

Social Work England Board meeting

MEETING
22 March 2024 10:30 GMT

PUBLISHED
18 March 2024

Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 22 March 2024, 10.30 - 13.00

at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

AGENDA

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
		Welcome			Chair
1.	10.30	Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest	Verbal	To note/declare	Chair
2.	10.35	Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2024	Paper 01	To approve	Chair
3.	10.45	Matters Arising and Action Log	Paper 02	To discuss and note	Chair
4.	10.55	Chair's Report	Verbal	To note	Chair
5.	11.05	Chief Executive's Report	Paper 03	To discuss, advise and note	Chief Executive
6.	11.15	Policy Committee Chair's Report	Paper 04 *	To note	Policy Committee Chair
7.	11.25	Board Effectiveness Review (Internal)	Paper 05	To discuss, note and approve	Chair
8.	11.35	Board Effectiveness Review (External)	Paper 06 Annex 06a*	To discuss, note and approve	Chair, Red Quadrant
9.	11.45	Practice Education	Paper 07	To discuss and note	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement; Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
10.	11.55	Finance and Commercial Report	Paper 08	To discuss and note	Executive Director, People and Business Support; Head of Finance and Commercial
11.	12.05	Performance data quality assurance	Paper 09	To discuss, note and approve	Executive Director, People and

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
					Business Support; Head of Business Planning and Improvement
12.	12.15	Corporate Risk Register	Paper 10*	To discuss, note and approve	Executive Director, People and Business Support; Head of Business Planning and Improvement
13.	12.25	Business Plan 2024/25 (final draft)	Paper 11 *	To discuss, note and approve	Chief Executive, Executive Director, People and Business Support, Head of Business Planning and Improvement
14.	12.35	Budget 2024/25 (final draft)	Paper 12 *	To discuss, note and approve	Executive Director, People and Business Support; Head of Finance and Commercial
15.	12.45	Corporate Governance: terms of reference and policy update - Board and Committees terms of Reference - Board Code of Conduct Policy - Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy - Gifts and Hospitality policy	Paper 13 Annex 13a Annex 13b Annex 13c Annex 13d	To discuss, note and approve	Chair, Executive Director, People and Business Support, Corporate Governance Manager
16.	12.55	Any other business Carbon Literacy Training	Verbal	To discuss	Chair, Corporate Governance Manager
		Date of Next Meeting: Friday 17 May 2024		To note	Chair
	13.00	Meeting ends			

* Papers marked with an asterisk are 'private' to protect confidentiality according to our guidance for publishing board papers.



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LIST OF ATTENDANCE

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Interim Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive
Board Apprentice	Rachael Hood	Board Apprentice
Staff in Attendance:	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Berry Rose	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Natalie Day	Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Sponsor Team:	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Catherine Pearson	Department for Education (DfE)
	Brooke Parker	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Guests:	Janice Prentice	RedQuadrant
	Jo Clift	RedQuadrant
Public Observers:	James Wilkinson	Unison
	Laura Sheridan	BASW
	Paddy McIntyre	BASW
	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Simone Ferris	Hearings Officer, Social Work England
Minute taker:	Elizabeth Frier	Corporate Governance Manager

Minutes of the last meeting held on 2 February 2024

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Liz Frier, Corporate Governance Manager

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Decision

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance - Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting **for approval**
2 February 2024, 10.30-13.00
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Interim Chair
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Boardroom Apprentice:	Rachael Hood	Boardroom Apprentice
Social Work England staff in attendance:	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Berry Rose	Assistant Director - Regulation (Investigations)
	Joe Stockwell	Head of Registration and Advice
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement, and Insight
	Catherine Witt	Regional Engagement Lead – North East
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
	Jack Harrison	Participation Officer
Sponsor Team:	Brooke Parker	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Catherine Pearson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Brenda Fitzgerald	Department for Education (DfE)
	Siobhan Carson	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	n/a	
Minute taker:	Liz Frier	Corporate Governance Manager
Apologies:	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director

1. Welcome

- 1.1 Interim Chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Ann Harris.
- 1.3 The Chair introduced the new Board Apprentice Rachael Hood.
- 1.4 The meeting was quorate.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 27th October 2023 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log

Paper 02

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.
- 3.2 The Chair reviewed the action log. All actions closed at or since the last meeting were **approved** as follows:

Closed actions following the last meeting:

- **Action 84:** Chief Executive to update the Board on the budget position by December and to consider an ad-hoc Board meeting if the risk were to increase. *Revised end year forecast, and budget mitigation plan circulated to the Board in December 2023. Action closed.*
- **Action 85:** Executive Director, People and Business Support, to confirm if members from the National Advisory Forum participated in the digital user experience work. *Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement, and Insight updated that there had been a focus on preparing for the launch of our new user research database. This aimed to bring together a pool of user researchers that Social Work England could use to improve our digital services and specifically our concerns journey. The National Advisory Forum were aware of this work and had assisted in the initial stages. The forum continued to be supportive in helping to recruit more user research participants using their valuable contacts and networks. Action closed.*
- **Action 86:** Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the Terms of Reference to reflect the SID role and appointment. *The terms of reference had been updated and circulated to the Board. Action closed.*
- **Action 87:** Chief Executive to provide further details on the campaign 'to inform and educate people on the value of social work' to the Board once plans have been agreed. *An update to be provided at the meeting. Action closed.*

- 3.3 The progress on the open actions was noted:

- **Action 70:** Head of Finance and Commercial to plan an exercise to look at financial modelling for 24/25. *Following a detailed review of our budgetary needs we submitted three budget scenarios for the 2024/25 financial year to the DfE in December. Conversations with the DfE are continuing and we will present our 2024/25 budget to the board at its meeting in March. Further information regarding the budget process was included in the finance and commercial paper Action open.*

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4. Chair's Report

Verbal

- 4.1 The Interim Chair provided an update on the Non-executive Director and permanent Chair recruitment process and advised the Board that he was awaiting the outcome of the formal process of public appointments and clearance. Further recruitment would be required later in the year. Further information would be shared with the Board at a future meeting.
- 4.2 The Interim Chair had attended a meeting of the Chairs of health and care sector regulators, hosted by the Professional Standards Authority. Topics of discussion included:
- Fitness to practise backlogs
 - Difficulty in funding the processing of backlogs
 - Emerging issues in fitness to practise including social media.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive advised the Board that plans were in place to arrange a meeting for sector regulator Chief Executives and Chairs in the early spring/summer.
- 4.4 The Board **noted** the verbal update.

5. Chief Executive's Report

Paper 03

- 5.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of his report.
- 5.2 The Board were advised:
- This year had been the most successful renewals period following collaboration across the sector.
 - Standards for training and education were now complete for best interest assessors and approved mental health professionals and had been sent to the Department for Education for Secretary of State sign off.
 - The first annual survey for social workers would be launched in March 2024. The data collected would enable Social Work England to understand perceptions and develop benchmarking as per section 1.1 of the Business Plan.
 - Plans for Social Work Week included a campaign supported by Department of Education as part of 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. The focus of the campaign was to help educate and inform the public on the important role social work plays in society and this was in line with organisational objectives.
 - Business planning and preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts was underway.
- 5.3 The Board asked for clarification of the focus of the campaign. The Chief Executive explained the campaign would be generic and would emphasise the broad areas of practise within social work.
- 5.4 The Board **noted** the update and report.
- Action: Chief Executive to provide further details of the Social Work Week campaign once plans have been agreed.**

6. Policy Committee Chair's Report

Paper 04*

- 6.1 The Policy Committee Chair provided an overview of the key areas of his report.
- Early Career Framework – At the time of the meeting, decisions related to devolvement, training and delivery were still pending. This would continue to be a focus of discussions of the policy committee.

- Research – Three recently completed research studies into the perceptions of social work, the social work workforce, and practice education were due to be published together given the alignment of themes across each research piece. The research would also play a role in Social Work Week and would be an important tool in educating the public and the profession about social work. The Board were advised that the research would be shared with Board Members before publication.

6.2 The Board **noted** the update and the report.

Action: Assistant Director, Strategy and Policy to provide the Board with the research studies into the perceptions of social work, the social work workforce, and practice education before publication.

7. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report

Paper 05*

- 7.1 Executive Director, People and Business Support presented the report in the ARAC Chair's absence.
- 7.2 The Executive Director, People and Business Support reported that the National Audit Office had agreed to look at Social Work England's approach to last year's audit recommendations and confirm that the actions taken in response were appropriate as part of the interim audit taking place in mid-February 2024.
- 7.3 The budget was discussed by ARAC and it was noted that the Head of Finance and Commercial and team were working on ensuring there was a balanced budget by year end; however actions taken to ensure this had consequences. The impact included a reduction in legal fees, meaning fewer hearings, and a pause on recruitment. These would all have an effect into the 2024/25 business year. The vacancy pause had been fully risk assessed and was manageable, unfortunately the changes to the hearings schedule would impact further on timeliness next year.
- 7.4 RSM had reported to ARAC the final internal audit on the hearings process, which had received substantial assurance, and the draft internal audit plan for next year was reviewed. ARAC had requested that some dates were brought forward within the audit plan, and this was agreed. The Committee were assured that it was an appropriately risk-based plan.
- 7.5 The risk team were in the process of finalising the review of corporate risk register removing any duplicated risks and other risks that were being transferred to the operational risk register.
- 7.6 The revised risk register, 2024/25 business plan and the current risk appetite statement would be presented to the Board meeting on 22nd March 2024.
- 7.7 The Board **noted** the **update** and report.

8. Remuneration Committee Chair's Report

Paper 06*

- 8.1 The Executive Director, People and Business Support presented the report in the Policy Committee Chair's absence due to the end of his term as a Non-executive Director.
- 8.2 The Board were provided with the key outcomes of the 2023 staff engagement survey, the analysis and actions taken in response. (slides attached as appendix in agenda pack).
- 8.3 Findings included an engagement score of 70% which was slightly lower than last year. It was difficult to compare year on year results as the survey provider had changed the

formulation of the questions; however, it was acknowledged that there was a slight reduction in terms of positive engagement this year.

8.4 It was reported that there was a broadly similar pattern in responses compared to the previous year and a similar pattern compared with the benchmark group average.

8.5 Actions taken in response to the 2022 survey to understand, explore and address feedback had translated into improved results in those areas within the 2023 survey.

8.6 The 2024 survey would be launched in May 2024.

8.7 The Board **noted** the report.

9. Finance and Commercial Report

Paper 07

9.1 Head of Finance and Commercial reported that the management accounts for the year to 31 December were close to budget. There was a year- to- date overspend of £222k which was an improvement of £192k from the prior period due to the recently implemented financial mitigation plan. The level of fee income and external legal fees remained variable. Assumptions had been forecast in the budget and it was expected that no further mitigation measures, in addition to those already being implemented, would be required to return the level of expenditure to budget by the end of the financial year.

9.2 The Department for Education had requested three budget planning scenarios for the 2024/25 budget to inform their internal planning process.

- Reverting close to our original core funding level, which is less than current year's budget, with a minimal adjustment for known price increases and the 2023/24 pay award.
- Funding levels similar to this financial year.
- An increased level of funding to grow our level of regulatory activity, ensuring that the number of cases awaiting hearing would begin stabilising during the 2024/25 financial year.

9.3 Whilst Social Work England had yet to receive a formal reply to the budget proposals the Department for Education had indicated that scenario three was unlikely and given this uncertainty, preparations were being made for either of the first two scenarios. The outcomes would be presented to the Board in March 2024.

9.4 The Board noted the constraints and requirements within which Social Work England worked particularly in relation to the delays in hearings and agreed the situation was extremely challenging for all involved.

9.5 The Board expressed concerns about current financial modelling and the implications for future years. The Board requested details of how the challenges with funding would be addressed in the medium /long term and to include details of the effective use of resource and securing efficiency in the fitness to practice process. This would provide assurance for the Board for governance purposes.

9.6 The Chief Executive assured the Board that work was being undertaken on the potential for efficiencies including scenario planning. The timeliness of hearings was a concern for the organisation due to the impact on the lives of those involved and the need for trust and confidence in the regulatory process.

9.7 The Board was reminded that that Social Work England's statutory responsibilities in regulation accounted directly for 70% of the budget and the two sources of income were

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grant and aid funding and fee income. Discussions were ongoing with the Department of Education in relation to grant in aid funding and any proposals to increase in fee income would require consideration and discussion with the sector.

9.8 The Board **noted** the report.

Action: Executive Director, Regulation to provide the Board with a broader critical view of how the challenges with funding would be addressed in the medium /long term to include details of the effective use of resource and securing efficiency in fitness to practice.

10. Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24

Paper 08

10.1 The Head of Business Planning and Improvement introduced the report which set out performance against the business plan and KPIs for quarter 3.

Prevention and impact

10.2 The Chief Executive advised the Board that Sarah Blackmoore, Executive Director Professional Practice and External Engagement would be returning to work on a phased basis and introduced Natalie Day, Assistant Director Policy and Strategy.

10.3 The Assistant Director Communications, Engagement and Insight highlighted:

- A successful renewals process, with increased stakeholder buy in and comprehensive engagement activity. There had been fewer requests for bespoke, regional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and registration renewal sessions. This suggested there was now a greater understanding of registration renewal and CPD requirements.
- Social Work England had delivered a conference session at Community Care Live 2023, answering questions about the organisation and gathering vital insight from stakeholders.
- By the end of Q3, recruitment had taken place for new national advisory forum members. Using a targeted approach, social work students were recruited. The organisation now has access to expertise from the private, voluntary and independent sectors of the profession.
- A social work annual survey had been developed to understand and track social worker perceptions and confidence in Social Work England and in the profession.

