Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting Friday 20 May 2022

Agenda Item 02   Paper Ref 01

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
The Chair of the Board

Author
Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date
22 July 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 20 May 2022, 10.30am
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

Board Members:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair
	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Deputy Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	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	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	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
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
	Tracy Watterson	Executive Director, People and Business Support
Sponsor Team:	Louise Woodward	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sue Howson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Representative	UNISON
	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Berry Rose	Head of Triage and Case Progression
	Emily Star	Insight and Analysis Manager
	Hayley Kitchen	Triage and Investigations Officer
	Julie Guihen	Professional Case Examiner
	Katie Vandenbroucke	Senior Lawyer
	Ria Jones	Case Review Officer
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 There were no new interests declared.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting — Paper 01

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on Friday 11 March 2022 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log — Paper 02

3.1 The Chair reported on the action log. All actions closed since the last meeting were approved as follows:

- Action 45: Location details for all Board meetings to be updated. This information would be circulated by the end of March. We would continue to offer a 'blended' approach to include videoconferencing for any Board members not able to attend on site, and for guests and observers. Meeting dates had been published on our governance platform **Action closed.**
- Action 47: Executive Office Lead to update the register of interests. *Updated 23 March 2022.* **Action closed.**
- Action 48: Board members to email feedback or comments on the updated Terms of Reference to Executive Office Lead by 31 March 2022. *Updates received and actioned.* **Action closed.**
- Action 49: Chair to draft a paper requesting advice from DfE and DHSC on how to prepare for business continuity in the light of the Ukrainian refugee situation. *This had been superseded by DfE and DHSC guidance documents (Cyber security; Ukraine update) as emailed 28 March 2022.* **Action closed.**
- Action 50: Executive Office Lead to circulate the Internal Audit Strategy to the Board for sign off by correspondence. *Circulated 29 March 2022.* **Action closed.**
- Action 53: Head of Business Planning and Improvement to incorporate feedback and review timeline for consistency and KPIs for the business plan 2022/23. *Completed and published 8 April 2022.* **Action closed.**

The Chair noted that the open actions were on the agenda for discussion at the meeting:

- Action 46: Plan to have all updated Board and Committee terms of reference brought into a single document. The single document had been drafted to align with new Framework Document and was reviewed by the Board at the private strategy meeting 11 March 2022. The Board agreed to submit final comments by correspondence to Executive Lead in time for formal approval for the 20 May 2022 meeting. **Open.**
- Action 51: Policy Committee to prepare a short paper for the Board on the engagement approach with the National Advisory Forum. **Open.**
- Action 52: Policy Committee workplan to include deep dive topics for discussion at future Board meetings. **Open.**

4. Chair's Report - verbal

4.1 The Chair reported that as part of Social Work England's buddying scheme he had followed the progress of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) students in Middlesbrough over the last 9 months; they have now set up an academy. The Chair recommended that Social Work England hold a future Board meeting in Middlesbrough.

4.2 There had been a meeting between the Chair and Chief Executive and Will Quince MP, Minister for Children and Families, Department for Education. The Minister was well-informed and showed a positive interest in social workers; was keen to visit Sheffield to meet our people, National Advisory Forum (NAF) and local service providers.

4.3 The Chair of the Policy Committee, Andrew McCulloch, was thanked for his work in progressing the engagement with the NAF. The Chair was keen for Social Work England to support how under-represented groups could gain shadowing or apprenticeship opportunities to develop their governance experience. He had asked Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement to lead on this.

4.4 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee, Mark Lam, was thanked for leading the work in updating the terms of reference and reviewing the Chief Executive's and Executive Directors' performance. **The Committee's recommendations were approved by the Board.**

4.5 The Chair and Chief Executive agreed to keep Board members briefed on upcoming reports concerning the Child Protection in England report and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care child. The Chair and the Chief Executive had a visit planned to Bradford University. The Chair planned to meet with each Non-executive Director.

Action: Chair to have one to one meetings with Non-executive Directors.

5. Chief Executive's Report — Paper 03

5.1 The Chief Executive noted that this meeting focused on the final quarter performance reports. Overall, there had been a positive outcome in meeting key performance indicators and qualitative measures. Recruitment for the new Executive Director, People and Business Support Services had been successful; transitional plans were in place for September. Mark Lam, Chair of the Remuneration Committee thanked Tracy Watterson for her leadership and wished her well for the future.

5.2 The Chief Executive had met the new President of The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Steve Crocker. Meetings were planned with the President of Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), British Association of Social Workers and with the Chief Social Workers.

