

NI GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY - BOARD MEETING
6th DECEMBER 2018

- Present:** Mr Bernard Mitchell, *Chair*
Mr Fred Smyth, *Non-Executive Director*
Mr Peter Reynolds, *Chief Executive*
Dr Karen Winter, *Non-Executive Director*
Mrs Gillian McGaughey, *Non-Executive Director (arrived 10:20am)*
- In Attendance:** Mr Sean Brown, *Corporate Services Manager*
Mrs Teresa Fallon, *Assistant Director*
Miss Patricia O’Kane, *Assistant Director (left 11:55am)*
Mr John Sheldon, *QA & Training Manager*
- Minute Taker:** Mrs Ann Andrew, *Administration Manager*

START TIME : 9.45am

75.18 SERVICE DELIVERY PRESENTATION

- 75.18.1 Mrs Fallon and Miss O’Kane, Assistant Directors provided a presentation to the Board on Signs of Safety. They confirmed the different approach taken to social work and gave an example of the assessments and planning tools used. They emphasised that ownership by all professionals and the family network involved is required.
- 75.18.2 Mrs Fallon provided a further presentation highlighting the Guardian’s perspective and stating how Signs of Safety is applied in cases. A case example was detailed and the Guardian’s role/input in safety mapping and their contribution to the case emphasised.
- 75.18.3 Mr Smyth queried who the driver for this agenda was? Mrs Fallon confirmed that the DoH are rolling out this model throughout Northern Ireland with all social work staff.
- 75.18.4 Mr Reynolds indicated that the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) has a ‘Child Protection’ committee which oversees Signs of Safety and other frameworks such as ACEs and ‘Building Better Futures’ as a joined-up approach. Mrs McGaughey noted that Guardians should be clear about the transition phase and be comfortable with it in the Court arena.
- 75.18.5 Mr Mitchell noted his thanks to Mrs Fallon and Miss O’Kane.

76.18 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 76.18.1 Mr Mitchell provided an opportunity for the Board members to identify any conflicts of interest in respect of today's agenda.
- 76.18.2 Dr Winter indicated that she is commissioned by VOYPIC to undertake a project. She confirmed this will be ongoing until further noted. The Board noted same.

77.18 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 77.18.1 The minute of the previous meeting of 11th October 2018 was agreed as an accurate record and approved.

78.18 MATTERS ARISING

- 78.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the action list from the previous meeting. All were noted as either complete or on the agenda for discussion today.

79.18 CHAIR & NON-EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING

- 79.18.1 **Accountability Meeting:** Mr Mitchell confirmed that he and Mr Reynolds attended a recent Accountability Meeting with the DoH. He indicated that a number of topics were discussed e.g. case demand, finance, use of additional funding and tackling the waiting list. Mr Mitchell referred to the Shadow Family Justice Board and the need for sufficient funding to support its work. He indicated that Mr Holland agreed to raise this with his colleagues in DoJ. Mr Mitchell confirmed that Mr Holland agreed to underwrite a NIGALA conference which should be child-centre focussed, perhaps on adoption post contact. He noted that accommodation and lIP were also discussed.
- 79.18.2 **NIGALA Chair/Non-Executive Director – Vacancies:** Mr Mitchell indicated that he is hopeful the new Chair and non-executive director will take up their posts from 1st January 2019. This has yet to be confirmed by DoH.
- 79.18.3 **Outgoing Chair – Thanks:** Mr Mitchell noted that today's meeting may well be his last if the public appointments are confirmed. He noted that he had very much enjoyed his time working with the Agency and offered his thanks to all the staff for their hard work and commitment in providing a front-line service to children and young people. He also noted his thanks to the senior team, Mr Reynolds and non-executives for their support and guidance over the years.

- 79.19.4 **Armagh Office – Business Plan:** Mr Mitchell noted that he attended the Armagh office for staff consultation on the Business Plan 2019-20. He noted there was an excellent turnout of staff who were all well engaged. He noted his thanks to all involved and suggested that going forward one Non-Executive Director should attend each of the staff consultation sessions.
- 79.18.3 **NICON:** Mr Smyth indicated he had attendance a ‘Good Governance’ session which was organised by NICON. He noted it was a useful forum for NIGALA to be involved and have its voice heard.

