



Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 21 January 2022

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair

Author

Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date

11 March 2022

Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

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 January 2022, 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
	Berry Rose	Head of Triage and Case Progression
	Catherine Witt	Regional Engagement Lead, North East
	Claudia Thompson	Directors' Assistant
	Jonathan Dillon	Executive Director, Fitness to Practise
	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
Sponsor Team:	Michelle Mann	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sue Howson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Representative	National Advisory Forum
	Representative	Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW)
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Clarissa Alford	Business Improvement Officer
	Katie Florence	Head of Communications
	Rachel McAssey	Head of Registration
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead
Apologies:	None	

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Board members, Social Work England's sponsor team, and observers to the meeting.
- 1.2 Since the last meeting, new interests had been declared and published on the Board's register of interests on the Social Work England website.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on Friday 19 November 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. **All actions closed since the last meeting were approved.** Updates on the open actions were noted as follows:

- Action 4: Regional meet and greet opportunities. There are provisional plans to host a meeting in Doncaster on Thursday 19 May, in advance of the Board meeting Friday 20 May, to be firmed up by the Regional Engagement Leads and Executive Office. Details to be circulated to Board members, and invitations to the social work profession extended through RELs. **Open.**

Action: Location details for all Board meetings to be updated.

- Action 17: Re-instating regional engagement and shadowing programme. The Board shadow/buddy programme with RELs had been stalled due to the pandemic. Participation Officer, Jack Harrison had scoped out a plan and this would also include members of the National Advisory Forum. Details to be circulated to Board members and National Advisory Forum members. **Open.**

Action: RELs and NAF buddying plan arrangements to be established with members of the Board.

- Action 33: The final iteration of the Framework Document had been tabled for the Board discussion at the private strategy meeting 21 January. This would be reviewed by the Board for approval by 27 January and then signed by the Chair and Chief Executive. It was anticipated that the Framework Document would be published prior to the next meeting with its publication publicly acknowledged at 11 March 2022 Board meeting. **Open.**
- Action 40: New committee terms of reference. Scheduled on the agenda item 9. **Action closed.**

Action: Plan to have all updated Board and Committee terms of references brought together in a single document.

- Action 41: 2020/21 Professional Standards Authority annual performance review update. Scheduled on the agenda item 5 Chief Executive's report. **Action closed.**
- Action 44: Meeting with NAF and Board members. Andrew McCulloch had attended the NAF meeting on 14 January 2022. It was agreed that Social Work England's Participation Officer would make the arrangements for future Board and NAF meetings in consultation with Executive Office Lead. **Action closed.**

4. Chair's Report - verbal

- 4.1 Regular meetings had taken place between the Chair and Chief Executive. The DfE had approved changes to terms of appointments to enable Andrew McCulloch to start his role as Deputy Chair from 1 January 2022. As Chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club many lessons were being learnt about organisational culture, this had led Lord Patel to reflect positively on the investment made by Social Work England into its culture.
- 4.2 The Chair referred to the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

5. Chief Executive's Report

Paper 03

- 5.1 The Chief Executive reported on the 2020/21 performance review by the Professional Standards Authority. Responses to the areas targeted for review would be shared with the Authority by the month end; final decisions by the Authority in relation to the review were expected week commencing 21 February 2022. Social Work England has engaged with the Authority on their proposed changes to their performance review process; the new process was expected to be adopted in April 2022.
- 5.2 Social Work England had contributed to the recent nationwide communications encouraging social workers to return to work using temporary registration. This had helped to mitigate concerns regarding workforce capacity for the sector during the Omicron variant of COVID 19.
- 5.3 Following the government's announcement regarding the end of plan B restrictions, Social Work England planned to return to its hybrid / smarter working model.

6. Quarter 3 Performance Report 2021/22

Paper 04

- 6.1 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement reported that overall, the quarter 3 performance was in line with expectations. Work towards setting the Key Performance Indicators for the business plan 2022/23 was well underway.