5.3 In response to the Chair's query regarding hybrid working, the Chief Executive reported that Social Work England had a set of principles that affirmed the office base as our core place of work while allowing for a high level of flexibility in how different teams and individuals approached their work.

6. Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report — Paper 04; Annex04a

6.1 ARAC Chair, Ann Harris reported that the digital services business case was presented at the last ARAC meeting. It was a compelling proposal and the Committee had agreed that it identified what the organisation required strategically. Feedback had been requested from Mark Lam. **The digital services business case was agreed by the Board in principle,** subject to any concerns that may be raised by Mark Lam following his review.

6.2 Overall adequate assurance had been received from the internal auditors on the 2021/22 audit plan. This was a sound end of year report for Social Work England.

6.3 There was a verbal annual Feedback and Complaints report to the Committee. Overall, feedback and complaints received had decreased, but those received were more complex.

6.4 The Data Protection Officer's Annual Report was positive. The overall positive culture of Social Work England had been noted in the report. The Chief Executive reported that the GDPR training programme for the Board was now available. **It was agreed that Board members should aim to complete the GDPR training before the 22 July meeting.**

Action: Executive Office Lead to provide Board members with access to the GDPR training so that it could be completed before the 22 July meeting.

7. Finance and Commercial Report — Paper 05

7.1 Head of Finance and Commercial reported that he was pleased the year end outturn was close to budget. The reallocation of budget underspends to the Fitness to Practise budget had been successfully managed. Overseas fee income had generated an overall increase to fee income for the year. The Chair of ARAC agreed that achieving a 1% variance, given the movement across the year, had resulted in a strong financial position for Social Work England.

7.2 The Chief Executive said that a budget variance of 1.5% had been agreed as the key performance indicator for 2022/23. The Grant in Aid letter had been received from the DfE. The Chair thanked the DfE for their continued support. **The Board agreed that the corporate strategy day should involve a discussion on Social Work England's capital strategy and budget.**

Action: Corporate strategy day to involve a discussion on Social Work England's capital strategy and budget.

8. Policy Committee Chair's Report — Paper 06; Annex 06a

8.1 The Policy Committee Chair recommended the quarterly horizon scanning paper, which was presented to the Policy Committee by the Policy Manager, should be circulated to all Board members; this was published on the governance platform. He reported that at their last meeting on 12 May, the draft of the 'readiness to practice' consultation document had been reviewed by the Committee and used to take a 'deep dive' into discussing the sector and regulatory approach to, and Social Work England's vision for, education and training. There would be a follow up informal meeting in July to inform the work on developing the corporate strategy.

8.2 Working with his regional engagement lead buddy, the Committee Chair reported on the valuable engagement opportunities with the Open University engagement forum; a meeting with Birmingham University was planned for June. He had met with the NAF on 19 May and consulted with them on the engagement proposal. The paper had been positively received by the NAF and the responsibilities entailed within the engagement proposal had been accepted by the NAF. It was proposed that 2 self-selected members of the NAF would sit on the Policy Committee; the Committee Chair would ensure they were inducted appropriately so that there was a shared understanding of the parameters of their brief and an effective utilisation of their skill. The NAF membership of the Policy Committee would be evaluated after 12 months. The Committee Chair proposed the engagement brief to the Board for approval. **This was approved.**

Action: Policy Committee Chair to ensure appropriate induction for NAF members to the Committee.

9. Performance Report Quarter 4 2021/22 Paper 07

9.1 Head of Business Planning and Improvement introduced the performance report. He reported that the organisation was largely on target at end of the year.

Registration and advice

9.2 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal reported that all targets for registration and advice had been met. He noted the pronounced increase in overseas applications to the register. Since the overseas applications take considerably longer to process, there would need to be careful balancing of managing overseas applications alongside the processing of UK graduate applications in quarters 1 and 2 of this current year. There had been a particular spike in applications from social workers based in South Africa, so efforts were being pursued to identify how best to work with the South African regulator. Social Work England's internal quality and improvement team would also be supporting overseas applicants by helping with the assessment of the robustness of overseas courses.

9.3 Limitations on the labour market were being noticed in the recruitment for the registration and advice team but there was no immediate impact.

Fitness to Practise

9.4 Executive Director, Fitness to Practise reported that key performance indicators FtP2 (number of open cases under investigation) and FtP3 (legacy cases progressed beyond investigation) had been significantly exceeded. He thanked the teams involved for their resilience in over exceeding their targets. Whilst the FtP1 triage target had just fallen short, lessons had been learnt by restructuring the service twice over the year and were being applied to how Social Work England uses its powers appropriately so that relevant cases can be progressed through triage within the 12-week target. The ongoing upstreaming local case management work was showing progress in how service level procedures were improving at a local level.

