Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting
Friday 19 November 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 January 2022

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 19 November 2021, 10.30am via videoconference

Board Members:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Mark Lam	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Social Work England staff in attendance	Amy Soar	Head of Policy
	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
	Gemma Thorne	People Development Business Partner (L&D)
	Jack Harrison	Participation Officer
	Jane Marr	Head of People and Development
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	Katie Newbould	Policy Manager
	Leanne Clarke	Finance Manager
	Morwenna Foden	Head of Strategic Engagement
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement
	Tracy Watterson	Executive Director, People and Business Support
National Advisory Forum:	Francesca Carpenter	National Advisory Forum
	Ify Nwokoro	National Advisory Forum
	Isaac Samuels	National Advisory Forum
	Sally Parker	National Advisory Forum
Sponsor Team:	Felicity Allen	Department for Education (DfE)
	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
	Louise Woodward	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sue Howson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW)
	Representative	Community Care
	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Catherine Elphee	External Relations Officer
	Gavin Moorghen	Regional Engagement Lead (E&W Midlands)

	Kamran Sadiq	Lawyer
	Kate Metcalf	Regional Engagement Lead (SouthEast)
	Victoria Hart	Regional Engagement Lead (London)
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead
Apologies:	None	

1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed Board members, guests and observers to the meeting. There was a special welcome for Dr Adi Cooper and Dr Sue Ross, who were attending as non-executive directors for their first board meeting. The Chair also congratulated Ann Harris who had just been reappointed as non-executive director by the Secretary of State for a further 3-year term.

1.2 Interests declared by Dr Adi Cooper and Dr Sue Ross at the time of their appointment were published on the register held on the website. The Chair declared a new interest as Chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club. Since the last meeting, Mark Lam had been appointed Chair of North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust and Andrew McCulloch had been appointed Gateway Advisor to Healthier Lives, Emerald Open Research 2021, Emerald Publishing; Mental Health Policy Advisor to m-LAH (student-led mental health programme). There were no other interests declared.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting — Paper 01

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on Friday 10 September 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:

- Action 4: Regional meet and greet opportunities to be scheduled alongside Board meetings in Sheffield city-region May 2022 and in London October 2022. The details for 19/20 May 2022 would be brought to the Board at the 21 January 2022 meeting, pending any changes in coronavirus restrictions. **Open.**
- Action 17: Approach for buddying / shadowing with Regional Engagement Leads and the National Advisory Forum would be brought to the board for at the 21 January 2022 meeting, pending any changes in coronavirus restrictions. **Open.**
- Action 33: The latest iteration of the Framework Document had been circulated to the Board and discussed at the private strategy meeting 19 November. Planned to be approved at 21 January 2022 Board meeting. **Open.**

Closed actions were recorded as follows:

- Action 22: Executive Director, People and Business Support would provide a progress report on People later in the meeting. **Action closed.**
- Action 27: Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Engagement updated that the DHSC timeline for the review and approval of the finalised AMHP and AMCP standards by the Board would likely slip significantly. The action was closed with a view to reopening when the timeframe was published. **Action closed.**

- Action 29: Executive Leadership Team to conduct a 'what if' scenario relating to Employment Tribunal. The action was closed with a view to reopening if necessary. **Action closed.**
- Action 30: Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the assurance framework map, progress was reported to ARAC 5 November and referenced in ARAC Chair report to the Board. **Action closed.**
- Action 34: Setting KPIs for 2022/23 was discussed at October strategy days and an update included in the Chief Executive's report. **Action closed.**
- Action 35: Head of Business Planning and Improvement updated the quarterly performance reporting to include actuals compared to forecast profiles. **Action closed.**
- Action 37: Head of Business Planning and Improvement updated the business planning timeline, as included in the Chief Executive's report for the meeting. **Action closed.**

4. Chair's Report - verbal

4.1 The Chair had met regularly with the Chief Executive and recently visited the Social Work England office. He met with Ann Harris and Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) regarding the joint strategic initiative and had set up quarterly meetings with Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE) students in Middlesbrough. The Chair and Chief Executive held meetings with some of Social Work England's partners; their feedback on people and culture of the organisation was extremely positive.

4.2 The Chair reported there had been a strategy awayday with the Board in October. This was used to plan the direction of travel for Social Work England. Actions from the awayday included setting up a new committee structure for the Board. Plans to set up new committees and terms of reference will be brought to the January meeting of the Board for approval with a view to the committees going live for the new financial year. The Chair had formally approached Andrew McCulloch to take up the new role of Deputy Chair who had accepted the role, this proposal was endorsed by the Board members at the away day and the details are currently being worked on.

Action: New committee terms of reference to be brought to the 21 January 2022 meeting for approval.

