





# NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

## MEETING 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023, NIPSO, Progressive House

#### **Members Present:**

Dónall Curtin – Chair; (DC) Terry McGonigal – Independent Member; (TM)

### In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Accounting Officer/Ombudsman; (MK) Sean Martin –Deputy Ombudsman; (SM) Gary Currie – NIAO; (GC) Philip Whitehead – ASM (PW) Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS) Sinead Sargent – Director of Investigations, NIPSO (SSt)

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Apologies	
	Patricia Snell – Independent Member	
2.	Conflicts of Interest	
2.	DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda.	
	No conflicts were noted.	
3.	Minutes	
	Minutes from 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2023 were agreed upon.	
4	Update on Action Points	
	Financial Review – A new business case has been made for a finance system which has been approved, and a supplier identified. Before moving forward, IT Assist are to confirm if the new package is able to integrate with their system. The plan is to have the system commenced by the end of the financial year. TMcG advised it would be more beneficial if any new codes were created for the new system.	
	Quality and Impact Indicators – work is ongoing	

IT and Info Security Policies – DPO and SMT have worked hard on this suite of policies. To be signed off by September 23.

Finance Manual – MK and SM met with TMcG. It was agreed to arrange a workshop approach to support the finance team, facilitated by TMcG. DC supports this proposal but advised that it should not impact the independence of the members.

Advisory Committee/Effectiveness Review (ARC) – HeadsTogether, who have governance expertise have been appointed and work is underway.

HR Support Tender – to be issued in September.

Contracts Register – DC would like this shared with ARC, twice a year – agreed.

SS to share contracts register with ARC twice a year

#### 5 Ombudsman Update (verbal)

MK reported on a few issues she wanted to share with ARC:

OI PIP Follow Up report – received print media interest

Launch of the Waiting List Communication report – was very well received and supported by the Royal College of Surgeons and Royal College of GPs. It got substantial media interest. A follow up report will be issued next year.

*NICON Conference* – In October NIPSO and NIAO are presenting a joint workshop on waiting lists.

Late 23/24 or early 24/25 NIPSO is planning to arrange a conference with a patient safety focus.

The Launch of the Complaints Standards Model took place in Stormont with 100 delegates.

MK commented there has been a rise in complaints – perhaps due to the recent media coverage over the summer.

Working with the Universities of Glasgow and York on a *Vulnerabilities Workshop*. DC suggested a major communications piece of work on the partnership.

*NI Affairs Committee* – The meeting went very well and was positively received and would be open to other work.

Met with the Chairperson of the Work and Pensions Westminster Committee (Sir Stephen Timms MP) regarding PIP.

When in London MK and SM took the opportunity to meet with the *Professional Standards Authority*, which was positive.

DC suggested a facilitation of understanding with the Department of Health, to ensure progress with the implementation of recommendations regarding communication with patients on waiting lists.

6	Financial Management	
	A potential a pay award has been factored into the full year predictions. SMT meet regularly with KC to have a better handle on the budget.	
	DC queried the high computer expenses – SM explained that the finance team underestimated the costs as part of the 3 year budget process due to costs having increased significantly.	
7	Case Performance Management	
	SSt reported there had been a considerable improvement in performance with all KPI's being met.	
	DC commented that the modernised report is clearer and less confusing.	
8	Internal Audit	
	PW reported that ASM will undertake the following reviews:	
	<ul> <li>Complaint Standards</li> <li>High Level Review of Financial Systems</li> <li>Follow Up review of previous internal audit recommendations.</li> </ul>	
9	Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update	
	People Strategy – The draft has been completed – but will seek input from external HR advisors to ensure NIPSO's approach is in line with best practice prior to being finalised. Agreed completion date of Jan 24.	
	Policies – due to be approved in Sept SMT.	
	Health and Safety Policy – SM has reviewed the current policy and SM would like an external consultant to update it. Agreed completion date of Dec 23.	
	DC expects by 31 <sup>st</sup> March for all outstanding recommendations to be completed.	
10	External Audit – NIAO Update	
	GC highlighted the key messages from the NIAO report.	
	The audit is complete, and the Annual Report and Accounts were laid at the Assembly and the House of Commons on the 19 <sup>th</sup> July 23.	
	Several journal entries relating to the 22-23 financial year were selected and reviewed. Testing confirmed that all journals examined related to routine transactions of the type would normally be found.	
	The accounting estimated within the financial statements were not complex and have been considered and found to be reasonable. No evidence of management bias was found.	