80.18 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BRIEFING

- 80.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *CEO Briefing Report* and Mr Reynolds spoke to same updating the Board in a number of areas.
- 80.18.2 Mr Mitchell queried work being undertaken in respect of Brexit. Mr Reynolds confirmed that NIGALA is fully engaged with the DoH on planning arrangements in the event of no deal be reached with the EU.
- 80.18.3 Mr Reynolds referred to Article 56 appointments and updated the Board on the work and liaison undertaken to date. Mr Mitchell noted his thanks for taking this forward.

81.18 FINANCE & PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 81.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Finance & Performance Report* and Mr Brown took the Board through the Performance Overview and Financial Performance. He updated the Board on the KPI performance (new KPIs as approved by the Board).
- 81.18.2 Mr Brown confirmed that improving Feedback was being actively addressed and the number of children and young people responding has increased.
- 81.18.3 Mr Brown noted that a 6 month pilot on new supervision arrangements commenced in September and once completed a questionnaire seeking feedback from Guardians will be issued.
- 81.18.4 Mr Brown highlighted the workflow position. Albeit there has been good progress on the waiting list, he noted that active caseloads are of concern given the increasing duration of cases. Miss O’Kane and Mrs Fallon are liaising with HSC Trust Principal Practitioners and discussing the longstanding cases over 400+ days. Mr Smyth indicated he would be grateful for an update at the next Board meeting on this work.

81.18.5 Mr Brown referred to the *Financial Performance Report* confirming that the Agency is on schedule to break even at year-end.

81.18.6 Mr Brown noted that development work in respect of GCIS is currently ongoing in conjunction with staff engagement.

82.18 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (IiP)

82.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *IiP Insights Assessment Report*.

82.18.2 Mr Sheldon thanked the Board for supporting the SMT in having the Agency assessed for Silver IiP Accreditation and achieving independent assurance. He noted this is the first assessment under the new IiP standard, 6th generation standard; IiP Accreditation expires 15/6/2021.

82.18.3 Mr Sheldon indicated that the Next Steps include an SMT meeting with the assessor Ms Stephanie McCutcheon and the development of an action plan. Mr Sheldon agreed that the Board would be updated at the February 2019 meeting.

82.18.4 Mr Sheldon noted the weaker spot of the recognition is looking at how you reward and recognise staff, particularly in light of current pressures.

82.18.5 Mr Smyth and Dr Winter congratulated the SMT and staff on the Silver Accredited.

82.18.6 Mr Mitchell noted his thanks to everyone in the Agency and also Mr Reynolds and Mr Sheldon for co-ordinating the assessment. He emphasised this was a good outcome for the Agency.

ACTION: Mr Sheldon to update the Board on the IiP Action Plan.

83.18 QUALITY FRAMEWORK

83.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *NIGALA Quality Framework* and Mr Sheldon indicated this is a new overarching document that draws together all Quality initiatives within the Agency into the one document, in line with a previous recommendation from Internal Audit in 2018.

83.18.2 Mr Sheldon confirmed the Quality Framework was before the SCG Committee earlier in the year and is now with the Board for approval today. Mr Sheldon noted the

framework is an evolving document and there will be additional information to be included along with hyperlinks which need to be added.

83.18.3 Mr Smyth noted this is a welcome framework from an auditor’s perspective and he is keen to see it completed with links to other frameworks included.

83.18.4 The Board approved the *NIGALA Quality Framework* acknowledging it is an evolving document.

84.18 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

84.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Proposal to amend the Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Committee* and Mr Brown highlighted the proposed changes in the document making it clear how the Committee is made up.