10.4 The Chief Executive updated the Board on plans to implement and launch the readiness for professional practice guidance in the summer. Work was ongoing to ensure alignment with the Early Career Framework.

10.5 The approach to education inspection was continuing to be streamlined and an evaluation would inform decisions about the process going forward. The timeline for inspections had changed and the new target for completion of the first cycle was December 2024 to allow for additional capacity to be made available for new course approvals.

10.6 The Chief Executive further reported that Social Work England were working with the children's residential care sector to produce a paper on the possible future regulation of the children's residential care workforce in response to the recommendation in 'Stable homes built on love' and the registration of that workforce. The paper would inform the Department for Education's decision making should it wish to implement the

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recommendation. The paper would be ready for consideration by the Board in mid-February 2024.

- 10.7 The Board acknowledged the approach to inspections and the positive outcomes of this and noted that a light touch regulatory approach to children's residential social care work force registration was important.

Regulation and protection

- 10.8 Executive Director, Regulation, reported that the registration renewal process had been a success and he wished to express thanks to all involved particularly to the registration and advice team which had been using new ways of working.
- 10.9 Overseas applications continued to be focus of the team and a paper outlining the continuing activity to manage international applications was included at Item 11 of the Board agenda.
- 10.10 Executive Director, Regulation, outlined the challenges in triage and investigations during Q3; there had been an increase in the volume of concerns received. Vacancies and absences had affected the ability to investigate triage concerns however the quality of triage decision making remained strong.
- 10.11 Investigations timeliness was affected by the delays in triage. Managers were supporting investigators to move cases through as quickly as possible. Challenges included engagement of social workers and their employers within the process and the ability to gather the information needed from external partners including employers, the police, and the courts. A range of actions were being implemented to address these issues.
- 10.12 The Board were provided with details of the quality assurance activity. The internal quality and improvement (IQI) team had conducted an audit of accepted disposals decisions, which provided an outcome of adequate assurance. The IQI team also conducted an audit on the overall decision-making process for case examiners, which provided substantial assurance. During Q3, an internal audit was conducted in relation to the hearings process, and this returned a finding of substantial assurance.
- 10.13 It was further reported that the time taken to approve Interim Orders remained on target.
- 10.14 The Board asked how the organisation was measuring quality and performance in fitness to practice in relation to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
- 10.15 In response the Executive Director, Regulation advised the Board that work had been undertaken to understand the diversity of social work registrants inside the process and through quality assurance, particularly the information gathered by the decision review group, there was a strong focus on EDI. Further analysis was taking place to explore the reasons for disparities within the process.
- 10.16 The Board acknowledged the work being undertaken and emphasised the need for EDI training to continue to be undertaken by all those involved in the fitness to practice process. It was agreed that Adi Cooper would have a separate conversation with Executive Director, Regulation about EDI training, quality assurance and how consistency of good values-based decision making is achieved.

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Delivery and improvement.

10.17 Executive Director, People and Business Support, reported that:

- The objectives relating to quality assurance were complete.
- Work was continuing to improve the approach to user research and to inform the future digital strategy. Although the rating was red, progress had been made in establishing foundational arrangements however until internal capacity could be strengthened the objective would not be achieved this year.
- The People Strategy objectives were rated amber although substantial progress was being made in a number of areas. Further progress would continue before the year end.
- The second cohort of the positive action mentoring programme had been launched.
- The benchmarking results from the first 'Race at Work' submission produced positive results.
- Leadership development was proceeding as planned and the roll out of development sessions for all managers within the organisations had been agreed.
- The value for money report was on track to be completed by the end of quarter 4 and would be further developed over the course of the year.
- The Sustainability Plan objectives in Year 1 were on track to be delivered and the Sustainability Group had completed carbon literacy training.
- Social Work England had become aware of an error in sickness data reporting due to a technical issue. This had resulted in the underreporting of sickness absence since April 2022. The error had been corrected and the new process of reporting would be rigorously assessed, and the corrected sickness data would be presented at the next Board meeting March 2024. In addition a report would be presented at the March Board meeting to provide wider assurance around KPI reporting.

10.18 The Board asked why career progression scored relatively poorly within the Race at Work charter assessment. The Executive Director, People and Business Support, advised the Board that this related to the availability of diversity data. Social Work England was actively working on the collection of diversity data of employees.

10.19 The Board noted the steady increase in sickness absence compared to the previous year, and asked what may be causing this. The Executive Director, People and Business Support advised the Board that further analysis would be undertaken on patterns of sickness absence once the reporting was confirmed to be accurate and a report would be submitted to the next Remuneration Committee. However, the increase related primarily to long-term absences and these individuals had been well-supported.

10.20 The Board **noted** the report.

Action: The Executive Director, Regulation to arrange an offline discussion with Non-executive Director Adi Cooper in relation to EDI and Fitness to Practice quality assurance.

Action: The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Board to provide assurance on KPI reporting of sickness absence and other indicators for the 22 March meeting.

Action: The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Remuneration Committee on 26 April 2024 providing sickness absence analysis.

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11. Overseas Applications

Paper 09

- 11.1 The Executive Director, Regulation introduced the report. The volume of applications from overseas applicants had caused additional strain on the ability of the registration and advice service to balance their workload over the course of the registration year. A number of activities had been undertaken to manage overseas applications within the resource envelope that was available. The detail was provided within the report.
- 11.2 Despite the volume of overseas applications, the department had continued to deliver against regulatory timescales and key performance indicators.
- 11.3 The Board acknowledged the work undertaken and the complexities of the process. It was agreed that communication with relevant stakeholders was paramount, and it would be useful for Social Work England as a regulator to look to examples of good practice - for example Local Authorities that have actively recruited from overseas and provided a thorough induction process and guidance.
- 11.4 The Board suggested that collaboration with organisations such as British Association of Social Workers, Association of Directors of Social Services, and the Local Government Association would help to inform the processes for overseas applications.
- 11.5 The Board **noted** the report.

12. Any other business

Proposal for reciprocal partnerships between Social Work England's Board and National Advisory Forum members

Paper 10

- 12.1 The Participation Officer and Regional Engagement Lead (REL) presented the report.
- 12.2 At a workshop between the National Advisory Forum (NAF) and the Board in October, feedback and reflections had been shared on experiences of the previous Buddying scheme as well as comments about how improvements could be made in the next iteration.
- 12.3 It was proposed to re-name the scheme 'Reciprocal Partnerships' and that the aim would be to build relationships between Board members and the NAF to the benefit of Social Work England.
- 12.4 The Board welcomed the report, agreed that the scheme should be implemented as soon as possible and appointed Adi Cooper as the Board link.
- 12.5 The Chair asked that formal meetings with NAF were included in the Board work programme and a lunch time session was to be arranged between the Board and members of NAF in person.
- 12.6 The Board **agreed** the recommendations in the report.
- Action: The Corporate Governance Manager to ensure meetings with National Advisory Forum are included in the Board work programme and an in-person lunch time session is arranged between the Board and members of National Advisory Forum.**

Social Work Week

Paper 11

- 12.7 Assistant Director Communications, Engagement and Insight presented the report which provided an update on the Social Work Week 2024 programme.
- 12.8 Highlights of the week included:

- Sessions hosted by the Principal Social Workers Network, Care Quality Commission (CQC), regulators from across the UK, and voices of international social workers and those with lived experience.
- Co-produced sessions with people who access social work services including Social Work England's National Advisory Forum
- Wider representatives from across the sector including researchers and education providers who will be delivering sessions on education and social work.

12.9 The Board enquired if there was scope for members to be involved in the activities around Social Work Week as it was important that Board members were visible and involved in events organised by Social Work England.

12.10 The Board were advised there were opportunities for members to be involved and it was agreed to discuss Board participation offline.

Action: Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement, and Insight to provide Board Members with opportunities for participation in Social Work Week 2024 sessions.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 22 March 2024 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.16pm.

Summary of Actions

- Assistant Director, Strategy and Policy to provide the Board with the research studies into the perceptions of social work, the social work workforce, and practice education before publication.
- Executive Director, Regulation to provide the Board with a broader critical view of how the challenges with funding would be addressed in the medium /long term to include details of the effective use of resource and securing efficiency in fitness to practice.
- The Executive Director, Regulation to arrange an offline discussion with Non-executive Director Adi Cooper in relation to EDI and Fitness to Practice quality assurance.
- The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Board to provide assurance on KPI reporting of sickness absence and other indicators for the 22 March meeting.
- The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Remuneration Committee on 26 April 2024 providing sickness absence analysis.
- The Corporate Governance Manager to ensure meetings with National Advisory Forum are included in the Board work programme and an in-person lunch time session is arranged between the Board and members of National Advisory Forum.
- Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement, and Insight to provide Board Members with opportunities for participation in Social Work Week 2024 sessions.

* Papers marked with an asterisk are 'private' to protect confidentiality according to our guidance for publishing board papers.

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Summary of Actions from Board meetings up to 22 March 2024

Agenda Item 3 Paper Ref 02

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
The Chair

Author
Sophie Rees Rumney, Executive Assistant

Date
22 March 2024

Reviewed by
Colum Conway, Chief Executive

This paper is for
Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective
SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite
Governance and compliance - Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
N/A

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1. Summary

The actions below provide an audit trail of items closed at or since the last meeting on 2nd February 2024. Actions still in progress or yet to complete since the last meeting are listed on the log that follows.

Closed actions following the last meeting:

- **Action 88:** Assistant Director, Strategy and Policy to provide the Board with the research studies into the perceptions of social work, the social work workforce, and practice education before publication. *Executive Assistant circulated the research studies to the Board on 8 February 2024. Action closed.*
- **Action 90:** The Executive Director, Regulation to arrange an offline discussion with Non-executive Director Adi Cooper in relation to EDI and Fitness to Practice quality assurance. *The Executive Director, Regulation and Non- Executive Director Adi Cooper met on 8 March 2024 to discuss. Action closed.*
- **Action 94:** Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement and Insight to provide Board Members with opportunities for participation in Social Work Week 2024 sessions. *Sessions were identified and offered to Board members. In addition, all Board members were given the opportunity to sign up to Social Work Now, the e-bulletin for the sector. Action closed.*

Actions pending sign off at the 22 March 2024 meeting:

- **Action 70:** The Head of Finance and Commercial to plan an exercise to look at financial modelling for 2024/25. *Following a detailed review of our budgetary needs, Social Work England submitted 3 budget scenarios for the 2024/25 financial year to the DfE in December 2023, with conversations with the DfE ongoing. The 2024/25 budget will be presented to the Board at the 22 March 2024 meeting. Action closed.*
- **Action 91:** The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Board to provide assurance on KPI reporting of sickness absence and other indicators for the 22 March meeting. *This paper will be presented to the Board during the 22 March 2024 meeting. Action closed.*

Updates on open actions are noted in the action log that follows.

2. Action required

The Board is asked to note the progress against the actions.

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Social Work England Board Action Log

Action no.	Date of Meeting	Action	Owner	Due By	Update	Next review	Status
89	02/02/24	The Executive Director, Regulation to provide the Board with a broader critical view of how the challenges with funding would be addressed in the medium/long term to include details of the effective use of resource and securing efficiency in fitness to practice.	Executive Director, Regulation	22/03/24	Work is ongoing to prepare our value for money report which will set out more comprehensive information about our effectiveness, efficiency and future plans.	17/05/24	Open
92	02/02/24	The Executive Director, People and Business Support to prepare a report for the Remuneration Committee on 26 April 2024 providing sickness absence analysis.	Executive Director, People and Business Support	26/04/24	This report will be presented at the 26 April 2024 Remuneration Committee meeting.	17/05/24	Open
93	02/02/24	The Corporate Governance Manager to ensure meetings with National Advisory Forum are included in the Board work programme and an in-person lunch time session is arranged between the Board and members of National Advisory Forum.	Corporate Governance Manager	22/03/24	Feedback received from NAF. Corporate Governance Manager to discuss a meet and greet on 10 th July 2024 with Board Members and dates to be agreed for in person sessions.	17/05/24	Open

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CEO Report to the Board March 2024

Agenda Item 05 Paper Ref 03

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Colum Conway

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Introduction

My report for this meeting is relatively brief, it is more of an update to the CEO report at the last meeting. The focus of the past few weeks has remained on areas mentioned at the last meeting – business plan 2024/25, budget scenario planning 2024/25, preparing for year end 2023/24, preparing for Social Work Week including the public communications campaign that informs and educates on the role of social work in England, the education quality assurance programme of inspections and approvals and the ongoing analysis of case management in fitness to practice.

Much of the work on the business plan 2024/25 and the budget 2024/25 is on the agenda for discussion and approval at this meeting. Thank you to members of the Board for reviewing drafts of the documents in between meetings. The leadership team are keen to continue to work with the Board through the year on developing clearer and more quantifiable success measures for our performance reporting.

The finance and commercial report includes an update on the challenge presented this year to ensure we arrive at a breakeven financial position by the year end 2023/24, something we have reported on in previous meetings.

We submitted our outline scoping paper on the registration of children's residential care workforce at the end of February, thank you to Board members for their review and comments on the paper. There are no further developments at this time.