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No significant items would indicate an override of the control systems in place.	
There were no recommendations arising from the audit.	
DC reminded GC that if he needed to have a private session with himself as Chair or the rest of the members, they would make themselves available.	
Business Plan – Q1	
SM advised there is a good level of scrutiny by SMT, and the business plan is reviewed regularly by MK and SM. SMT are not flagging any issues at the moment but will review the plan again at September SMT.	SS – Paper to be included in the April ARC
MK advised that we have an Independent Service Standards reviewer and proposed that for the April ARC meeting, a paper summarising her recommendations is tabled.	meeting  SM/SS – change of
TMcG – has suggested changing the timescale on the business plan to specific months. SMT to consider.	timescale to months to be considered by SMT
Risk Register – Q1	Civi
Resources – There was a discussion on the competitive recruitment market and retaining staff.	
KPI8 – Prompt Payment	
SM advised that NIPSO are considering removing the current KPI 8 target to pay 98% of correctly presented invoices within 10 working days. NIPSO is proposing to report against both a 10 day and 30 day target in line with the approach taken by Northern Ireland Government Departments such as TEO.	
TMcG advised that all payments are to be checked before payment is made and not rushed through to chase a target. Suppliers are to be advised that bills will not be paid if no PO is provided.	
GC confirmed he would have no issues and suggested a rationale inserted in the annual report next year regarding the change of KPI8.	
Comment on Information Items	
FD (DoF) 07/23 - Remuneration of Chairpersons and Members of Public Bodies and other Fee Rates 22/23 – MK and SM to review and ensure this is in line with other bodies.	SM/MK – review fee rates
FD (DoF) 08/23 - Annual Theft and Fraud Return to DoF 21-22 – TMcG would like email to be included in the papers.	
AOB	
Data Breaches – DC asked whether enough was being done regarding the management of data.	
	There were no recommendations arising from the audit.  DC reminded GC that if he needed to have a private session with himself as Chair or the rest of the members, they would make themselves available.  Business Plan – Q1  SM advised there is a good level of scrutiny by SMT, and the business plan is reviewed regularly by MK and SM. SMT are not flagging any issues at the moment but will review the plan again at September SMT.  MK advised that we have an Independent Service Standards reviewer and proposed that for the April ARC meeting, a paper summarising her recommendations is tabled.  TMcG – has suggested changing the timescale on the business plan to specific months. SMT to consider.  Risk Register – Q1  Resources – There was a discussion on the competitive recruitment market and retaining staff.  KPI8 – Prompt Payment  SM advised that NIPSO are considering removing the current KPI 8 target to pay 98% of correctly presented invoices within 10 working days. NIPSO is proposing to report against both a 10 day and 30 day target in line with the approach taken by Northern Ireland Government Departments such as TEO.  TMcG advised that all payments are to be checked before payment is made and not rushed through to chase a target. Suppliers are to be advised that bills will not be paid if no PO is provided.  GC confirmed he would have no issues and suggested a rationale inserted in the annual report next year regarding the change of KPI8.  Comment on Information Items  FD (DoF) 07/23 - Remuneration of Chairpersons and Members of Public Bodies and other Fee Rates 22/23 – MK and SM to review and ensure this is in line with other bodies.

	Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 – Progressive House, 9.30 am	
16	Date of next meeting	
	Training – Members to liaise with SS regarding possible training	ARC Members - training
	DC would like to see the Phishing report – SS to include in the October ARC papers	Report in October papers
	SM advised that a Phishing test took place recently and currently waiting on the report from IT Assist. The process of FOI is being managed by the legal team. If there is a significant FOI, the response would be given to MK before issued.	SS to include Phishing