84.18.2 Following discussion it was agreed that under **membership**: “*The Chair of the Agency shall not be a member of the Committee* and under **quorum**: “*It shall be permissible for another member of the Board to sit on the Committee, which may include the Chair where required*”. It was agreed that under **attendance**: the Chair should attend a minimum of once per annum”.

84.18.3 The Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference were agreed subject to the agreed amendments. Mr Brown indicated he would update the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders accordingly.

ACTION: Mr Brown to update the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference and Standing Orders to reflect proposed amendments.

85.18 MID YEAR UPDATE ON OBJECTIVES

85.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Mid-Year Update on Business Plan Objectives 2018-19* highlighting the Agency’s progress on objectives to date. The Board noted the progress and Mr Mitchell indicated this reflected well on the senior team.

86.18 OPERATIONS FRAMEWORK

86.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *NIGALA Operations Framework* and Mr Reynolds noted the framework provides an assurance to the Accounting Officer on the governance arrangements in place within the organisation. He noted this is a live document that

will be developed over time and will be inclusive of all NIGALA framework documents, policies, procedures, etc.

86.18.2 Mr Brown indicated that when all framework documents have been completed, they will be brought together into an overarching document.

86.18.3 Mr Brown went through the details of the framework.

86.18.4 The Board noted the *Operations Framework* and Mr Reynolds agreed to consider the document in the context of the wider governance framework before bringing it back to the Board for approval.

ACTION: Mr Reynolds to consider the document in the context of the wider governance framework prior to bringing back to the NIGALA Board for approval.

87.18 BUSINESS PLAN 2019-20

87.18.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *NIGALA Business Plan 2019-20* confirming consultation with Board members and staff has been undertaken across the organisation.

87.18.2 Mr Brown highlighted a new strategic theme has been added as requested by the Board in previous discussions.

87.18.3 Mr Mitchell indicated that the views of external stakeholders such as children/young people, members of the judiciary, HSC bodies and solicitors should be reflected more explicitly in the document in future. The Board discussed the Business Plan and made a number of suggestions and amendments.

87.18.4 Mr Brown explained the next steps for the *Business Plan 2019-20*. The draft plan will be updated to reflect discussions with the Board today and circulated prior to Christmas with the aim to have any additional comments returned by early January in time for submission and formal approval with the DoH. He indicated that Department have already be contacted about any objectives or comments they would like included.

87.18.5 The Board agreed to the draft *NIGALA Business Plan 2019-20* subject to suggested amendments.

ACTION: Mr Brown to update the draft NIGALA Business Plan 2019-20 to reflect suggested amendments as discussed. Business Plan to be circulated for final comment prior to Christmas 2018 and responses to be received by early January 2019.

88.18 BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS SINCE LAST MEETING OF THE BOARD

- 88.18.1 Mr Mitchell noted the *Remuneration Committee* met on 6th December 2018. He provided an update on business discussed.
- 88.18.2 Dr Winter noted the *Social Care Governance Committee* met on 29th November 2018. She noted the SCG Action Plan is being redeveloped and streamlined. The Committee will also be preparing an SCG Framework which will come to the February meeting of the Board for approval.

89.18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 89.18.1 There was no other business for discussion.

90.18 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

- 90.18.1 There were no confidential items for discussion.

End time: 1:10pm

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2018 @ 9.30AM

Chair of the Board

ACTION LIST

OPEN ACTIONS

Minute Ref	Action	By Whom	Progress Noted for Meeting
85.18 Investors In People	Mr Sheldon to update the Board on the IIP Action Plan.	Mr Sheldon	
84.18 Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference	Mr Brown to update the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference and Standing Orders to reflect proposed amendments.	Mr Brown	
86.18 Operations Framework	Mr Reynolds to consider the document in the context of the wider governance framework prior to bringing back to the NIGALA Board for approval.	Mr Reynolds	
87.18 NIGALA Business Plan 2019-20	Mr Brown to update the draft <i>NIGALA Business Plan 2019-20</i> to reflect suggested amendments as discussed. Business Plan to be circulated for final comment prior to Christmas 2018 and responses to be received by early January 2019.	Mr Brown	