To note we are expecting the Professional Standards Authority periodic review of our performance 2022/23 to be published shortly, we will ensure to notify the Board once it is available.

We will be discussing the Board effectiveness review at our meeting today, as the only executive member of the Board I was pleased to be part of the review process and I think the recommendations will help us grow and develop as a Board over time. As the saying goes, the road to quality is always under construction!

2. Social Work Week

At the time of writing this report we are in the final stages of preparation for Social Work Week. At this stage we have just over 11,000 tickets booked for the sessions across the week. I hope we are reporting a successful event at this Board meeting and congratulating the team on the quality of the work they have put into planning and delivering the week of events.

Alongside Social Work Week, we have launched our inform and educate communications campaign, 'Change the Script'. The campaign has arisen out of recommendations from the children's social care review 'Stable Homes Built on Love', has been supported directly by the Department of Education (DfE) and is aligned with our key objective - to promote

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public confidence in social work. The campaign is informed by the recently published perceptions research which we carried out earlier in the year. Running the campaign in a short burst allows us to pilot, learn and create a solid evidence base for any future public facing activity of this nature. We will update the Board on the evaluation of the campaign, what we have learned and if there is likely to be any future phases of this type of campaign.

3. Workforce Round Table

In February we had the latest in a series of meetings with key representatives from across the social work sector. While we have been facilitating these meetings for some time this meeting acted as a follow up to a workshop meeting held at DfE in January hosted by the Association of Professors of Social Work. The meetings are an opportunity to discuss some of the issues that are having an impact on the profession as whole and consider ways in which activities can be aligned to greatest effect. We are planning a further workshop in May/June.

4. Education and Training

Our Education Quality Assurance (EQA) inspection activity is progressing well. Approving education and training programmes against our standards is a key part of our regulatory role in social work.

We have worked well alongside providers to use the inspection process as a way of supporting development and enhancement, and we have on occasion taken more robust steps with programmes when we considered it is necessary. The EQA inspection activity will run for the rest of this calendar year to ensure every social work qualifying course will have received at least one inspection which helps provide a comprehensive picture and assurance of the quality of social work training.

We are planning to carry out a review of the EQA findings to assess what we have learnt about the nature of education and training of social work in England and to consider how best to take forward the EQA process into the future. The review will be informed by our Education and Training Advisory Forum who will also assist with the development of a broader strategic approach for Social Work England to education and training in social work. This will also be a key focus for the Policy Committee in the year ahead.

To note the 308 education and training programmes across England have all been communicated with through our annual monitoring process.

Without wishing to pre-empt the EQA review one key area for further development in education and training is the nature and quality of practice placements. Of central importance to the practice placement is the role of practice educators and at our meeting today we are highlighting the outcome of our research on practice educators and how we might plan to develop this role into the future.

A focus for the work of the Education and Training Advisory Forum has been the development of our Readiness for Professional Practice guidance which is due to be

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published later this year and we will work with the providers on how they may implement the guidance within their programmes.

5. Conclusion

I think it is interesting to note that some of the areas I have focused on in this report have arisen as a result of the research we completed through the year and recently published on the workforce, on perceptions and on practice educators. It is important that the research we do and the data analysis we have is having an impact on our activity and is informing our decisions and direction of travel.

We have always promoted the value of collaboration across all the key stakeholders in social work and regulation. Internal collaboration across the organisation is also a corner stone of the culture of Social Work England. The recent work on our budget and business planning has been a real example of the quality of collaboration within the organisation.

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6. Annexe

Annex 1: Chief Executive's meetings

Chief Social Workers Office at Department Health and Social Care

Chief Social Worker – Children's

Association of Chief Executives Conference

Institute of Regulation Conference

Director General Families at Department of Education

Skills for Care Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy Steering Group

Principal Social Workers Network at ADSS

International Social Work Regulators Network

CEO Social Care Wales

CEO Scottish Social Services Council

CEO Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

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Board internal self-evaluation 2023/24

Agenda Item 7 Paper Ref 05

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
The Chair of the Board

Author
Andrew McCulloch

Date
22 March 2024

Reviewed by
The Chair of the Board

This paper is for
Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective
SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite
Governance and compliance - Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
N/A

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1. Summary

This paper reports the results of the 2023 Board internal self-evaluation carried out in September and October 2023. The Board will be aware that Red Quadrant are currently undertaking an external evaluation of the Board. It was not thought appropriate to suspend our annual self-evaluation, but instead the full results of this have been made available to Red Quadrant. This paper also discusses possible action we could take to improve Board functionality, but largely speaking it is logical for all but urgent action to await the appointment of a new Chair (currently under consideration by Government) and to be considered alongside the Red Quadrant report so that a single agreed action plan can be produced responding to both evaluations and with input from the new Chair. Feedback from the Board would be useful now as well as identifying the key actions we consider important.

2. Methodology

A questionnaire was circulated to all Board members (including the exec member and the Chair) by the interim Chair. It has now been completed by all members and analysed by the Chair who has relevant research expertise. The questionnaire - which is an amended version of the one used in previous years by SWE - was revised by the Executive Director, People and Business Support and the Chair. Board members' comments are unattributable, but the raw anonymised data is available for Board members and the external evaluator on request and has since been provided to the external evaluator.

3. Quantitative analysis

The table at Annex A presents the average scores from respondents. Scoring was on a 5 point Likert scale so 1 is the lowest possible and 5 highest possible score. Any average of 4 or above shows very limited concerns in that area, but that does not mean there is no room for improvement.

Many of these results are either self-explanatory or need analysis in the light of qualitative feedback. However, it is worth noting that whilst the Board consider functionality very good both in the Board and the Committee structure there were some significant areas of discomfort or areas where the Board needs to consider improvements and these would appear to be:

- (a) Board composition/size
- (b) Division of responsibilities between the Board and Exec
- (c) Role of the Board with regard to stakeholders
- (d) Strategic focus.

All these issues are clarified by the qualitative feedback and indeed have been raised with the Chair privately in some shape or form in recent months. They will be considered further below.

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4. Qualitative feedback

There were quite a few positive comments about how the Board and the Committee work has developed, and about how papers and other elements of functionality have improved. All Board members seem to find working with colleagues (exec and non-exec) comfortable. And in many cases there were no comments on some sections where colleagues had scored all 4s and 5s so we can assume a good degree of satisfaction in those areas.

Significant areas for consideration and possible improvement were as follows, with the number of respondents making similar points noted:

More strategic focus required, Board too operational x5

No or few Board members with lived experience of social work x3 (but note it is hard to assume the level of individual or family contact with social work as this does not need to be disclosed – but we don't have this explicit role)

Worries about succession planning especially around key skills e.g. digital, regulation or skills gaps e.g. education x3

Private sessions without the exec needed x3

More challenge needed from all Board members x3

Not enough communication of ad hoc issues or updates between meetings x3

Board and Committees are small making workload or reliance on individuals high and skills thinly spread x2

Clearer statement of Board vs Executive responsibilities needed x2

Strategic planning and objective setting needs further work x2

Not clear what contact the Board should have with stakeholders x2

Hybrid meetings less effective than face to face x2

Relationship with the National Advisory Forum (NAF) needs to be strengthened x2

Reports on stakeholder views too positive, need to know their concerns x2

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) needs tech skills

Scope of profession (client groups, policy domains, practice environments) a challenge for the Board

Feedback from regional events needed

Many of these comments are self-explanatory and can be discussed both within the Board and within the context of the external evaluation report to generate improvements. Some of the individual comments can also be grouped under a major theme (e.g. skill mix). The author/Chair's own perspective on the key themes is as follows:

(a) Strategic focus

This is perhaps the critical issue which relates to a widely shared view within the Board. There is more than one strand to it. One strand is that although the Board find the strategy days useful they perhaps do not dig deep enough and then the strategic focus needs to be sustained throughout the year. This is made difficult by public meetings (strategy discussion needs thinking the unthinkable and can set hares running or can simply be impossible in public) that are hybrid. Private sessions are more suitable but are fairly short and are often loaded with business issues that require private discussion. One solution would be to have a six monthly review as well as a strategy day and also to have more dedicated agenda time, whether public or private to strategic matters. The other strand is dissatisfaction with the strategic planning process which results in good strategic statements for public consumption but less than a full measurable strategic plan in the normal business sense, despite progress being made on performance measurement.

(b) Board composition

Most Board members have some degree of discomfort with this issue, not least because we are one NED short at present and have 2/3 retirements coming very shortly. The Board is small anyway and does not include all the key skills and knowledge required. Lived experience is noted but education is a partial gap as well. Committees are also small and one person being sick or unable to attend creates risk and there are no “spare” NEDs to fill gaps. This is an area of high risk for the Board over which it has little control but some influence.

(c) Stakeholders

This is not necessarily a major weakness, but the Board is unclear on what is expected here and wishes to receive better information about concerns expressed by stakeholders and perhaps more regular contact or feedback from the NAF. It should be possible to address these concerns through an open discussion about expectations and a few simple actions.

(d) Board/Exec responsibilities

This is an area which needs to be revisited now the organisation is maturing to be crystal clear about the role of the Board. A lot of papers come to the Board for information and few for decision. Greater clarity about which decisions are made by the Board would be helpful as well as an annual forward plan on decision items coming forward at Board meetings (which can change but would be a helpful road map). This could usefully be implemented now.

(e) Challenge

This final area of importance did not come through clearly from the quantitative data. There has been a good tendency for the Board to be very supportive during the start up process and in establishing the excellent culture and team. Now it is possible to think about increasing the level of appropriate and constructive challenge across the NEDs as a whole but this is something that requires open discussion in 121s and private sessions with and without the CEO.

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5. NED evaluation process 2023

The individual evaluation process for all NEDs was also completed during the autumn/winter of 2023/24. Feedback from individual NEDs about Board functionality and training needs was in line with that reported in the internal and external evaluations, particularly with regard to putting in place an induction process which is already in hand.

6. Conclusion

The results of the survey are very encouraging especially in regard to process and how we are all working together. It is also clear that we have dealt effectively with some concerns that arose in earlier years about issues like quality of papers and information for the Board. This is a firm foundation for improvement in the areas identified which need to be addressed by the Board and by the external evaluation. I hope this material will also be of value to the new Chair and NEDs who will come onto the Board next year. Board members are asked for their feedback, particularly on the 5 key issues identified above. These can be considered alongside the results of the external evaluation and the plan will be to develop an integrated action plan to address both sets of findings.

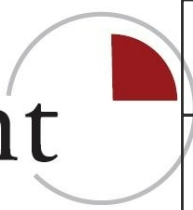
Andrew McCulloch, Interim Chair, October 2023

Annex A: Quantitative results from the survey

QUESTION	AVERAGE SCORE	COMMENT
STRUCTURE Q a	4.3	
PERFORMANCE		
Q b COMPOSITION	3.7	
Q c COMMITTEES	4.1	
Q d DIVERSITY	3.9	
RELATIONSHIPS Q a EXEC	4.1	
Q b RESPONSIBILITY	3.6	
Q c DELEGATE	4.4	
Q d OVERSIGHT	4.0	
Q e CHALLENGE	4.1	
Q f RELATIONS	4.7	
Q g COMMUNICATION	4.3	
KNOWLEDGE Q a	4.3	
UNDERSTANDING		
Q b SKILL MIX	3.9	
Q c GOVERNANCE	4.4	
RELATIONSHIPS Q a TEAM	4.7	
Q b CONSTRUCTIVE	4.7	
Q c EMPOWERED	4.6	
Q d STAKEHOLDERS	3.9	
PROCESS Q a TIME	4.9	
Q b PAPERS	4.7	
Q c AGENDAS	4.3	
Q d ISSUES	4.4	
Q e TIME USE	4.7	

Q f FREQUENCY	4.6	
Q g MANAGEMENT	4.6	
Q h DECISIONS	4.7	
Q i FOLLOW UP	5.0	
Q j CHAIRING	4.9	
STRATEGY Q a OVERSIGHT	4.1	
Q b EVALUATE	4.0	
Q c PUBLIC FIRST	4.1	1 OUTLIER RESPONSE
Q d IDENTIFY	3.9	
Q e STRATEGY TIME	3.7	RANGE OF RESPONSES
Q f STRATEGY DAYS	4.0	
RISK Q a INFORMATION	4.4	
Q b NOTIFICATION	4.3	
Q c SYSTEMS	4.6	
Q d REPUTATIONAL RISK	4.4	
Q e MONITOR	4.4	
Q f Col	4.7	
STAKEHOLDERS Q a CONCERNS	3.9	
Q b FEEDBACK	3.9	
COMMITTEES Q a INFORMATION	4.7	
ARAC Q a ToR	5	ONLY 4 RESPONDENTS ON ARAC
Q b COMPOSITION	4.0	
Q c RESOURCES	4.8	
Q d AUDITORS	4.5	
Q e ACCOUNTS	5	
Q f RISK	4.8	
Q g LENGTH	5	
REMUNERATION Q a ToR	5	ONLY 4 RESPONDENTS ON REMCO
Q b SKILL MIX	4.3	
Q c RESOURCES	5	
Q d CEO	4.5	
Q e INFORMATION	4.8	
Q f LENGTH	5	
MEMBER EVALUATION	6 YES, 1 NO	NO – NEEDED MORE TIME WITH CHAIR
EVALUATION FORM	6 YES, 1 NO	NO – TOO LONG AND REPETITIVE

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Independent Board Effectiveness Review