4.3 Regular meetings had taken place with the Chair and our Sponsor, the Department for Education (DfE). In October, the Chair and Chief Executive met the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP and his ministerial team at a ministerial reception.

5. Chief Executive's Report — Paper 03

5.1 The Chief Executive gave an overview of his report. The Board awayday in October had been an opportunity for non-executive board members to meet with the broad leadership team at Social Work England to review our progress to date and agree priorities for the future.

5.2 Funding had been confirmed from the Department for Education (DfE) to help deal with the legacy cases from HCPC. Proposals for additional support for the hearings service for next financial year were currently under consideration with Executive Director, Fitness to Practise and Executive Director, People and Business Support taking this forward.

5.3 The Decision Review Group (DRG) internal audit achieved adequate assurance. This was a good outcome; the quality of decision-making had been enhanced through thematic discussions concerning issues that impact on social work practice.

5.4 Our work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was continuing by working with a re-configured steering group and in partnership with others including the Principal Social Worker networks and What Works Centre.

6. Professional Standards Authority (the 'Authority') annual performance review update

Paper 04, Annexes 04a, 04b

6.1 The Chief Executive reported that our first annual performance review by the Authority was published in September and we met 15 out of the 18 standards of good regulation. An action plan was in place to address and evidence what we were doing to meet the three unmet standards and the recommendations relating to other standards. This was a good first review and provided us with a useful benchmark.

6.2 Work began on 18 October on the performance review for 2020/21 and the continued good feedback from the Authority on our quality of engagement was noted. The Chief Executive and Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal have had a recent review feedback meeting with the Authority's Chief Executive and Head of Scrutiny and Quality.

6.3 The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) gave assurance that the actions had been discussed at the last meeting on 5 November and this was in her report.

6.4 The Board asked for an update on the performance review 2020/21 currently under way to be brought to the January meeting.

Action: 2020/21 annual performance review to be updated at 21 January meeting.

6.5 The Chair said that as a new organisation and a specialist social work regulator, it was pleasing to receive a positive first annual performance review from the Authority.

7. Quarter 2 Performance Report 2021/22 and mid-year review of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Paper 05

7.1 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement reported that the forecast figures were now included in the tables in the report and that he was satisfied that at this mid-year point review our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) remain informative. The parameters for three KPIs had been adjusted to provide more meaningful measure of our performance:

- FIN1 Forecast variance to budget - To report on the forecasted year-end variance between budget and actual spend. This better aligns with our internal reporting approach.

- EQA1 Number of course reapproval processes initiated - To better align the reapproval process with our quarterly reports and to avoid reporting zeros for the KPIs for the first three quarters, the report will be on the number of course reapproval processes initiated in each quarter, with a target of 30 by March 2022.
- IQ1 Corporate complaints response time - From Q2, the report will be on the percentage responded to within the timescales communicated to complainants, retaining the target of 100%.

Registration, enquiries and advice

7.2 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal said that his team were now entering the busiest period of the year for calls and emails regarding renewals. The renewal process had been well supported by the communications and engagement teams. As at the date of this meeting 73% of registrants had renewed or submitted their application for renewal which was just short of the profile for renewals last year. He noted that a benchmark pattern for renewals was not yet established. Renewals were due to close on 30 November. The temporary register was being managed carefully; following communications with social workers on the register, it had been reduced from 13,000 to 6,500. In response to questions from the Board, it was confirmed that the low number of overseas registrations was as anticipated.

7.3 It was noted that the call management process aimed to direct enquiries to the most appropriate channel so that phone lines were protected for those who really need to speak to someone; all abandoned calls were recorded.

7.4 The Chair said that registration was part of our statutory duty and that everything was being done to support social workers with their applications and renewals to the register.

Fitness to Practise (FtP)

7.5 Executive Director, Fitness to Practise reported that performance was where he had expected it to be at the end of Q2. The investigation caseload was now down to 1,040 cases. This was 100 lower than the caseload inherited from the HCPC and was expected to fall below 1,000 by the end of the year. Our new powers and restructure were helping to resolve cases proportionately and at the required pace. With the additional funding from DfE it was anticipated that the year-end target would be exceeded.

7.6 Triage performance had been slightly behind target at the end of Q2, but was back on track in October.

7.7 FTP's quality in decision-making had been audited by our internal auditors, Haines Watts and had received an adequate assurance. An action plan was in place to address areas of improvement and actions scheduled for completion by April 2022.

7.8 This year's performance targets were focused on reducing the caseload. It was anticipated that next year the focus would be on the timeliness of case progression.

7.9 The Board discussed the impact of the pandemic on the sector and consequently our FtP service. The Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement said that the pandemic had generally exacerbated existing issues in the workforce. A reduction in peer to peer support and a lack of placement experience and support for newly qualified social workers had led to an increase in case load numbers and the complexity of cases. Positive impacts from the pandemic included the use of technology, especially in relation to connecting with younger people.