9.5 FtP5 (time taken to identify interim orders once need identified) had been a challenging target to meet due to a surge of cases and the follow on impact on the hearings service. With the introduction of two-person panels, the hearings case load had been brought down over the last 3 months. FtP6 (FtP internal quality score), our internal quality assurance target for decision making, had achieved its target with particularly strong performance in this quarter. The Decision Review Group (DRG) had been happy with 93% of cases reviewed. The Executive Director proposed to prepare a detailed paper on quality assurance for the July Board meeting. **This was agreed.**

Action: The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise to prepare a detailed paper on quality assurance for the July Board meeting.

9.6 The Executive Director noted that there would be a significant challenge over the next period to bring the case load down and to manage the service but the team was in a good place to achieve this. The KPIs for 2022/23 were ambitious and would shift the focus towards resolution of cases.

9.7 The Chief Executive reported that this would be the last Board meeting for the Executive Director, Fitness to Practise since he would soon be stepping down from this role. The Board thanked the Executive Director for his report and congratulated him and his team on the achievements in establishing the strong foundations for Social Work England's fitness to practise service and for bringing the legacy caseload down.

The Social Work Profession

9.8 Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement provided a summary of her report. The team were supporting the sector with the new requirements for 2 pieces of CPD; 2.5% of social workers had been selected for a review of their CPD submission. The second Social Work in England report had been published and planning for the final report had begun. Consultation was well underway on the rules and regulations and the new training and education standards for Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) and Approved Mental Capacity Professionals (AMCP). Preparations for a consultation on the guidance 'readiness for practice' were well under way and have been informed by a number of 'warm up' workshops, this is supported by Social Work England's vision for new education and training in social work. . Planning for next year's sector-led Social Work Week had started, as had work on developing our second corporate strategy.

The people we work with and for

9.9 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead had made significant progress on moving forward our EDI action plan. Social Work England was working with the sector to encourage social workers to provide their EDI data; our hosting of an anti-racism event in Birmingham in June was part of this promotion. This year's Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) assessment from the Employer's Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) had evidenced Social Work England's EDI performance had increased from 41% to 66% across all benchmarked survey results.

Education and Training

9.10 Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance and Legal said that the quality assurance process was well underway with the continued approval of new courses. The next quarter was expected to see an increase in activity of course approvals.

Our organisation

9.11 Executive Director, People and Business Support reported that the number of people returning to work in the office had continued to increase; our internal communications were keeping everyone up to date with the planned organisational changes. Recruitment and retention were a priority focus. Finance and commercial teams had achieved success in working with an external provider to recruit 65 partners for our legal services and 15 partners for education quality assurance. Work on reducing the number of fixed term contracts and our early intervention in supporting colleagues returning to work after sickness absence, were both progressing well. Whilst the last quarter had met its recruitment target, it was anticipated that market volatility would present Social Work England with more challenge in filling vacancies in the year ahead.

9.12 Work on Forge case management system had started; this would deliver administration efficiencies once completed. Work on cyber security and digital business continuity would be updated in the next quarter performance report.

9.13 The Board observed that there had been a continuous agile approach to recruiting and retaining our people and that this had been supported by the positive organisational culture. This had been successful year, led by a winning team, despite having to deal with the second year of the pandemic. It would be important to keep our people and culture strategy refreshed.

9.14 The Chief Executive provided assurance that in recognition that fixed term contracts were less attractive, the organisation was taking a longer-term view of how to plan and support future recruitment needs.

10. Terms of Reference — Paper 08

10.1 It was agreed that the terms of reference for the Policy Committee needed to be updated with National Advisory Forum representatives attendance at meetings and ARAC terms of reference amended to reflect that the Chief Executive attended meetings, but was not a committee member.

Action: Executive Office Lead to make amendments to the terms of reference.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Chair noted that the rescheduled corporate strategy session with the Board would take place on Thursday 21 July.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 22 July 2022 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 12.03pm.

Summary of Actions

- Chair to have one to one meetings with Non-executive Directors.
- Executive Office Lead to provide Board members with access to the GDPR training so that it could be completed before the 22 July meeting.
- Corporate strategy day to involve a discussion on Social Work England's capital strategy and budget.
- Policy Committee Chair to ensure appropriate induction for NAF members to the Committee.
- The Executive Director, Fitness to Practise to prepare a detailed paper on quality assurance for the July Board meeting.

- Executive Office Lead to make amendments to the terms of reference.