For Social Work England

Findings and
recommendations

March 22 2024

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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

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Current strengths



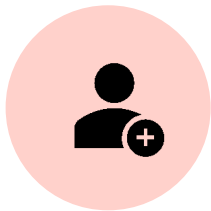
Continuity maintained since Chair's departure



Communications, papers & analysis provided to the board have improved



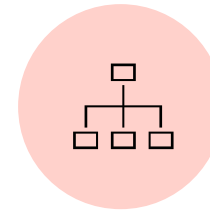
Chairing



National Advisory Forum buddying scheme appreciated



Relationships between board members and the executive



Committee structure is appropriate and fit for purpose



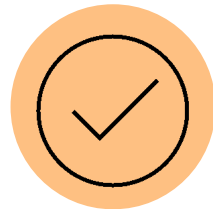
ARAC is a high performing committee

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Areas to focus on



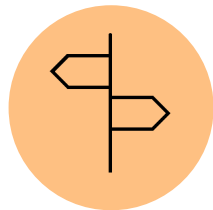
Enhancing the role of the Policy Committee



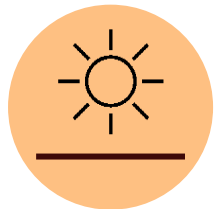
Clarifying the specific role of the Board – particularly in relation to the profession



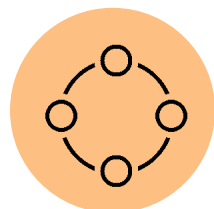
Increasing the number of board members



Focusing on a set of key measures that allow success of the organisation and the strategy to be monitored;



Two strategic events per year for the board to set and review strategy



Increasing the board's constructive challenge of the executive



Building the board's skill set following NED departures in 2023/24

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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Clarity of the board's role

- Help the board to clarify its role, particularly regarding its strategic challenge and oversight of the executive, and vis a vis the social work profession.
- Provide an opportunity for NEDs to talk as a group with the Chair and CEO to get a sense of developments in the business/sponsor dept/wider environment.
- Monthly communication to NEDs with key policy/operational developments to help them keep in touch between meetings.
- Chair to hold one-to-one meetings with NEDs on a regular basis particularly for new NEDs.
- Ensure that the revised induction takes account of the Whitehall environment that SWE sits within and that visits set up by SWE's regional engagement leads are maintained.
- Continue to provide board/executive/NAF 'buddies' for new NEDs.

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Board operation

- The number of NEDs to be increased (e.g. by two).
- Consider recruiting in the medium term a NED whose experience includes some lived experience of social work.
- Create an 18 month forward look for board meetings and committees. This should also timetable papers for decision as opposed to information.
- Face to face attendance at board meetings to be strongly encouraged.

Culture relationships and engagement

- As there has been a high turnover on the board recently, we recommend a team building event be included within one of the strategy events.
- Hold alternate board meetings in different locations to take the opportunity to engage with local stakeholders.
- Timetable two board dinners per year (one to include the senior executive team).

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Strategic foresight and performance

- Improve strategic planning through six monthly (private) off-site strategy events. Alternate strategy sessions should include a focus on horizon scanning and the risks for the organisation.
- Board members to agree the key questions to address at the strategy events, so that there is a sense of co-production with the executive.
- The board to continue to develop the performance measures underpinning the strategic objectives

Board committees

- Enhance the role of the Policy Committee.
- Make the papers and minutes from ARAC and the Policy Committee available to all board members.
- Discussion of the risk register and strategic risk at alternate board meetings.



Practice Education

Agenda Item 9 Paper Ref 07

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

Author

Katie Newbould, Head of Policy

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Natalie Day, Assistant Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO4: Ensure all social work students receive comprehensive and consistent education and training, in a supportive and inclusive learning environment to prepare them for practice.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

We recently commissioned research into practice education in England, which has been shared with the Board and will be released as part of Social Work Week. This paper supports the research by providing a high-level overview of our knowledge of practice education and practice educators, and our ambitions for the future.

2. Action required

To note.

3. Commentary

Our role in education and training

Part of our role is to assure the public's confidence that all social workers receive comprehensive initial education and training in a supportive and inclusive learning environment. It is our responsibility to ensure that social work courses meet the required standards in order to equip students with the knowledge, values, skills and behaviours to meet the professional standards and register to use the protected title of social worker, confident and prepared to start their career.

Our existing regulatory activity is a strong baseline for this, and we see clear strengths in the sector. However, persistent challenges continue to pose hurdles to achieving consistent experiences for students and readying newly qualified social workers for practice.

The role of the practice educator

All social work students in England are required to spend 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. We expect each student to have placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences, and a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient statutory social work tasks involving high-risk decision making and legal interventions. These requirements are set out in our 2021 [education and training standards](#).

Fundamental to practice placements is the role of the practice educator who teaches, supervises, and assesses students on their placements. We expect education providers to ensure that practice educators are on the register, and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.

Practice educators play a crucial role in overseeing the safety of a student's practice on placement, as well as assessing a student's competence and suitability to progress through their initial training.

The practice education landscape

From our recent research we know that in some areas there are effective local networks in place supporting the delivery of practice education, often underpinned by an experienced and motivated workforce. There is also appetite for change, including regulation, oversight, and standardisation to ensure greater consistency in the practice education system.

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Practice educators described their role as rewarding, complex and challenging. They were keen to emphasise the positive benefits of direct work with students and intrinsic rewards of the role, including personal growth and a chance to directly shape and influence the profession. Practice educators reflected positively on opportunities to work collaboratively with course providers on other aspects of qualifying social work programmes, such as their involvement in admissions, teaching and assessment.

Being social workers themselves, practice educators are subject to the same workforce issues being faced across the whole social work profession. This is particularly acute in local authorities, which intersects with our requirement for social work students to undertake at least one placement in a statutory setting. In addition to this, the practice educator workforce risks precarity, as there are several internal and external factors which pose risks to the retention of experienced practice educators.

From our research into practice education in England, course providers recognised the value of the practice educator role and advocated for greater recognition for practice educators, including improved remuneration and workload relief. Course providers highlighted the high workload faced by practice educators in local authorities as a challenge to their recruitment and retention, and the impact of practice educator numbers on placement sufficiency.

Discussion with employers further identified that practice education is perceived as providing a vital pipeline for the recruitment of future social workers, with students bringing fresh knowledge, positive challenge and insight into teams. However, a lack of resources within organisations coupled with limited workload relief for practice educators could limit an organisation's capacity to provide placements, or to provide the support needed for students with additional needs. In addition, the lack of national oversight and the localised nature of practice education systems creates significant variability in the provision of practice education and the support available to practice educators, making it difficult to ensure consistency for students.

There was consensus among practice educators that they were increasingly required to work with students with ever more complex needs, including mental health conditions and neurodivergent students. Some practice educators described feeling insufficiently equipped to work with students with complex needs. Some students have also highlighted concerns related to equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, the limited number of practice educators from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and how this is perceived by students from those backgrounds.

Practice educators recognise the importance of their role for improving recruitment and retention in the wider workforce, sustaining practitioners in practice, and driving up standards. However, the hidden emotional labour within the role, the strain of working with students who are at risk of failing, and lack of protected caseloads is a persistent challenge. Overall, practice education helped social workers feel that they were making a meaningful and lasting contribution to the profession.

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Our relationship with practice educators

We currently have no explicit relationship with practice educators beyond their social work registration, nor with the organisations providing practice educator training. At present, practice educators work to the practice educator professional standards (PEPS), held by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care recommended that we take on a greater role in overseeing practice educators and their work.¹ Given the central role practice educators play in the development of the future workforce, we agree that it is important we develop a closer relationship with them, assuring their training, supporting their practice, and ensuring the ongoing suitability and competence of social workers who take on this role. From our engagement, we understand that practice educators would like a closer relationship with us and greater recognition of their role.²

Our ambitions for the future

In pursuing necessary changes and improvements to initial education and training, we hope to contribute to a streamlined landscape of increased clarity for providers, students, employers and the public. However, we do not own all of the frameworks and guidance that exist in the education and training landscape, and to safely achieve a streamlined environment, we may need to find effective integration with existing frameworks.

We have developed new guidance on 'readiness for professional practice' which will set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that students will be expected to demonstrate by the point of graduation (linked with the professional standards and aligned to the apprenticeship standard for social work).

We are continuing to learn from the reapproval cycle and our ongoing inspections of qualifying social work courses in England. We plan to undertake an analysis of inspection findings in the next financial year.

We will consider options for the future regulation of practice education and practice educators informed by our recent research, learning from other regulators, and engagement with key stakeholders, including our Education and Training Advisory Forum. There are several regulatory options for us to consider and some of these options may require changes to our rules and/or regulations. We will need to consider the resources any change may require and the costs they will incur, as well as whether the options are proportionate, risk-based and in the public interest. Options could include:

- Annotation of the register.
- Additional standards for practice educators.
- New education and training standards for the courses that train practice educators.
- Continuing professional development requirements for practice educators.
- Amendments to our education and training standards for qualifying courses.
- New guidance for course providers.

¹ The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care, p.186 \(May 2022\)](#).

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4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

We intend to commit in the 2024/25 business plan to develop a model of regulating specialist and advanced practice, which would include practice education. We will keep the Board informed of our work in this area as it develops.

5. Annexes

N/A

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Finance and Commercial Update

Agenda Item 10 Paper Ref 08

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

Richard Simpson, Head of Finance and Commercial

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Financial governance - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

This paper provides an update on the following:

- Year to date management accounts for the period ending 29 February 2024, including an updated full year forecast.
- An update on our preparation for the 2023/24 financial year end audit
- An update on commercial activity

2. Action required

For discussion and noting.

3. Commentary

Management accounts

A summary set of the Management Accounts for the year to 29 February 2024 can be found in Annex A. Key highlights are as follows:

Year to date expenditure, net of fee income, is £10,276k compared to the budgeted amount of £10,157k. This represents a year to date overspend of £119k which is an improvement of £295k from the year to date position at the time of the implementation of our financial mitigation plan, 31 November 2023.

Whilst we anticipate an outcome for the year to be a small revenue underspend of c£2k there are a number of variables in March which are outside of our control. These include the amount received from overseas applicants to join the register, which can vary significantly from month to month as well as litigation cost. We have made realistic provision for these in our forecast.

Year to date capital expenditure is £2,047k, which is £32k higher than the year to date budget. This is a reduction of £57k compared to a year to date overspend in the prior period. We expect a continued slowdown in capital expenditure in March and anticipate a small underspend of £8k at the end of the year.

Preparation for the 2023/24 financial year external audit

Our preparation for the year end audit is well advanced and the interim audit was completed in February. Whilst the National Audit Office (NAO) have not provided a written report on the outcome of the interim audit we have received verbal assurance that the work they have undertaken has not raised any concerns.

We have previously informed the Board of the actions we were taking in preparation for the audit, and we remain on track to complete these in advance of the year end. The current status of each of the actions is provided below:

- We have completed the transition to a new fixed assets register for IT equipment and have provided a copy to the NAO for their review.
- We have updated our systems and processes for producing financial information for the annual report and accounts (ARA) including the financial statements as well as the remuneration and staff section of the ARA. These have been trialled successfully.

- We have commenced the recruitment process for a senior finance and payroll officer, and we are hopeful that the successful candidate will be in place during the audit in May and able to provide additional capacity. We had hoped to fill the post in April, however we were unable to find a suitable applicant.

Commercial update

We have prepared our first Modern Slavery statement which we plan to publish on our public website in April following internal review. Using the Home Office modern slavery risk assessment tool, we have undertaken a review of all existing contracts and are undertaking further due diligence for a small minority of suppliers who operate in areas where the risk is deemed to be higher. Going forward we will undertake this review annually and will factor in modern slavery selection criteria in all relevant tenders.

