



January 2025 SMT Minutes

MEETING: Thursday 16th January 2025, Progressive House

In Attendance:

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

Agenda Item	Minutes
1.	<p>Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>No apologies received.</p> <p>MK invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting</p> <p>The minutes from 12th December 24 were agreed upon as a true and accurate record.</p>
3.	<p>Outstanding Actions</p> <p>Holiday Accrual – It was agreed that MK will write out to all staff.</p> <p>LGES Communication Plan – AR/CN to look at a broad approach for high profile LGES cases for further discussion before the end of April.</p> <p>People Strategy – Comments to KMcC by the end of January.</p>
4	<p>Inclusion Award</p> <p>The discussion moved to March SMT.</p>
5	<p>Discussion on the Provision of Gifts and Hospitality Policy</p> <p>A detailed discussion took place regarding good practice. KMcC will create a hospitality register for SMT to populate. The level of detail required will require further discussion.</p>

6	<p>2024/25 Business/Operational Plan Q3</p> <p>Business Plan updated in preparation for ARC.</p> <p>A telephone recording product has been identified, with implementation expected in February. The rollout will begin with stages 1 and 2 and LGES, and following an initial effectiveness review, it will proceed to stage 3.</p>
7	<p>Risk Register Q3</p> <p>KMcC made a few changes to the wording of the top 6 risks. All changes were agreed.</p>
8	<p>Corporate Policy Database</p> <p>KMcC reported the following policies are due for renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Continuity Plan • Disciplinary Policy • Equal Opportunities Policy • And Risk Appetite Statement – to be sent to MK and SM for review
9	<p>Master Audit Recommendations</p> <p>The list of outstanding recommendations was reviewed.</p>
10	<p>MAL and LGES Update</p> <p><u>Investigations</u></p> <p>Support has been provided on chasing outstanding responses and compliance, sourcing IPAs, assisting with preparing IPA bundles, and maintaining work so that the IOs can focus on case progression.</p> <p><u>LGES Update</u></p> <p>A quality assurance meeting took place with the Commissioner on 12th December and a further meeting will be planned for February.</p>
11	<p>Complaints Standards and ASSIST Update</p> <p><u>Assist</u></p> <p>The number of decisions made at stage 2 is 451, 92 of which have been settlements, and 13 referred for local resolution. There have been 94 handovers progressed to stage 3.</p> <p>Service Standards Complaints - one complaint is ongoing.</p> <p>Workpro – SS to arrange for Reporting to be discussed further in February SMT.</p> <p>QA – JH was asked to help with the 3rd QA exercise on Settlements before the end of March. CN to provide templates and guidance to JH.</p>

	<p><u>Complaints Standards</u></p> <p>LG Sector – The team continues to conduct monthly MCHP practical compliance checks on the LG sector. The ASSIST letter of investigation has been adapted to ensure all relevant information is being obtained from the body to monitor compliance.</p>
12	<p>Communications Update</p> <p>Sectoral Insights – draft reports are being finalized.</p> <p>Website – The allocated annual support hours for the site have not all been used. AR advised that it may be possible to do some additional work to freshen up the site without extra cost.</p> <p>Lunch and Learn – the next event will take place on the 4th February by AWARE.</p>
13	<p>OI and Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</p> <p><u>Own Initiative Update</u></p> <p>The team is back to full complement. Work is ongoing to finalise an investigation proposal.</p> <p><u>Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</u></p> <p>Complaints Standards Engagement – positive meetings with NISSC and Praxis took place in December.</p> <p>Case Digest – Women’s Health Digest booked in for design, aiming for an online launch on International Women’s Day. The Care Home Case Digest was shared as part of an engagement session with NISSC, which proved very productive.</p> <p>Internal Data – Responses to the EDI survey are steady at 30% for mal and 35% for LGES.</p> <p>British Academy Project with Uni of Glasgow –International Roundtable on 24th Jan at QUB, 19 delegates including Ombudsman / Ombuds reps and academia attending. Save the date for the conference on 20th March went out in December. A follow up email of confirmed conference content is still to go out.</p>
14	<p>Finance and Corporate Services Update</p> <p>MMcC to look at all budget areas showing an underspend.</p> <p>Progressive BS will introduce a swipe in and out - date to be confirmed.</p> <p>Implementation of the new HR System – is going well. Managers are now trained, and access has been provided. Getgotjob Module went live with the first job vacancies on Monday 13th January.</p> <p>CARE Review and Probation Process – with the new system it was agreed to have a further discussion regarding CARE, including the revamp of the paperwork. SMT to get feedback</p>

	from staff regarding their experience of CARE and Probation. Comments to be brought back to KMcC.
15	AOB There was no other business.
16	DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 13 th February at 10 am, Progressive House. Papers are due by Monday 10 th February at 1pm.