





April 2024 SMT Minutes

MEETING: Thursday 11th April 2024, Progressive House

In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Ombudsman; MK Sean Martin – Deputy Ombudsman; SM Andrew Ruston - Head of Communications; AR Julie Healy - Head of Improvement, Engagement & Impact, JH Sinead Sargent – Director of Investigations, SSt Corinne Nelson – Director of Investigations, CN Kirsty McCool – Director of Governance and Support Services KM Sarah Sherry – Secretariat; SS

Agend	
a Item	Minutes
1.	Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
	No apologies
	MK invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.
2.	Minutes of the last meeting
	Minutes from 14 th March 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.
3.	Outstanding Actions
	Progressive House – Key contact numbers to be circulated to staff in relation to the building and to be included in the induction.
	Trade Union Recognition Agreement –SS to print out and provide copies to both MK and SM for final approval.
	Health and Safety Manual – final changes being made.
	Effectiveness of SMT – to be brought to the next SMT.
4	Staff Planning Day
	Agreement was made for a day in September, with a morning discussion on the Strategic Plan and a team building exercise in the afternoon. Malone House was suggested as a venue and SS to contact a facilitator.

5 Recruitment Discussion IO recruitment can be processed immediately. SS/KM to arrange a meeting on finance/staffing. Trainee Investigator Programme - SM advised that PC, who has experience with this programme, will co-ordinate this group. KM and SM to speak further. SMT to indicate who they would want on the working group (either Director or Staff Member) and let SS know. 6 Service Standards Review MK commented that she found the report from the Independent Reviewer very reassuring. Paper approved to go to ARC. One suggestion given was to change the timescales of the process. CN to speak to JMcG It was agreed the budget should sit under CN. 7 Follow Up of Previous Internal Audit Recommendations KM advised that there are two partially implemented recommendations. MK thanked the staff for the excellent follow up review. MK advised that ARC make the final decision on what areas to be investigated, however, she thought it might be useful for SMT to suggest some areas which would be beneficial. The audit on Complaints Standards should be complete for May SMT. 8 **Risk Register** SM updated the key risks. It was agreed that SMT to follow this process: • Each Theme Lead is to update their themes after discussion with their teams. Co-ordinate the changes with KM To be completed before June ARC 9 **Business Plan** SMT to update final position re: 2023/24 Business Plan before Monday. SS to arrange a meeting to agree the draft 2024/25 Business Plan. 10 **Communications Update** Investigation Reports - Of the 89 cases closed at Stage 3 in 2023/24, 47 were published, 75% within 6 weeks of the cases being closed. Plain English - SMT to advise of any nominations to attend training. Media Monitoring – The contract is coming to an end and a new procurement needed.

10 Finance and Corporate Services Update

Finance

SMT to review POs and confirm values of goods/services.

Prompt Payment Rate for 2023/24 97.7% of invoices have been paid within 10 days.

Budget - NIAAC has approved the budget for 2024-25.

New Finance System – The new system is due for implementation over the summer.

Corporate Services

Staff Survey – agreement to be sent out as part of staff development day.

Lunch and Learn – to take place quarterly – SMT to provide KM/AR with suggestions for a programme for the year.

Exit Interviews Report – Summarised report to be recirculated to SMT.

IT/Reporting – MMcG to keep a record going forward and all changes are to be approved by KMcC to enable budget management

Learning and Development Policy - MK and SM to have a look at the policy and email it to SMT for final approval.

Advisory Panel – MK and SM to look at further – target for recruitment and panel to be established by end of this financial year.

11 Investigations Update

Maladministration

CN advised that the team's performance at the end of 2023/24 was very good with increases in all aspects of the process – handovers accepted, decisions issued, and cases closed.

MK to send out an email to IOs as a thank you for all their hard work.

LGES Update

Older cases - SM congratulated CN and the team for working on completing work on a number of older cases.

Adjudications – 3 cases are currently at the Adjudication stage.

MK reported that she is writing a letter to all council Chief Executives attaching a copy of the Commissioner's Annual Report and requesting that it be brought to the attention of the council.

12 Complaints Standards and ASSIST Update

Tony Dysart (PHSO) delivered a workshop to staff, which considered strategies to deal with Vicarious Trauma along the themes of self, team and organization. A planned approach to organization support and embedded practices is in draft form.

Representation of Cases – work continues to enable the implementation of the new approach. SSt advised also that additional assurance around the MAL report a backup record of represented cases is being maintained by ASSIST.

Change of Terminology – all essential template changes and internal training have been completed. The opportunity was taken to implement plain English into the templates, with a supplementary internal guidance document provided to the team. SSt thanked AR for his work on the project.

KPI Descriptors – wording on stage 2 still needs to be changed – SSt to circulate to SMT for final approval.

Complaints Standards

CS Audit – SSt advised that she has received the draft report for consideration. The overall rating was satisfactory.

Best Practice Guides Development – Scripts for the video voice overs are currently being drafted

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Own Initiative Improvement, Engagement, and Impact

Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update

Care Home Case digest – 1st draft has been received. JH would like each complainant to receive a copy.

EDI Survey –one year of data now available, process is going well with a response rate of 31% (mal), and 17% (LGES) – data now can be analysed and be brought to the next SMT

Balmoral Show – 15th-18th May – JH would like IOs to attend to take any queries. JH to send out the expression of interest to staff to work at the show.

NIPSO Patient Safety Conference – the event was successful with 109 delegates attending. MK expressed her thanks to both JH and SS for their work organising the conference.

Own Initiative Update

JH advised that the OI team met with MK and SM recently and it was agreed that access to healthcare will be looked at in more detail, specifically:

- GP Interpretation Services
- Healthcare Charges
- Removal from GP practices

Waiting Lists Communications – meetings have been held with Trusts to discuss progress.

10	AOB
	No further information
11	DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 9th May 2024 at 10am at Progressive House