As reported to the Board at its last meeting, we will bring a business case to the audit and risk assurance committee (ARAC) in May for the procurement of transcription services. We will also provide ARAC with a report on the implementation of our 2023/24 commercial plan and provide an update regarding the new Procurement Bill and its potential impact to our procurement processes.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

N/A

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5. Annexes

Annex A – Management accounts at 29 February 2024

Income and Expenditure Statement

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Variance
Fee Income	(9,256,337)	(9,651,354)	(395,017)	(10,605,000)	(10,094,490)	(510,510)
Executive Leadership Team						
Wages & Salaries	492,084	462,304	(29,780)	504,814	538,120	(33,306)
Support	26,009	9,167	(16,842)	10,000	27,580	(17,580)
Total	518,093	471,470	(46,623)	514,814	565,700	(50,886)
People & Business Support						
Wages & Salaries	2,123,260	2,214,988	91,728	2,435,835	2,231,049	204,786
Support	2,196,945	2,192,110	(4,836)	2,423,029	2,472,465	(49,436)
Total	4,320,206	4,407,098	86,892	4,858,864	4,703,514	155,351
Regulation						
Wages & Salaries	5,458,316	5,365,698	(92,617)	5,850,773	5,933,010	(82,237)
Support	6,740,297	6,836,246	95,949	7,464,440	7,140,732	323,708
Total	12,198,612	12,201,944	3,332	13,315,213	13,073,742	241,471
Professional practice and external engagement						
Wages & Salaries	1,925,714	1,886,780	(38,934)	2,063,578	2,102,512	(38,934)
Support	570,466	841,726	271,261	925,529	719,269	206,261
Total	2,496,180	2,728,506	232,326	2,989,107	2,821,781	167,326
Total Expenditure	19,533,091	19,809,019	275,928	21,677,999	21,164,737	513,262

Net Revenue Expenditure
Depreciation/Amortisation
Net Expenditure inc Depreciation
Capital Expenditure
Total

10,276,754	10,157,665	(119,088)
1,875,766	1,981,833	106,067
12,152,520	12,139,499	(13,021)
2,047,435	2,014,833	(32,602)
14,199,956	14,154,332	(45,623)

11,072,999	11,070,247	2,752
2,162,000	2,055,933	106,067
13,234,999	13,126,180	108,819
2,199,000	2,191,000	8,000
15,433,999	15,317,180	116,819

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Balance Sheet

	Cost £	Depreciation £	N.B.V £
Fixed Assets			
Buildings	1,264,299	(913,239)	351,060
Lease - right of use	986,710	(345,502)	641,209
IT Equipment	1,196,619	(887,041)	309,579
Fixtures & Fittings	321,359	(318,851)	2,507
Intangible	7,807,986	(1,821,863)	5,986,123
Asset under construction	2,609,797	0	2,609,797
	14,186,770	(4,286,496)	9,900,274
Current Assets			
Prepayments			1,350,135
Bank			4,229,635
			5,579,769
Current Liabilities			
Accruals			(842,180)
Deferred Income			(4,215,111)
Trade Payables			(337,145)
Payroll Control			(328,555)
			(5,722,990)
Working Capital (Current Assets less Current Liabilities)			(143,221)
Non-Current Liabilities			
Lease liabilities			(728,673)
Dilapidations provision			(135,542)
			(864,215)
Total Assets and Liabilities			8,892,838
Taxpayers Equity			(8,892,838)



Performance data quality assurance

Agenda Item 11 Paper Ref 09

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

Andy Leverton, Head of Business Planning and Improvement

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Processes - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1. Summary

This paper details the work we are doing to improve our data architecture and the controls we have in place to ensure the quality of our performance data. We describe the journey of developing of our reporting mechanisms and the next phase of our plans.

We also set out the factors that led to an error in our sickness reporting, that we discovered in January 2024, to illustrate why this work is needed and the additional steps we have taken to ensure confidence in our KPI reporting.

2. Action required

The Board is asked to note, discuss and advise on the content of this paper.

3. Commentary

During the set-up phase and in the first few years of our organisation, our priority was to build reporting mechanisms quickly so that teams had the necessary information to assist them in managing their operations. This meant building reports based on a replica of the data stored in our case management system (Forge) and other systems, rather than a more sophisticated data architecture, such as a [data warehouse](#) or a [data lakehouse](#). We had neither the time nor the resource to consider building and servicing a data warehouse before the start of our operations.

As we have matured as an organisation, the complexity and depth of our data and reporting has increased. The need for a data warehouse or similar solution to better manage our reporting has become more pressing. Without a data warehouse, many of the calculations within our reports have needed to be overly complex, which creates potential for error. We began to explore in 2022 how to address the risks associated with the absence of a suitable data architecture.

Improving our data quality, governance and technology are key strands of our data and insight strategy, which we published internally in summer 2023. Work to achieve this has been ongoing since the second half of 2022 and will continue throughout 2024-25.

Whilst this work continues, we recognise that there continues to be some degree of risk in relation to our performance reporting. We mitigate this risk through frequent review and testing, but the risk of error in our current reporting set-up can only be fully mitigated by changes to our data architecture. We recently identified that this risk of error had materialised in one of our KPIs.

Error in sickness reporting

In January 2024, we identified a problem with our sickness absence KPI - the mean number of days lost per person to sickness absence over the past 12 months. By looking at sickness absence over a 12-month period, we can benchmark with the public sector average provided by the ONS.

We identified that work schedules from our HR system, Enable, had stopped exporting after a person left the organisation. As a result, when we updated the sickness absence statistics each month, any absence that had previously been included in our calculations was excluded after people had left the organisation.

The potential for this error arose primarily due to the limitations of our data architecture, which requires complex adjustments to extract and report on data held on 'live' systems.

Other contributory factors were:

- limited knowledge of the Enable system when we first built the sickness reporting;
- the testing approach, which verified the report's accuracy at a snapshot in time;
- this indicator not being easily comparable with routine sickness absence monitoring data.

We immediately amended our reporting mechanism, so that it now includes the absences for those who have left the organisation. We have audited the newly calculated report and are confident the figures are accurate. We will repeat the audit in 3 months to confirm the data remains reliable and accurate.

This means that we have been under-reporting levels of sickness absence since April 2022. The extent of under-reporting has increased over time, as the cumulative impact of leavers increased.

See table 1 and table 2 below for a complete picture of these differences.

Table one: 2023-24 figures for the number of days lost to sickness per employee over the previous 12 months

2023-24	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Corrected figures	6.3	7.8	8.3	tbc
Previously reported	4.3	4.8	6.0	n/a

Table 2: 2022-23 figures for the number of days lost to sickness per employee over the previous 12 months

2022-23	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Corrected figures	4.8	5.1	5.9	6.1
Previously reported	3.4	3.9	4.6	3.8

We knew that our sickness absence levels had been increasing, but the error meant we did not recognise the true rate of increase and that this was above our benchmark. The significant factor behind our increased sickness absence levels has been a rise in long term absence. This has been due to a small number of very long-term absences, predominantly due to pre-existing conditions that we have been supporting individuals with. We understand the reasons for each long-term sickness absence in depth and personalised support has been given to support a sustainable return to work. People continue to be appropriately supported and long-term absence has reduced since Q2, 2023-24 although there has been more seasonal illness during Q3.

In light of the higher rate of sickness absence we have now identified, we will review and re-prioritise our approach to absence management. There is no impact on our ability to manage individual sickness absence effectively. We continue to provide one to one support, using our wellbeing tools and occupational health to allow sustained return to work.

Our plans to improve our data architecture and strengthen data and reporting quality controls

We recognised back in 2022 that we needed to initiate work on our data governance and our data architecture. We have been progressing this work since then, through our data and insight strategy.

A key long-term requirement is the ability to store data in static tables and readily access historical data. This will significantly reduce the potential for system changes or anomalies to affect what we report and will reduce the need to run complex and time-consuming queries on raw data.

By improving our data architecture, through the implementation of a [data lakehouse](#), we will be able to store historical data on static tables, simplify our data queries, reuse standardised calculations across reports and increase the efficiency and reliability of our reporting mechanisms. The new data architecture will also provide improved options for data governance and quality monitoring.

The funding for this work has now been approved and it commenced in March 2024. We expect the new data architecture to be implemented throughout 2024-25.

In addition, we have developed a specific plan to improve data quality and data governance.

The following actions set out what we are doing in the short (phase 1), medium (phase 2) and long-term (phase 3) to assess data quality and reporting accuracy and provide additional

assurance. There are interdependencies and competing priorities across the organisation which could affect timescales, particularly where system development is required.

Most of the actions in phases 2 and 3 were envisaged when we developed our data and insight strategy and set out in our plans to improve data quality and governance. We have added some further short-term actions in light of learning from the recent sickness reporting issue.

Phase 1: January to February 2024 - complete

- Review all KPIs and assess the level of confidence we can have in current reporting

Action taken: We have completed a review and risk assessment of how each of our KPI figures is calculated. Through this work, we have confirmed that the data we use to report on each KPI is being correctly extracted and calculated. We have also identified further improvements that we can make to our reporting methodology in Q1, 2024/25 and in the longer term through ongoing developments to our data architecture and Forge.

- Review and consider amending the risk (PBS07) in our operational risk register about the potential for incomplete data or errors in reporting to undermine our decision-making and identify effective mitigations.

Action taken: We have amended this risk to focus on the adequacy of the data and analysis to support decision making, and added a new, separate risk focusing on the data quality and potential for errors. We will continue to monitor these risks as part of our internal risk management processes.

Phase 2: March to June 2024

- Complete the short-term improvements to our KPI reporting identified through our phase 1 review and risk assessment, where this is not dependent on system changes or data architecture
- Establish a regular testing schedule of our sickness statistics using a random sample of approximately 10% of all employees on each working pattern.
- Collate known challenges and complexities in validation of Forge data and develop a prioritised plan to implement improvements.
- Review where we can incorporate more supporting indicators in our internal monthly performance reporting to support more comprehensive checking between the data and insight team and operational teams.
- Continue to prioritise training for the data and insight team to improve knowledge and skills around report design and maintenance in Power BI, associated testing approaches, and how this might be affected by future changes to data architecture.

Phase 3: July 2024 onwards

- Risk assess all externally facing data and produce a briefing paper for an ARAC deep dive, outlining any identified risks and mitigations.
- Based on our risk assessment, work through our functional area Power BI reports, to ensure that all methodology and data is thoroughly and robustly tested and make any improvements that may be required.
- Develop and document a clear and consistent approach to testing and validating our data and reporting, in alignment with the improved data architecture, reusable datasets and new reporting suite.
- Review and improve our existing control reporting to automatically identify statistical anomalies and data completeness issues.
- Review agreed practices and principles for data governance within the data and insight team, as well as embedding best practice for data governance in Power BI.
- Use the planned internal audit on data and reporting in 2025/26 to evaluate our progress.
- Consider whether it would be beneficial to seek a peer review to provide additional assurance of the data validation and reporting approach for any of our KPIs (e.g. this could be carried out by another regulator's data and insight team)¹
- Implement our agreed data lakehouse solution along with the creation of reusable datasets to support reliable and accurate reporting.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Whilst we aim to avoid errors in our reporting, the error in sickness reporting has caused us to reflect on, and further supplement, our existing plans to improve data quality and reporting controls. We have identified additional actions we will take to improve the controls we have in place.

The proposed short, medium, and long-term actions will mitigate vulnerabilities, improve data quality, and simplify reporting mechanisms. Our work on data architecture is a central part of these improvements.

¹ We commissioned a review of our data architecture in phase 1 of our work with Cognizant. This set out a series of recommendations to improve our structures, which we are in the process of implementing. We will review as part of this action what additional value a peer review could bring.



Corporate Governance: Board terms of reference and policy update

Agenda Item 15 Paper Ref 13 and Annex 13a

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Elizabeth Frier

Date

22 March 2024

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

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

Governance and Compliance – Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1. Summary

In accordance with good corporate governance practice Social Work England conducts an annual review of the Board and Committee terms of reference and board-related policies. These documents have been reviewed and updated to ensure they align with our Framework Document, official guidance and best practice.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Board and Committees are supplied as a single document and are now due for review and reapproval by the Board.

The Board terms of reference are largely unchanged, they include the appointment and responsibilities of the senior independent director role that was agreed during the year.

Following an effectiveness review in October 2023 the **Remuneration Committee** requested various amendments to its **terms of reference** which have been incorporated within annex 13a. These focus on:

- Clarifying the Committee’s responsibilities regarding assurance and advice to the Board in relation to:
 - remuneration and performance.
 - People and culture
- The Committee’s annual meeting cycle
- Reference to the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Related Policies

The related policies that are due for review and reapproval at this time are:

- **Board code of conduct policy**

Amendments to this policy are mainly to:

- Replace “Executive Office Lead” with “Corporate Governance Manager”
- Register to be held and maintained by Executive Office (deleting previous reference to the Chair).

- **Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy**

Amendments to this policy are:

- Replace “Executive Office Lead” with “Corporate Governance Manager”

- **Gifts and hospitality policy**

Amendments to this policy include:

- New references to advise against accepting hospitality during a procurement process.

- Replace “Executive Office Lead” with “Corporate Governance Manager”
- Amendments to wording and presentation throughout following a review by our communications team, these are presentational and do not affect content or meaning.

The updated terms of reference and related policies will be published on Social Work England’s website or intranet as appropriate, following reapproval by the Board.

2. Action required

The Board is invited to review and approve the terms of reference and policy documents contained in the annexes that follow.

3. Annexes

Annex 13a: Board and Committees terms of reference

Annex 13b: Board code of conduct policy

Annex 13c: Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy

Annex 13d: Gifts and hospitality policy

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Terms of Reference

Social Work England was established under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (“the Act”) to be a new single-profession regulator for social workers in England. It is a separate legal entity, administratively classified by the Cabinet Office as a non-departmental public body (“NDPB”) and operates at arm’s length from Government.

Social Work England was established on 1 April 2018. It took on its regulatory functions on 2 December 2019.

Social Work England regulates all social workers in England.

The Board is the governing body for Social Work England.

Purpose

The Board provides leadership, direction and a steer on the overall strategy for the organisation. It is responsible for overseeing the full range of Social Work England’s regulatory functions, including setting professional standards and standards for education and training for all social workers; establishing and running a fitness to practise system; and holding a register of social workers in England. The Board ensures effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control.