Registration, enquiries and advice

- 6.2 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal reported that the renewals and restorations had gone well. The team had maintained performance throughout this busy period, engagement with the sector had been successful and positive feedback had been received.
- 6.3 The Chair passed on thanks to the team for the smooth processing of renewals and restorations.

Fitness to Practise (FtP)

- 6.4 Executive Director, Fitness to Practise said that the results for quarter 3 were encouraging in respect of the reductions in the substantive caseload and exceeding the target for progressing legacy cases.

- 6.5 Achievement of targets for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) FTP1 'Number of open cases in triage stage' and FTP5 'Time taken to approve interim orders once the need is identified' had been affected by staff turnover and absences. Staff from other service areas had been redeployed to improve performance in quarter 4 against FTP1 and therefore it was anticipated that the year-end target remained achievable. Workforce planning was being undertaken to increase capacity in this service area by around 25% for the future.
- 6.6 As reported to the Board last November, FTP5 had been affected by the increase in new cases referred and this had continued in quarter 3. To mitigate, the plan was to increase capacity at the hearings stage in 2022/23 which would allow targeting towards the resolution of this work and significantly reduce the amount of review activity required from the hearings service. In quarter 3 a pilot was introduced on two-person panels and to optimise the use of meetings rather than hearings for certain types of cases. The outputs from the pilot were being analysed with a view to implement permanently. This will assist with the throughput of interim order cases.
- 6.7 The impact placed by the legacy cases on FTP4 'Time taken to conclude cases received since our inception following an investigation' was expected to reverse in the near future.
- 6.8 The Board was reassured by the review process and the decisions concerning in-year changes for Fitness to Practise that had been made.
- 6.9 The Chair thanked Executive Director, Fitness to Practise for the comprehensive report.

Strategy, Policy and Engagement (SPE)

- 6.10 Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement reported how busy this period had been for all teams working on registration, renewals and CPD; she gave her thanks for social workers' positive engagement in the process. CPD requirements for 2022 were more aspirational and would increase from the minimum amount of one recorded piece of CPD to two, including a requirement for peer reflection.
- 6.11 The policy team had launched an ambitious consultation programme last December; this would continue into next year. It was expected that the Board's involvement in this area would be through the new Policy Committee. Social Work England's consultation on the review and approval of the finalised AMCP (approved mental capacity professional) standards had been affected by the DHSC's timetable, though this was now expected to pick up in February 2022. Social Work England planned to publish revised course approval standards for AMHPs (approved mental health professionals) at the same time.
- 6.12 Four new members had been recruited onto the National Advisory Forum (NAF).
- 6.13 The Head of Equality Diversity and Inclusion was thanked for leading Social Work England's EDI Action Plan; this had been published on Social Work England's website on 17 December 2021. Input from the Board into the second interim Social Work in England report had been gratefully received and the report would be published by the end of the month.
- 6.14 The Board praised all the work and engagement involved in achieving the CPD target and driving up the level of aspiration for CPD.

Education and Training

- 6.15 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal said that the process of reapproving all currently approved social work courses had now started and was due to

complete by September 2024. The annual report on this year's monitoring of courses would soon be published.

People

- 6.16 Executive Director, People and Business Support reported that performance targets were mainly on track. Our internal communications had been vital in supporting connectedness whilst our people had been working from home.
- 6.17 Although the retention target was narrowly missed for this quarter, the year-end target was expected to be met. Despite significant efforts, we have not been able to recruit an IT developer. We are developing skill in-house, but this takes time.
- 6.18 A review of our fixed-term contracts has been undertaken as part of the planned conversion of fixed-term contracts to permanent roles. Internal consultation on the proposed increase to the pension contributions had received a supportive response so far. Following the consultation conclusion in quarter 4, any changes would be implemented from April 2022.
- 6.19 The IT team have progressed with Forge improvements and the planned development work was on track. The team's vigilance in maintaining our system availability whilst dealing with cyber security was also noted.
- 6.20 Whilst there had been a reduction in the number of corporate complaints received compared to the previous quarter, the complexity of corporate complaints has continued. Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal reported that targets were on track in responding to Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests. A detailed Information Governance report would be presented to the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee next month.