7.10 The Chair noted that FtP was on track although some service areas were more stable than others and the focus on quality and application of our new powers were proving to be effective. He also thanked the DfE for their support.

Strategy, Policy and Engagement (SPE)

7.11 Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement said that the team had been busy supporting the sector with renewals and uploading CPD. Following the consultation on CPD, the new renewal year starting in December 2021 would require a minimum of two pieces of CPD, at least one of which must include a peer reflection. Work was also underway to support post-qualifying students coming into the profession.

7.12 The DRG work looking into thematic issues had been successfully enhanced by input and support from the National Advisory Forum.

7.13 Although the Authority's standard on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) had not been met, the considerable progress in this area had been acknowledged. Work continued to progress positively with our Head of EDI leading a new steering group and action plan. Learning from other regulators would be applied to our approach to collecting EDI data from the social work workforce on the register. Having launched an anti-racism survey in June with What Works for Children's Social Care and others, the research findings would be published by the end of Q3 with action plans to follow in Q4.

7.14 The Chair welcomed the sector's aspirations to increase CPD and thanked the team for the scope of work delivered.

Education and Training

7.15 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal reported that the process for reapproving all currently approved social work courses had started. There was a good level of engagement between the education quality assurance (EQA) team and course providers, and the schedule of inspections were well-planned.

7.16 The annual monitoring process started on 28 September 2021 and all providers have until 26 November 2021 to submit their return.

7.17 It was noted that the KPI for course reapproval would be adjusted to make the reporting more meaningful by reporting on the number of course reapproval processes initiated in each quarter, with a target of 30 by March 2022.

People

7.18 Executive Director, People and Business Support referenced the people paper also on the agenda that she would report on. For Q2, sickness and absence and unplanned leavers were stable. Recruitment was on track though suggestions were welcomed to how to overcome the challenges of competition faced in the recruitment of an IT Developer. An offline discussion was agreed.

Action: Mark Lam to make recruitment suggestions to the Executive Director, People and Business Support.

7.19 Although the number of corporate complaints had reduced this quarter, the complexity of the complaints received had increased and a number of repeat complainants was noted.

7.20 The Chair noted that the eight KPIs were all achieving target and he thanked the team for all their hard work.

8. ARAC Chair's Report Paper 06

8.1 ARAC Chair, Ann Harris reported on the recommendations and actions the Committee had made at the meeting on 5 November.

8.2 There were three internal audits to report. As already noted the DRG audit has reported adequate assurance. The main recommendation concerned reporting to the Board which may be addressed in considerations on the terms of reference for the new board committee's structure. The CPD audit has reported a substantial outcome, this was an exceptional achievement in a first year of operation. Budgetary control follow-up audit reported substantial assurance which reflected well on the on the changes implemented in financial control.

8.3 On behalf of the Committee, the Chair commended the Legal Services Business Case to the Board for approval. **The Board approved the Legal Services Business Case.**

8.4 Two risks, data risk and capacity resilience, had been selected by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) from the Corporate Risk Register and discussed in detail with ARAC. The discussion concluded that a data insight strategy was needed for the next planning round, this would address how data was collected and used.

8.5 There were new governance arrangements in place for Forge. The Committee had requested a relatively simple road map to set out what changes are to be delivered, when and their priority.

8.6 The work on the Assurance Framework was progressing well. The Senior Leadership Team were leading on the mapping of organisation-wide assurance arrangements with an aim to complete this by the end of the financial year.

8.7 The National Audit Office had appointed EY as our new external auditors. The external audit team were now working with our team and would present an audit plan at the next ARAC meeting.

8.8 The Committee had discussed the Data Protection Officer's report and the mitigation of risks for information governance. It was agreed that the typographical error in the report regarding employee contracts would be corrected for the record.

Action: Executive Office Lead to correct the typographical error in the 5 November ARAC Chair's report.

8.9 The ARAC Chair said she would attend the next ALB Audit and Risk Committee Chair's meeting. The Chair thanked her for the report.

9. Finance and Commercial Report Paper 07

9.1 The Finance Manager presented the management accounts for the year to 30 September 2021. Year to date revenue expenditure, net of fee income, was 1.5% lower than budget. Underspends from several business areas had been vired to FtP during the year to enable increased expenditure towards the reduction of legacy cases. The additional funding from DfE for FtP would be accounted for in the next set of management accounts. Year to date capital expenditure was underspent due to timing differences on purchasing and management of Forge but would be closer to budget by the year end.

9.2 At the 5 November meeting, ARAC had agreed the change to our finance KPI which meant that we would compare our budget against forecast to give a better indicator of our underlying financial performance.

9.3 ARAC had discussed the commercial plan 2021/22 to 2022/23 and work had started on implementing actions. The ARAC Chair noted that beyond this timeframe, the commercial plan would be aligned with the new Strategic Plan.