Responsibilities

The Board’s specific responsibilities include:

- establishing and taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of Social Work England consistent with its overall strategic direction in its corporate plan
- providing effective leadership of Social Work England within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enables risk to be assessed and managed
- ensuring the financial and human resources are in place for Social Work England to meet its objectives
- reviewing management performance against Key Performance Indicators and other deliverables
- ensuring that the Board receives and reviews regular financial and management information concerning the management of Social Work England
- ensuring that the Board is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of Social Work England’s Board or on the attainability of its targets, and determining the steps needed to deal with such changes and where appropriate bringing such matters to the attention of the Secretary of State and Principal Accounting Officer via the executive leadership team, sponsor team (DfE) or directly

- ensuring that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with the DfE, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds (Annex A); and that, in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account guidance issued by the DfE
- supporting the executive leadership team in the development and effective use of a data and insights strategy as part of our business plan objectives
- ensuring that as part of the above compliance it is familiar with:
 - the Framework Document,
 - any delegation letter issued to Social Work England
 - any elements of any settlement letter issued to the DfE that is relevant to the operation of Social Work England
 - any separate settlement letter that is issued to Social Work England from the DfE, and
 - that it has appropriate internal mechanisms for the monitoring, governance and external reporting regarding any conditions arising from the above documents and ensure that the Chief Executive and Social Work England as a whole act in accordance with their obligations under the above documents
- demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including by using the independent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to help the Board to address key financial and other risks
- assessing and approving risk appetite annually
- advising the Secretary of State annually on the remuneration of the Chief Executive giving due weight to the proper management and use and utilisation of public resources.
- appointing, with the Secretary of State's approval, subsequent Chief Executives
- contributing to the annual evaluation of the performance of the Chair, to be led by the DfE
- determining all such other things which the Board considers ancillary or conducive to the attainment or fulfilment by Social Work England of its objectives, and
- establishing and maintaining a publicly accessible register to list all the interests of its Board members.

Therefore, the Board will ensure effective arrangements are in place to:

- Provide strategic direction and challenge to the Chief Executive, and through the executive leadership team, in running the organisation.
- Ensure Social Work England's strategic direction and corporate objectives are in line with our overarching objective, the protection of the public.
- Provide assurance and ensure effective systems are in place for managing performance, risk, governance and internal control.
- Maintain probity in, and public accountability for, the exercise of Social Work England's functions and the use of public funds.

Membership

The Chair and non-executive members are appointed by the Secretary of State under paragraph 2, Schedule 3 of the Act. These appointments are subject to the [Public Appointments Order in Council](#) 2019 and as such must comply with the [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). All such appointments should have regard to the principle that appointments should reflect the diversity of the society in which we live, and appointments should be made taking account of the need to appoint boards which include a balance of skills and backgrounds.

The Secretary of State may remove a member, by notice in writing. Appointment processes will be carried out in line with the [Governance Code for Public Appointments](#). The Board operates in accordance with the [Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance](#).

The membership of the Board consists of:

- The Chair
- The Deputy Chair
 - Non-Executive Directors, one of whom will be an appropriately qualified finance director as described in Annex 4.1 of [Managing Public Money](#).
 - appointed by the Chair to undertake the role of Senior Independent Director (SID), with the specific responsibilities detailed at Annex B.
- The Chief Executive

There are three sub committees made up from the members of the Board: the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, the Remuneration Committee and the Policy Committee.

Social Work England will comply with all the requirements for an NDPB and the principles of good governance for public bodies in ensuring that non-executive members will always be in the majority on the Board. This is to ensure that the organisation's executive is supported and constructively challenged in their roles.

Decision-making

Decisions by the Board are normally be made by consensus and in accordance with the [Social Work England Board Code of Conduct](#).

The decisions made by the majority of Board members will be considered as if made by the whole group. Decisions and actions will be recorded within the minutes of the meeting. While the Board may make use of committees to assist its consideration of appointments, succession, audit, risk and remuneration it retains responsibility for, and endorses, final decisions in all of these areas.

Where there is disagreement between the relevant committee and the Board, adequate time should be made available for discussion of the issue with a view to resolving the disagreement. Where any such disagreement cannot be resolved, the committee concerned should have the right to report the issue to the sponsor team, Principal Accounting Officer, and Secretary of State. They may also seek to ensure the disagreement or concern is reflected as part of the report on its activities in the annual report.

Meetings

Meeting arrangement are as follows:

- the frequency of Board meetings is aligned with the requirement to review performance, strategy and work on board development
- the Chair, or Chief Executive, may convene additional meetings, including strategy meetings, as they deem necessary
- the minimum number of non-executive members for the Board to be quorate is 3 plus the Chair, or if delegated, the Deputy Chair
- Board meetings will normally be attended by the executive leadership team and the sponsor team (DfE)
- other members of Social Work England's staff may be invited to attend the Board meetings as and when required
- as part of our commitment to openness and transparency, members of the public are welcome to attend and observe Board meetings held in public. Places for members of the public to attend Board meetings as a guest will be allocated on a first come first served basis and will be limited according to capacity.

Reporting and Administration

The Executive Office will provide the secretariat function for the Board. Papers for all Board meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The minutes of all Board meetings will be recorded including the recording of decisions made by the Board.

The minutes of the meetings and papers, as appropriate, will be published on the Social Work England website.

The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair and Deputy Chair. The Chair, or if delegated, the Deputy Chair, is asked to agree the minutes before they are presented to the Board for approval at the following meeting.

Access

The internal auditors, external auditors or their representative and the Sponsor Team will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Board.

Information requirements

After the end of each financial year, the Board must prepare and publish an Annual Report and Accounts. This sets out its activities together with an account of corporate governance in its annual governance statement, including the Board's assessment of its compliance with the Corporate Governance in [Central Government Departments Code of Good Practice](#); and its audited accounts

Review and Evaluation

The Chair will review the effective working of the Board and its members on an annual basis as set out in the [Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance](#). The Chair will usually do this annually, with an externally facilitated board evaluation conducted at least every three years, in line with the [UK Corporate Governance Code](#) (Provision 21).

The terms of reference of the Board shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Annex A

Matrix A – Purchases	
Maximum authority levels (including VAT)	Role of authoriser
£10,000	Budget Holder
£25,000	Head of Function
£100,000	ELT Director
£500,000	Chief Executive
£500,000+	Board
Unbudgeted expenditure within agreed DfE budget allocations	Chief Executive
Unbudgeted expenditure out with agreed DfE budget allocations	Board and DfE together
Notes: 1 Authority levels represent the gross value of an order (including VAT) or contract rather than value of individual invoices. 2 Business cases are required for amounts of £25,000 and above.	

Annex B

Senior Independent Director (SID): Role and responsibilities

- To work closely with the Chair, acting as a sounding board and providing support
- To act as an intermediary for other non-executive directors on the Board as and when necessary
- To be available to key stakeholders and other non-executives to address any concerns or issues they feel have not been adequately dealt with through the usual channels of communication (i.e. through Board meetings, or through the Chair or chief executive officer)
- Dealing with any complaints about the Chair, or dealing with any matters where the Chair has a conflict of interest and has recused him/herself
- To act as decision maker for complaints or other matters, as may be requested to support the Chair and/or maintain their independence to hear an appeal
- To support with succession planning, recruitment and induction for the Chair's role and for other non-executive directors as may be required
- To contribute to the Chair's annual appraisal if this is requested by DfE



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Last reviewed: February 2024

Next review date: February 2025

Signed off Board:

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board has established an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as a sub-committee to support them in their responsibilities for providing assurance in the areas of audit, risk management, governance and internal control.

Responsibilities

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee provides assurance to the Board and Accounting Officer on:

- the strategic processes for risk management, governance, levels of assurance activity and the annual Governance Statement
- the accounting policies, the accounts, and the annual report of the organisation
- the Scheme of Delegation and in line with this, proposed expenditure over £500,000
- management's letter of representation to the external auditors
- planned audit activity and results of both internal and external audit
- adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter
- assurances relating to the management of risk including data protection risks and compliance with data protection obligations, and corporate governance requirements for the organisation
- our approach to managing sustainability risks, and making appropriate disclosures, in line with relevant standards such as the Greening Government Commitments and the [Government Financial Reporting Manual's Sustainability Reporting Guidance](#).
- the proposals for tendering and appointment of internal auditors or for purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services
- the strategy, remuneration and the work of the National Audit Office for the audit work undertaken on the annual accounts
- compliance with [Government Financial Reporting Manual](#) and [HMT Managing Public Money](#), anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes, and arrangements for special investigations.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The membership consists of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director who is neither the Chair of the Board nor the Chair of the Remuneration Committee); and
- Non-Executive Directors who are not existing members of the Remuneration Committee.

The Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) also attends Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee may also:

- procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Board.

Meetings

Meeting arrangement for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will be as follows:

- the frequency of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings is aligned with requirement to review audit, risk management, governance and internal control. The Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary
- a minimum of 2 Non-Executive Director members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the chair role).
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings will normally be attended by the:
 - Internal auditors
 - National Audit Office (External Audit) and / or their representatives
 - Sponsor Team (DfE)
- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee may ask any other member of staff within Social Work England to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter
- as part of our commitment to continuing professional development, members of staff are welcome to attend and observe Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis and will be limited according to capacity
- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members to withdraw from a meeting to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters
- the Board or the Accounting Officer may ask the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee's advice.
- if the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director Committee member.

Decision-making

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Reporting and Administration

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will report to the Board through the Chair of the committee. The Executive Office will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Board meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair of the committee.

Access

The internal auditors, external auditors or their representative and the sponsor team (DfE) will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Social Work England's Data Protection Officer will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and / or any Non-Executive Director of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Review and Evaluation

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will also review its own effectiveness annually and report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Last reviewed: February 2024

Next review date: February 2025

Signed off Board:

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

Remuneration Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Remuneration Committee is established as a sub-committee of the Social Work England Board. Its purpose is to support the Board, and the Chair, to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to remuneration and performance; people and culture.

As outlined in the [Framework Document](#), the Remuneration Committee develops advice for the Board, which in turn advises the Secretary of State annually on the remuneration of the Chief Executive. The Committee also advises on remuneration and performance for the executive leadership team.

The work of the Remuneration Committee is bounded by the levels of remuneration and terms and conditions of service (including pensions) within the general pay structure approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and HM Treasury and on the understanding the Secretary of State's approval is required to amend these terms and conditions.

The Committee also holds delegated responsibility to consider people and culture issues, to assist the Board in fulfilling its obligation to provide strategic direction and challenge to the chief executive and leadership team in running the organisation.

All Committee members should uphold the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. These principles should be central to the way in which the Committee delivers its remit, and the advice it gives to the Board.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Remuneration Committee are to provide advice and assurance to the Board regarding remuneration and performance; people and culture.

In order to provide advice and assurance in relation to remuneration and performance, the Committee:

- Reviews the Chief Executive's annual performance report.
- Advises the Board, who then advises the Secretary of State annually, on the remuneration of the Chief Executive.
- Provides oversight on the setting of annual objectives for the Chief Executive.
- Reviews the Chief Executive's performance assessment of the Executive Leadership Team.
- Advises the Board on the remuneration of the team of Executive Directors.
- Reviews and advises on job specifications for Executive Directors and the Chief Executive.

- Supports succession planning for the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.
- Advises the Board on appointing the Chief Executive.

In order to provide advice and assurance in relation to people and culture, the Committee:

- Offers guidance to assist the organisation in developing its people strategy
- Reviews progress towards identified people priorities, offering relevant advice, challenge and support.
- Reviews and challenges performance in relation to key workforce indicators -including, but not exclusively, sickness absence, learning and development, retention and employee engagement
- Considers the need for periodic ‘deep dives’ to better understand and advise on key people and culture related issues, as appropriate
- Provides assurance and oversight of the overall system of remuneration and reward, including the annual pay remit process
- In line with the corporate risk approach reviews, assesses and identifies risk in relation to people and culture, ensuring appropriate mitigation and escalation.

Decision-making

The Remuneration Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

The membership of the Remuneration Committee is comprised of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director who is neither the Chair of the Board nor the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee).
- Two Non-Executive Directors who are not existing members of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

The Chair of Social Work England and other Non-Executive Directors will attend as appropriate apart from the Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

The Chair of the Board should attend meetings, as appropriate, to discuss the Chief Executive’s remuneration and performance.

The Department for Education’s Director of HR is not a member of the Committee but may attend meetings, as the Secretary of State’s representative, to advise on senior remuneration policy across the public sector and how this has been applied in other non-departmental public bodies (“NDPB”s). Social Work England should have regard to Chapter 5 of the

[Cabinet Office’s Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments](#) that provides guidance on staff issues in public bodies including the CEO.¹

Meetings, quoracy and attendance

- The Remuneration Committee will meet at least once a year. A meeting will take place each spring to review senior performance, agree non-consolidated performance pay, set objectives for the chief executive and executive leadership team and discuss priorities for the annual pay remit.
- The Committee’s annual meeting cycle will typically include 2 further meetings – (i) in summer to oversee final pay remit proposals and (ii) in autumn to review mid-year performance and consider people engagement survey outcomes.
- The Chair of the Remuneration Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary.
- A minimum of 2 Non-Executive Director members of the Remuneration Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director Committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the role)
- if the Chair of the Remuneration Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director committee member.

The Remuneration Committee Chair, on behalf of the Remuneration Committee members may:

- invite the Chief Executive to attend any parts of its meetings and take part in discussions, except when the Committee is discussing the Chief Executive’s own performance or remuneration
- invite the Executive Director for People and Business Support to attend any parts of its meetings and take part in discussions, except when the Committee is discussing the Executive Director’s own performance or remuneration
- ask any other member of staff within Social Work England to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter, providing there is no breach of confidentiality or conflict of interest in relation to the matters being discussed.
- ask any or all of those who normally attend, but who are not members, to withdraw from a meeting to maintain confidentiality and/or to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters
- ask the Remuneration Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee’s advice.