7. Finance and Commercial Report

Paper 05

- 7.1 Head of Finance and Commercial reported the additional funding from the DfE to support the reduction of the legacy caseload was now included in the spending plans for the remainder of the financial year; the original budget and full year forecast had been adjusted accordingly.
- 7.2 It is hoped that Ministerial approval for the second tranche of funding to support FtP may be received by the end of February.
- 7.3 Year-to-date revenue expenditure, net of fee income, was £258k lower than budget. It was expected that expenditure plans for quarter 4 would result in net expenditure returning to budget.
- 7.4 Year-to-date capital expenditure was £227k lower than budget. This variance was expected to balance out in the final quarter of the financial year as the IT team complete their procurement activity.
- 7.5 The full year outcome, for both revenue and capital, was forecasted to be close to budget.
- 7.6 The Board discussed the stability of the budget for the next 3 years. The Chief Executive said that the Grant in Aid settlement would protect the budget bottom line and fee income was

predicted to be stable. Longer term financial planning would accommodate capital development needs and any re-allocation of resources once the impact of FtP investment was realised

8. Fitness to Practise upstreaming progress update

Paper 06 and slide deck

8.1 Head of Policy, Head of Triage and Case Progression and Regional Engagement Lead (North East) gave a presentation on the progress to date. The project was created to focus, primarily, on understanding and responding to the disproportionate numbers of referrals Social Work England receives in Fitness to Practise that are not appropriate for investigation. Originally three phases were designed to :

1. Help members of the public intending to raise a concern to better understand the role of the regulator and regulatory investigation.
2. Optimise our fitness to practise activity, with a focus on triage decision making, in line with our commitment to fair, proportionate and efficient regulation.
3. Develop rich insight into the perceptions and experiences of members of the public raising a concern and inform robust and well evidenced change.

A fourth phase had been added later:

4. Enhance communication with the sector to ensure effective progression of casework.

8.2 The implementation phase had delivered a comprehensive redesign of the online concerns journey; has involved procuring research into public perceptions of our role as the regulator and public experiences in raising concerns about social workers; and has engaged with employers to develop a network of 'single point of contacts' in local authorities.

8.3 Early signs indicated that referral rates have been reducing, with evidence of a reduction in referrals from members of the public. Alongside the web improvements, engagement and system changes that have been introduced over the last few months, the project team observed that the project was having a positive impact. The team planned to do more work on measuring impact, including data coding different types of referrals to provide detailed trend analysis over the longer term.

8.4 The Chair thanked everyone involved in what was agreed to be an excellent piece of work that had potential to provide Social Work England with insight to protect the public.

9. Governance update

Paper 07

9.1 The new Policy Committee and the decision to upgrade the Remuneration Committee had been agreed at the Board awayday last October.

9.2 Mark Lam, Remuneration Committee (REMCo) Chair said there would be a further stage of redrafting the terms of reference for this committee before the March Board meeting.

9.3 Following scoping discussions with members of the Board, the Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement said that the main headlines of the terms of reference for the committee had been drafted. **The policy terms of reference and headlines for REMCo terms of reference were agreed**, subject to further drafting amendments to be agreed at the March meeting.

10. Any other business

10.1 The scheduling of the arms-length body Audit Risk and Assurance Chairs' meetings was discussed. Our sponsor team had been supportive of ensuring the meeting dates were agreed well in advance to enable ARAC chairs to schedule.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 11 March 2022 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 12.26pm

Summary of Actions

1. Location details for all Board meetings to be updated.
2. RELs and NAF buddying plan arrangements to be established with members of the Board.
3. Plan to have all updated Board and Committee terms of references brought together in a single document.