10. People Report Paper 08

10.1 Executive Director, People and Business Support presented the report. We have received approval from Ministers to improve our employment offer by increasing our pension contributions over time and also to provide life assurance. Subject to consultation, we intended to move to a salary exchange (sacrifice) pension scheme that would offset increased costs.

10.2 Progress on our workforce planning and talent framework had been stalled while we deployed resources to finalise implementation on our new ERP system, Enable. Draft plans would be shared in due course with the Chair of the Remuneration Committee in anticipation of agreement on the proposed expanded terms of reference for that committee, before coming to the Board for approval.

10.3 The People Engagement Survey took place in May and for the second year this was conducted under restriction due to the pandemic. The most significant variances compared with last year concerned leadership of wider business operations and managing change. Improvement actions were being finalised by the people forum whilst changes concerning leadership visibility were already underway. It was encouraging to see that the highest scoring area concerned inclusion and fair treatment.

10.4 A snapshot of the learning and development programme was shared to show the findings and impact of learning and development activity produced in house by the team and commissioned from an external supplier.

10.5 The Board discussed the impact of the pandemic on the survey. It was agreed that the desired response rate for the survey should be around 85% (currently 78%). The Board concluded that this was a useful piece of work that had produced a good set of results. The Chair thanked the team for their work and the DfE for their support.

11. The National Advisory Forum and co-production at Social Work England: review of Year 1

Paper 09 and slide deck

11.1 The Participation Officer introduced members of the National Advisory Forum (NAF) making the presentation: Francesca Carpenter, Ify Nwokoro, Isaac Samuels and Sally Parker.

11.2 The NAF acts as a critical friend to Social Work England and seeks to improve the work of the organisation across the board. The organisational values helped to enable co-production with NAF. The NAF's first year achievements had all been delivered during the pandemic. NAF achievements included the following examples of co-produced work:

- influencing the tone, content and accessibility of Social Work Week 2021;
- designing the new recruitment process for increasing NAF membership;
- being on recruitment panels to appoint Regional Engagement Leads and Non-executive directors;
- co-writing chapters for Social Work in England Report 2;
- contributing to Decision Review Group (DRG) and effecting instrumental change in the quality of DRG outcomes.

11.3 NAF representatives ended the presentation with how they hoped their work would continue to develop by:

- establishing effective working relationships with decision-makers including the Board, ELT and Senior Leadership Team;
- having a member of the Board as a designated contact for NAF;
- establishing buddy relationships between Board and NAF members;
- embedding co-production across all areas of our operation.

11.4 The Board commended the work of NAF and welcomed the opportunity to develop a relationship with members. It was suggested that this could also involve sitting in on a NAF meeting, the first step would be to arrange a face-to-face meeting between NAF and Board members.

Action: Executive Office Lead and Participation Officer to arrange a face-to-face meeting between NAF and Board members.

11.5 The Chair said that Social Work England was privileged and proud to have the experience and quality input from NAF and he thanked the members of NAF for their presentation.

11.6 NAF members thanked the Board and the organisation for their support.

12. Social Work Week 2022

Paper 10 and slide deck

12.1 The Head of Engagement presented the plans for Social Work Week 14-18 March 2022. We are committed to enabling face to face regional events alongside ensuring a national presence through online sessions promoted through our website. The tagline 'social work and me' would be used to bring people together to learn, connect, and engage with social work in England. The final programme would be launched in January 2022.

12.2 The Chair thanked the Head of Engagement for the presentation.

13. Social Work in England Report 2 update — Paper 11 and slide deck

13.1 The Head of Policy and Policy Manager introduced the work on the Social Work in England Report 2. The Board had already fed into the draft report and the full final draft had involved a NAF member in co-leading each chapter. The next steps would involve working with an external designer with the final report being signed off by ELT and the Board before publication early 2022.

13.2 The Chief Executive noted the Board's involvement with the aim of enabling collective ownership over the report.

13.3 The Chair thanked colleagues for the clear presentation and report layout.

14. Board meetings 2022/23 — Paper 12

14.1 **The Board approved the dates for Board and ARAC meetings 2022/23.**

14.2 Jonathan Gorvin gave his apologies for the meeting on 22 July 2022.

15. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 21 January 2022 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm

Summary of Actions

1. New committee terms of reference to be brought to the 21 January 2022 meeting for approval.
2. 2020/21 The Professional standards authority annual performance review to be updated at 21 January meeting.
3. Mark Lam to make recruitment suggestions to the Executive Director, People and Business Support.
4. Executive Office Lead to correct the typographical error in the 5 November ARAC Chair's report.
5. Executive Office Lead and Participation Officer to arrange a face-to-face meeting between NAF and Board members.