Reporting and Administration

¹ Social Work England Framework Document 2022

The Remuneration Committee Chair will report to the Chair of the Social Work England Board after each meeting. The Corporate Governance Manager will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Committee meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair.

Access

The Department for Education will have free and confidential access to the Chair of Remuneration Committee.

The internal and external audit teams will have access to the Chair of the Remuneration Committee and its members.

Review and Evaluation

The Remuneration Committee will review its own effectiveness annually and will report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Remuneration Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Policy Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board provides leadership, direction and a steer on the overall strategy for the organisation. It has established a Policy Committee as a sub-committee of the Board to support the Board, the Chair and Deputy Chair with oversight of the positioning of Social Work England as the single-profession regulator for social workers in England, in relation to matters of public policy.

This includes the organisation's programme of policy development, consultation, research and publications in delivering the current and future corporate strategy. The Committee will provide the Board with assurance with regard to the process and content of the organisation's policy programme, enabling the Board to delegate detailed scrutiny of the policy process, but also to receive regular reports and advice from the Committee.

Responsibilities

The Policy Committee

- Advises the Board on developing external policy, significant changes to existing policy, presentation of policy and relations with key stakeholders.
- Advises the Board on research priorities, procurement and progress of research partnerships, and recommendations and action issuing from research activity.
- Advises the Board on the programme of public consultation, to ensure inclusive and widespread engagement with people and agencies who may be affected by proposals and those who have an interest in our work.
- Advises the Board on matters relating to the link between policy and legislation, understanding the legal basis for developing policy and significant changes to regulation.
- Assures the Board on the development of a data and insights strategy.
- Reflects the Board's views on major policy publications, including but not limited to, state-of-the-nation or landmark policy publications and advises the Board on horizon scanning, progress to delivery and the impact of policy outputs.
- Works alongside the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee to advise the Board on matters relating to regulatory risk, developing 'right-touch' mitigations, and monitoring and evaluating measures taken to protect the public.
- Agrees the executive's strategic aims on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and then advises the Board on the executive's progress towards delivery.
- Considers wider contextual issues that could impact us and relevant policies both social work specific and generic (e.g. workforce, regulation, health and social care).
- takes account of Stakeholder management. i.e. how we relate to stakeholders in our policy arena tactically and strategically to achieve maximum appropriate impact.

Decision-making

The Policy Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Policy Committee.

The membership of the Committee is comprised of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director)
- At least one other Non-Executive Director
- Two Executive Directors with responsibility for regulatory functions
- Two members of the National Advisory Forum.

Meetings

- The Policy Committee will meet at least four times a year.
- The Chair of the Policy Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary.
- A minimum of 3 members of the Policy Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director Committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the role).
- If the Chair of the Policy Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director Committee member.

Reporting and Administration

The Policy Committee Chair will report to the Board after each meeting.

The Executive Office will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Committee meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair of the Committee

Access

The Chief Executive will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Policy Committee.

Review and Evaluation

The Policy Committee will periodically review its own effectiveness annually and will report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Policy Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Last reviewed: February 2024

Signed off by the Board:

Next review date: February 2025

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

Board code of conduct policy

1 Why do we need this policy?

Social Work England was established under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act) to be the single-profession regulator for social workers in England. Our powers and obligations are set out in part 2 of the Act¹ and The Social Workers Regulations 2018. Our over-arching objective is the protection of the public. The pursuit of our over-arching objective involves the following objectives:

- (a) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- (b) to promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England; and
- (c) to promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

1.2 We are a separate legal entity in the form of a non-departmental public body (NDPB). We operate at arm's length from government and comply with all of the requirements for an NDPB and the principles of good governance for public bodies.

1.3 The principles of this policy have been adapted from the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies² (last revised in 2019) and apply to all Non-Executive Directors.

1.4 The Code of Conduct for our board members provides guidance on the responsibilities and standards of conduct expected of all board members, including those that sit on the Board's sub-committees – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Policy Committee and Remuneration Committee. Board members are expected to subscribe to this Code of Conduct and comply with it while carrying out their duties.

2 Who needs to follow this policy and why?

All board members, including those that sit on the Board's sub-committees.

3 What's our policy and how will we implement it?

Duty to follow principles of public life

Individual board members must follow the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life³. These principles should inform your actions and decisions as a board member. The principles are:

- Selflessness

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/part/2/enacted>

² [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

General conduct

Duty to safeguard public funds

Board members have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public funds. You must comply with the rules set out in your term of appointment letter and Social Work England's travel, subsistence and expenses policy. It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with all relevant HM Revenue and Customs' requirements concerning payments, including expenses.

Board members must take appropriate measures to ensure that we conduct our operations as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible, with full regard to the relevant statutory provisions and to relevant guidance⁴.

Board members should not misuse official resources for personal gain or for political purposes.

Duty not to accept benefits from third parties

Board members should follow our Gifts and Hospitality Policy⁵. You are responsible for your decisions on the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for ensuring that any gifts or hospitality accepted can stand up to public scrutiny and do not bring your public office and Social Work England into disrepute. You must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.

Board members must not accept any gifts or hospitality which might or might reasonably appear to compromise their personal judgement or integrity or place them under an improper obligation. No inducement of any amount or value may be accepted under any circumstance. Any overt or covert offer of any inducement (of whatever value) for some action pertaining to a contract with an external third-party individual or organisation or concerning a future decision of the board must be referred immediately to the Chair and/or the Chief Executive.

The corporate governance manager shall keep a Register of Gifts and Hospitality. This will cover all invitations and offers of hospitality extended to staff and board members, whether they are accepted or declined. All individuals should maintain a personal record of gifts and hospitality. The register shall be available for periodic inspection by internal audit and will be made available at Year End for review by external audit. All offers of gifts and hospitality

⁴ For more guidance on how to handle public funds, please refer to Managing Public Money

[Managing public money - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/managing-public-money)

⁵ [Gifts and hospitality policy \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com/gifts-and-hospitality-policy)

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involving the Board and Executive Directors will be published within the annual report and website and could be disclosed to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Duty to preserve confidentiality.

Board members may receive information which is not in the public domain. It is the responsibility of each individual member to ensure that this information remains confidential, unless prior authorisation has been given by the Chair for this to be discussed elsewhere. This duty of confidentiality continues to apply after members have left the board.

Board members must never use confidential information for their personal advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of anyone known to them or to disadvantage or discredit the board. Board members must not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for political purpose.

Duty to act in the public interest

Board members must act in good faith and in our best interests. They should not use their position to promote their personal interests or those of any connected person, firm or organisation.

In their public role, board members should be, and be seen to be, politically impartial. Board members should not make political statements or engage in political activity related to our role or activity.

Duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to register interests

Board members should avoid being influenced by others or placing themselves under obligation to any individual or organisation which might affect, or be perceived to affect, their ability to act impartially and objectively.

Board members must ensure that conflicts do not arise, or appear to arise, between their public duties and their private interests, whether these are financial or otherwise. It is the personal responsibility of all board members to declare any personal or business interests which may or may reasonably appear to conflict with their responsibilities.

Board members are expected to declare an interest at the start of a meeting or at the very latest the start of the agenda item to which the interest arises.

Board members may be asked by the Chair to remove themselves from the discussion or determination of matters in which they have, or may be perceived to have, a financial interest. In matters in which they have a non-financial interest, board members should not participate in the discussion or decision on a matter where the interest might suggest that the board was biased.

Board members' interests will be published on our website.

Board members will declare any other employment.

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Where there is potential for interests to be material or relevant to us such interests should be declared and recorded in the register held and maintained by the executive office team. Examples of interests which should be declared, though not exhaustive, are:

- Directorships, including non-executive directorships, of private companies or PLCs.
- A paid or unpaid position on an advisory or other decision-making group that could influence how we spend taxpayers' money.
- Ownership of private companies, businesses or consultancies, or shareholdings in the same; likely or possibly seeking to do business with us.
- A position of authority in another statutory, professional, commercial, charity, voluntary or other body, which could be seen to influence our work within operations.
- Any other interests or connection with public, private or other organisations that may have reason to work with us.
- Any close family member, or business associate who has any interests that may influence or be seen to influence us.

Duty to promote equality, diversity and human rights

The Equality Act 2010 created a 'public sector equality duty' covering all forms of discrimination, and which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relation between different people when carrying out their activities.

Therefore, board members have a duty to promote equality, diversity and human rights and not discriminate unlawfully against any person, treating all people with respect, regardless of their race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, age, disability, marriage and civil partnership.

Failure to comply with Code of Conduct

If any board member fails to perform the duties required of them or display the standards of conduct expected of them, they may be judged as failing to carry out the duties of their office. This could lead to them being removed from the board.

Failure at any time by a board member to disclose information about their personal or professional history or conduct, which could cause embarrassment or bring us into disrepute, would constitute a serious breach of this Code.

If this policy isn't followed, the most appropriate course of action will be agreed between the policy owner and the Chair, dependent on the circumstances.

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Chair of the Board

The Chair is responsible for overseeing the board's Code of Conduct by specifically:

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- encouraging and promoting high standards of propriety;
- ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the board takes proper account of guidance provided by Ministers and the sponsor department (Department for Education) and the Board 's sub-committees;
- maintaining a register of declared interests;
- representing the views of the board to the general public; and
- ensuring that all decisions are only made where the board is quorate.

The Chair will ensure that the board meets at regular intervals throughout the year and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and matters discussed. The Chair should ensure that all Board members feel able to contribute to the Board 's discussions.

4.2 Board members

The responsibilities of board members in relation to the Code of Conduct include ensuring that:

- high standards of corporate governance are observed by the board at all times;
- we operate within the limits of our statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with Ministers and the Department for Education (sponsor Department), and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and
- we comply with any duties imposed on public bodies by statute, including obligations under health and safety legislation, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and data protection principles (as set out in Article 5 of the UK GDPR and section 35 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (which relates to data processing for law enforcement purposes). Board members have a collective duty to ensure that their decision-making processes are transparent. When a decision is made in private, there must still be transparency around the process, which resulted in a decision being made. Each board member has a personal responsibility to ensure that they have sufficient understanding and information to participate in the decisions that are made by the board.

Board members' engagement with the public should be based on the core principles of integrity, competence and confidentiality. Any public statements should accurately reflect our policies and practices and not compromise or threaten our reputation as the independent social work regulator.

4.3 Conducting Board meetings

Board meetings must be well-conducted, and the decisions taken should be well-informed. Therefore, board members should:

- take account of the views of others, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions;

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- be as open as possible about their actions and decisions, being prepared to give reasons for their actions and willing for their decisions and actions to be scrutinised and challenged in a constructive way;
- allow everyone to take part, respecting the contribution of other members and not interrupting when someone is speaking, nor be dismissive of views expressed by others;
- respect the impartiality and integrity of other board members, never being derogatory in their speech or manner. Members should not use language which could be construed as discriminatory or offensive to others;
- act in alignment with our values, behaviours and culture.

4.4 Responsibilities towards employees

You will treat any colleagues employed by Social Work England, temporary agency workers, and contracted partners with courtesy and respect. It is expected that you will be shown the same consideration in return.

You will not ask or encourage employees to act in any way which could conflict with their own Code of Conduct.

4.5 Social media

Social media is a public forum and the same considerations, including the provisions in this Code, apply as if speaking in public or writing something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity. When engaging with social media you should at all times respect confidentiality, financial, legal and personal information.

Where any personal social media accounts used by you link to your public role, you should take care to ensure that it is clear what capacity you are acting in.

5 Raising concerns

If a board member wishes to express a concern about the behaviour of another Board member, they should in the first instance raise the issue with the Chair. If the concern involves the Chair, the board member should raise the matter with the Chief Executive.

Where a board member has reason to believe that a very serious wrong-doing has taken or is taking place, (e.g. a criminal offence or a staff member is failing to comply with a legal obligation) they should raise this immediately with the Chair and/or the Chief Executive.

6 Related policies, procedures and information sources

[Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy](#)

7 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact our corporate governance manager.

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8 Definitions

8.1 Non-departmental public body (NDPB)

According to www.gov.uk, a NDPB is a “body which has a role in the processes of national government but is not a government department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm’s length from ministers.”⁶

8.2 Code of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities of, and or proper practices for, an individual.

Last reviewed: March 2024

Next review: March 2025

Signed off by Board :

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-bodies-reform#ndpbs-executive-agencies-and-non-ministerial-departments>

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Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy

Why do we need this policy?

This policy provides guidance on (all of the following):

- recognising and disclosing activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts
- ensuring that we avoid, or properly manage, any conflicts

Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all Social Work England Board members.

1 What's our policy and how will we implement it?

Board members must always demonstrate high standards of (all of the following):

- professional conduct
- impartiality
- honesty
- integrity

All board members must identify and disclose activities and relationships that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts. They must also ensure that any conflicts are properly managed (or avoided).

If properly managed, a board member's activities can proceed as normal. This will ensure the board member still upholds their obligations to Social Work England, protecting the integrity and reputation of the organisation.

However, there is a risk if board members do not report conflicts, or if we do not manage these conflicts effectively. This may (do all of the following):

- jeopardise public confidence in Social Work England and damage our credibility
- damage the credibility of the individual(s) concerned

Our values also reflect our statutory public sector equality duty. This requires us to (do all of the following):

- have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- foster good relations between different groups

Therefore, board members must behave in a manner which is compatible with our values.

