussed the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and agreed they should be both stretching and achievable. The Chair noted that the approach to setting KPIs would be discussed at the October awayday. The Chief Executive added that the business planning process underway would enable the Board to comment on the 2022/23 KPIs at an early draft stage.

Action: Board to discuss the approach for setting KPIs for 2022/23 at the October awayday and as part of the business planning process for 22/23.

6.3 In response to the Board’s comments concerning staff retention, our people engagement survey and our organisational culture, the Executive Director, People and Business Support said that about 70 people had joined the organisation during this period of remote operation and that a great deal of development work was underway following the people engagement survey. The people engagement survey and workforce strategy would be discussed in detail at the November Board meeting, but noted that terms and conditions, and in particular the low level of pension cover, has been raised as an issue by staff.

6.4 The Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal noted that an announcement was anticipated soon from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about when the emergency response to the pandemic would end. The temporary register would remain in place until then and would be closely monitored.

6.5 The Board commented that the new format and layout of the performance report was much improved and easier to read. The Board recommended reporting actuals against forecast profiles and that over time, the Board would expect to see year on year analysis The Chair thanked ARAC and team members for the work in improving the performance report format. **The Performance Report Quarter 1 2021/22 was approved by the Board.**

Action: Head of Business Planning and Improvement to update performance reporting with actuals compared to forecast profiles.

7. Fitness to Practise: service performance and investment update Paper 05

7.1 The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise reported on KPIs 1, 2 and 3 regarding case progression performance as prioritised in the business plan. Incoming referrals had recently stabilised, at a rate of around 150 per calendar month, and a seasonal picture was now starting to emerge.

7.2 The recent restructure of the triage service to increase capacity had reduced the caseload, though the service remained lean and potentially subject to some turbulence in team turnover. Further investment to support one additional manager and the extension of three fixed term contracts was recommended. This would help to maintain the trajectory towards meeting KPI 1 (reduction of triage caseload to approximately 300 by 2022/23) and to mitigate against the risks to the service concerning peak referral months in Quarter 3 and unplanned absences.

7.3 The number of active investigations was now 100 fewer than when we took over from the previous regulator. Based on this performance rate, the target for KPI 2 (reduction of the investigation caseload to approximately 1230 by 2022/23) was likely to be exceeded. This rate of performance was reliant on maintaining 10 FTEs within the service, and this would be a key consideration both operationally and strategically for the 2022/23 budgeting and business planning process.

7.4 It was noted that KPI 3 (reduction of the legacy caseload within the investigations service by 80% by 2022/23) has an impact on the overall FtP service performance as well as each individual case. Performance against target was broadly on track with legacy cases reduced to 560. It was noted that any minor shortfall would be addressed by reallocating existing resource in the service in Q4 to intensify the targeting of legacy cases. This would only be possible if KPI 2 performance continued to exceed overall caseload progression targets and if turnover in the final half of the year was not excessive.

7.5 In consultation with our sponsor team, an opportunity had arisen to make a case for additional funding for fitness to practise activity in 2021/22 by virtue of a supplemental grant from DfE. A full business case for this approach had been reviewed and approved by correspondence by the Audit and Risk Committee on 31 August 2021. Subject to the grant being secured in September 2021, the Board was asked to note and approve the approach recommended in the business case.

7.6 The Chief Executive noted the positive and responsive engagement with the DfE concerning a potential supplemental grant. The Chair thanked the sponsor team for their support.

7.7 The Chair thanked the Executive Director, Fitness to Practise for the paper. **Subject to the funding being secured, the Board approved the proposed approach recommended in the paper.**

8. Finance and Commercial Report Paper 06

8.1 The Head of Finance and Commercial reported a year to date underspend due to budget timings and one off events. The September forecast was being updated and it was anticipated that this would achieve a close to budget full year outcome. The overspend within the FtP directorate was offset by underspends in the People and Business Support and Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal directorates.

8.2 The draft form of the commercial strategy would be reviewed in September by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and would then be shared with ARAC for discussion and noting. The Chair of ARAC said it was expected that the strategy would be signed off by correspondence in advance of the 5 November committee meeting.

Action: Head of Finance and Commercial to submit the commercial strategy to ARAC for sign off by correspondence in advance for the ARAC meeting on 5 November.

9. Policy update on Continuing Professional Development — Paper 07

9.1 The Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement introduced the paper. The Policy Manager and the Head of Strategic Development presented the outcomes from the recent public consultation regarding changes to CPD requirements as follows:

- The evidence gathered from a 12-week public consultation has informed how the changes to the CPD process would evolve.
- The changes to come into effect from 1 December 2021 would include:
- an increased CPD requirement from 1 to 2 pieces,
- replacing the 2 CPD forms with an improved single form,
- introducing a new requirement for peer reflection.

9.2 The Board was informed that a full response to the consultation would be published on our website in September and the amended guidance would be published in the coming months in time for the new CPD model to be launched in December 2021.

9.3 The discussion about peer reflection identified that our Regional Engagement Leads would continue to provide support online, moving to face to face meetings, and Social Work Week would also provide an opportunity to share good practice.

9.4 The Chair thanked the Policy Manager and the Head of Strategic Development for the presentation. It was noted by the Board further discussion will take place at the awayday on the role of the Board in the development of policy in areas such as CPD. **The Board agreed to support the proposed changes to our CPD requirements for registration Year 3.**

10. Registration and Advice update — Paper 08; Annex 08a

10.1 The Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal introduced the paper. Learning had been applied from the registration cycle 2020/21 and significant changes had been introduced to deal with challenges the service had faced concerning processing times for applications and enquiries. The year-on-year comparison data evidenced how performance in both the registration and advice services had stabilised or improved.

10.2 The Board asked how our engagement with social workers is measured in qualitative terms. It was reported that feedback on renewals is always requested and that the Regional Engagement Leads also supply feedback from social workers. The Head of Registration said that engagement with and feedback from social workers had helped to inform the improved service delivery.

10.3 The Board welcomed the performance updates in the report and congratulated the team on the continued improvements to performance.

11. Business Planning 2022/23 Paper 09

11.1 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement reported that the business planning process had now started. A draft would be ready by end January 2022 with the final plan to be signed off by the Board at the March meeting.

11.2 The Board welcomed the early planning approach for the 2022/23 business plan. It was advised that the timeline should be updated to reflect the required Board inputs and updates. The Chair reiterated that the October awayday would be used to discuss the business plan KPIs. The Board also agreed the need to discuss the ambition for our capital plans within next year's business plan.

Action: Head of Business Planning and Improvement to update the business planning timeline with Board inputs and updates.

Action: Head of Business Planning and Improvement to provide a business planning update report to future Board meetings.

Action: Board to discuss ambitions for our capital plan at the October awayday.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 19 November 2021 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 12.01pm

Summary of Actions

1. Board to discuss the approach for setting KPIs for 2022/23 at the October awayday and as part of the business planning process for 22/23.
2. Head of Business Planning and Improvement to update performance reporting with actuals compared to forecast profiles.
3. Head of Finance and Commercial to submit the commercial strategy to ARAC for sign off by correspondence in advance for the ARAC meeting on 5 November.
4. Head of Business Planning and Improvement to update the business planning timeline with Board inputs and updates.
5. Head of Business Planning and Improvement to provide a business planning update report to future Board meetings.
6. Board to discuss ambitions for our capital plan at the October awayday.