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Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest can arise where a board member's commitments and obligations to us are compromised (or may appear to be compromised). This may include (any of the following):

- a board member has competing interests or loyalties that are (or could be) at odds with each other.
- a board member's private affairs or financial interests are in conflict (or could appear to be in conflict) with the interests of Social Work England
- a person with whom the board member has a close personal relationship has private affairs or financial interests in conflict (or could appear to be in conflict) with the interests of Social Work England
- a board member's actions appear to show bias or favouritism towards another person (this could be within or outside Social Work England)

There can be situations which appear to show a conflict of interest, even when no conflict exists. It is important for all board members to consider how potential conflicts of interest might be perceived.

Financial conflicts of interest: We define a financial conflict of interest as any situation where there is (or appears to be) any of the following:

- opportunity for personal financial gain
- opportunity for financial gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the board member has a close personal relationship)
- reason for another party to believe that a board member's actions are affected by financial benefits

Financial interest means anything of monetary value. For example (any of the following):

- payments for services
- equity interests (for example, stocks, stock options or other ownership interests)
- intellectual property rights (for example, patents, copyrights and royalties from such rights)

Non-financial conflicts of interest

Non-financial interest may include any benefit or advantage. This includes, but is not limited to (either of the following):

- direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career
- gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship)

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Types of conflicts of interest

We have set out below some types of information which board members should consider declaring as potential conflicts of interest.

This list is not exhaustive. It is impossible to list every potential situation or circumstance that could give rise to a conflict of interest. Board members should use their judgement to decide whether to disclose any of their interests.

Directorships and committee appointments

Both paid and unpaid directorships of any public or private company (or other body). This also includes (either of the following)

- non-executive director roles
- senior employee roles
- any roles or positions with other committees

Other remunerated work

Any paid employment or other sources of income outside normal work. For example, paid consultancy or advisory positions. These could be with government departments or private companies.

Gifts, benefits and hospitality

Any substantial gift or material advantage received by a member, which in any way relates to their role as a Social Work England board member. For further guidance on this, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality policy.

Shareholdings or other positions

Any relevant organisation in which the board member holds significant shareholdings, interest or control. This includes partnerships and consultancy activities.

Relevant organisations include (any of the following):

- public companies
- private companies
- not-for-profits

Indirect social or business relationships and family interests

Any close association with an individual who has (any of the following):

- a financial interest
- a non-financial professional interest
- a non-financial personal interest
- and any other interests

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in Social Work England.

Miscellaneous and unremunerated interests

Other interests which do not fall clearly within any of the above categories. For example (either of the following):

- membership of (or work for) other bodies such as charities which could possibly influence a board member's position.
- the possession of confidential information

How we manage conflicts of interest

We require all our board members to (do both of the following):

- update their declaration of interests for each board meeting
- submit a signed record of their register annually

We'll make a copy of all declared board member interests available at each board meeting. We'll also do this at sub-committee meetings. For example (all of the following):

- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- the Policy Committee
- the Remuneration Committee

The Chair will ask (both of the following):

- if there are any new interests to add
- if there any potential conflicts of interest specific to the issues being considered at the meeting

This is to confirm (and potentially add to) the interests that board members have already declared before the meeting.

The secretariat will formally record any declarations of interest within all board meeting and sub-committee minutes. They'll also record any actions arising from the declarations. The Secretariat of the Social Work England board will also maintain a written record of all disclosures. We'll also publish all declarations of interest on our website.

Each board member is responsible for informing the Chair if a conflict arises (or if someone might perceive a conflict). They should do this as soon as possible.

If a board member has an actual (or potential) conflict of interest, the Chair will take one of the following approaches:

- requiring the board member not to attend the meeting. They may also exclude the member from receiving meeting papers relating to their interest
- excluding the board member from all (or part) of the relevant discussion and decision

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- allowing the board member to remain and participate. However, they will note the nature and extent of the potential conflict of interest

They will ensure that the secretariat documents the reason for the chosen action in minutes and/or records.

If Board members don't follow this policy

If Board members don't follow this policy, the policy owner and the Head of Finance and Commercial (or corporate governance manager) will agree the most appropriate course of action. The course of action will be dependent on the circumstances.

2 Roles and responsibilities

Board members (as individuals)

- On appointment to the Social Work England Board, every board member must make a written disclosure. This should cover any activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest (or the perception of conflicts).
- Each board member should recognise situations in which they have a conflict of interest (or which others might reasonably see as a conflict). They should then disclose that conflict and take any further steps as set out in this policy.
- If in doubt, the board member should declare the activity or relationship in the interests of transparency.

3 Related policies, procedures and information sources

Board code of conduct policy

Board related parties transaction form

Gifts and hospitality policy

4 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact [corporate governance manager](#).

5 Definitions

Conflict of interest

A 'set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest.' (National Audit Office "Conflicts of interest", 23 January 2015).

Last reviewed: March 2024 [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Next review: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) March 2025

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Signed off by Board:

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

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Gifts and hospitality policy

Why do we need this policy?

This policy aims to provide guidance to all individuals when receiving, accepting and/or providing gifts and hospitality.

Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all of the following:

- board members
- employees
- partners

What's our policy and how will we implement it?

- You must declare all offers of gifts and hospitality, made to or by you, regardless of value.
- Any offers or acceptance of gifts and hospitality must be reported to the corporate governance manager.
- All offers of gifts and hospitality must be recorded in the gifts and hospitality register.
- Offers must be declared whether they are accepted or declined.

Receiving Gifts

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are not placed in a position that compromises your role or our organisation's statutory obligations or appears to do so.

Seasonal or modest gifts may be accepted. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- diaries
- pens
- calendars

Gifts through which a member of staff might personally or financially benefit must not be accepted. For example, trade or discount cards. Gifts of alcohol should not be accepted under any circumstances.

Gifts should be refused or returned with a carefully worded covering letter, especially where a contractor relationship is involved.

Where the refusal or return of a gift is likely to offend or embarrass the donor discretion may be exercised as to the handling and retention of the gift. This is dependent on all of the following:

- value of the gift
- nature of the gift
- origin of the gift

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In these circumstances, guidance on whether to retain the gift should be sought from the corporate governance manager.

A distinction should be made between items offered as gifts and those offered in place of fees for speeches, lectures, or other work done in an official capacity. Offers of this kind may be accepted providing the item is of a trivial nature or value but should still be reported.

Receiving Hospitality

In determining whether it is proper to accept hospitality offered, all of the following should be considered:

Nature of the hospitality:

Approval is generally not required for a working lunch which is regarded as acceptable practice.

A more formal lunch or dinner should be approved by a member of the executive leadership team, chief executive and/or chair prior to attendance.

Representation:

Care should be taken to ensure that the organisation is not over-represented when invited to formal events where hospitality is accepted.

Risk of expectation of reciprocal hospitality or business:

Care should be taken not to accept or offer hospitality that will create an expectation of the same in return, or an expectation that other business benefits may be offered such as a favourable regulatory decision or the awarding of a contract.

Where refusal of hospitality may cause embarrassment or appear discourteous, guidance should be sought from the corporate governance manager prior to acceptance/refusal.

Further Guidelines for Offers of Hospitality

Offers of hospitality should only be accepted where there is a clear link to working arrangements and a business reason can be demonstrated. For example (any of the following):

- attendance at a conference which provides complimentary subsistence, travel and accommodation (this does not need to be declared on the register unless a gift is received)
- attending a free training course
- attending a drinks reception to network with key partners or stakeholders

The receipt of modest working lunches and dinners are acceptable where there is a business reason. For example, maintaining good relationships with existing and future stakeholders. Care should be taken when accepting hospitality from potential future contractors. In particular, it is not advisable to accept gifts/hospitality at any point in the time surrounding a tendering process or a contract renewal as this has the potential to be construed as a bribe. In these circumstances, guidance should be sought from the commercial team.

Invitations to events which are purely social events should be considered carefully before

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accepting as it may be difficult to substantiate a genuine business reason. You should seek guidance from a member of the executive leadership team, chief executive or chair prior to accepting.

The following guidance outlines what action should be taken when seeking approval for the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

Hospitality	Prior Approval?	Further Action?
Modest conventional hospitality (working lunch)	No	None
Formal lunch/dinner by prior invitation	Prior approval required from an executive director, chief executive and/or chair. Consult commercial team if offered during a tender process.	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Commemorative event, for example, those organised by a contractor, consultant or supplier to celebrate a hand over, or opening	Prior approval required if it takes the form of a formal lunch or dinner by prior invitation; otherwise, no approval required	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Annual dinner of a professional institute where the officer is a guest of the institute or association	No	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Cultural or sporting event as a guest	Prior approval required from an executive director, chief executive and/or chair. Consult commercial team if offered during a tender process.	Record in gifts and hospitality register

Gifts and Hospitality Register

The corporate governance manager shall keep a register of gifts and hospitality. This will cover all invitations and offers of gifts and hospitality extended to staff, board members and partners, whether they are accepted or declined.

The register shall be available for periodic inspection by internal audit and will be made available at year end for review by external audit.

All offers of gifts and hospitality involving the board and executive directors will be published within the annual report and website.

All individuals should maintain a personal record of gifts and hospitality.

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Gifts/ Hospitality record form

A gifts/hospitality [record form](#) should be completed by all recipients and providers of gifts and hospitality. This is to ensure information is recorded in a consistent manner.

Completed and approved forms should be sent to the corporate governance manager who will update the register accordingly and file the forms appropriately. All such forms will be made available for review by internal and external audit.

Reporting, Monitoring and Reviewing

In order to provide the necessary level of assurance for audit and compliance purposes, the gifts and hospitality register **must** be regularly monitored, reviewed and reported.

All gifts, prizes and donations made by Social Work England staff **must** be reported in writing on an annual basis. This will be commissioned by the finance team.

Providing gifts and hospitality

The expenditure of public money on official gifts and hospitality should be done with modesty. Frivolity and excess can provide just cause for a negative public reaction.

Providing gifts

In line with [Managing Public Money](#), we may make gifts of items such as mugs and pens bearing the Social Work England name and/or logo. Similarly, for promotional purposes, small value items such as gift tokens may be used.

Gifts and vouchers to staff are generally inappropriate unless as part of our recognised non-pay reward scheme, Applause.

Providing Hospitality

Hospitality (both internal and external) can be described as any generous or material reception that is more than incidental. Detailed guidance in regard to providing hospitality is contained within our [travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#).

Key things you need to know:

- When considering a gift, you must speak to the [finance team](#) first to ensure you have the appropriate authority and budget. The finance team will also decide whether the gift is acceptable/appropriate.
- Before giving or offering a gift(s) or hospitality, prior approval must be obtained as outlined within this policy and the [travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#).
- Make sure any decisions you make, and any approval given, are fully documented.
- Your actions must bear both public and internal scrutiny. Breaches of policy or unethical behaviour may result in disciplinary action.

Expenditure on official gifts

You must attain approval from HM Treasury and/or Parliament before providing money or

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purchasing property that you intend to give as a gift.

Purchase of Alcohol

It is government policy that public funds **should not be used** for the purchase of alcohol.

If this policy isn't followed, the most appropriate course of action will be agreed between the policy owner and the head of people and development, dependent on the circumstances.

Roles and responsibilities

Accounting officer

The accounting officer's responsibilities in regard to this document cover the following areas:

Regularity and Propriety

- Ensuring all transactions are accurately identified and recorded
- Ensuring that all requested funds are used for the purpose intended

Value for Money

- Ensuring that the organisation's procurement, projects and processes are regularly evaluated and reviewed. This is so that we can ensure confidence with regard to suitability, effectiveness value.

Management of opportunity and risk

- Achieving the right balance commensurate with the organisation's business and risk appetite.

Corporate governance manager

- Ensure the gifts and hospitality register is accurate and complete at all times
- Ensure all details contained within record forms are accurately transferred to the register.
- Ensure all forms are securely stored and available for inspection
- Provide a quarterly report of all gifts and hospitality to the head of finance and the executive director of people and business support for review
- Provide an annual summary of the register for inclusion in the annual report and website
- Provide, upon request, all details/records relating to the receipt and offer of gifts and hospitality for internal and external audit

All Board members, employees and partners

- All individuals must be familiar with and apply this policy.

Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact the corporate governance manager.

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Annex 13d Definitions

Gift

A gift is any item, cash, goods or service which is offered for personal benefit of the recipient at no cost or at a cost that is less than the commercial value. It includes all transactions economically equivalent to free.

Hospitality

Hospitality can be defined as any generous or material reception that is more than an incidental kind, such as a light refreshment or beverage.

NDPB

Non-Departmental Public Body

Propriety

The requirement that expenditure and receipts should be dealt with in accordance with **Parliament's intentions and the principles of Parliamentary control**, this includes the conventions agreed with Parliament (and in particular the *Public Accounts Committee*).

Regularity

The requirement for all items of expenditure and receipts to be dealt with in accordance with the legislation authorising them, any applicable delegated authority and the rules of Government Accounting.

Supply estimates

Supply Estimates are the means by which a department seeks authority from Parliament for its own spending each year, including spending by its NDPBs.

Related policies, procedures and information sources

- [Travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#)
- [Anti-fraud policy](#)
- [Fraud response procedure](#)
- [Government procurement card policy](#)
- [Disciplinary policy](#)
- [Employee code of conduct](#)
- [Board code of conduct](#)

Policy information

- Last reviewed: March 2024
- Next review date: March 2025
- Board sign off: (scheduled again for March 2024)
- Policy owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

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