



# October 2024 SMT Minutes

MEETING: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024, Progressive House

In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Ombudsman; MK  
Sean Martin – Deputy Ombudsman; SM  
Julie Healy - Head of Improvement, Engagement & Impact, JH  
Corinne Nelson – Director of Investigations, CN  
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>Minutes from 17<sup>th</sup> September 24 were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p>
3.	<p>Outstanding Actions</p> <p>IPA Contracts – further meeting with PHSO in October</p> <p>Lunch and Learn – AR to provide staff with a calendar of dates. Staff to be consulted about what they would find beneficial for next year’s programme.</p> <p>Hybrid and Parental Leave Policy – MK to receive the final version for sign off.</p> <p>Workpro Data Removal – due to commence in September.</p>
4	<p>24/25 Business/Operational Plan</p> <p>SMT to update Business Plan in time for ARC papers.</p>
5	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>KM advised that two internal audit reports have been completed,</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow Up – with 3 not yet implemented – 1 recommendation is not due yet and 2 are partially implemented</li> <li>• Case Management – WBG provided a satisfactory level of assurance surrounding the case management arrangements in place and no recommendations for improvement were raised.</li> </ul> <p>MK offered her congratulations to CN and SSt for producing an excellent report when teams are under enormous pressure. MK to send out an email to the teams.</p>
6	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>KM to reword risks 2 and 3</p>
7	<p>Corporate Policy Database</p> <p>KM provided an update on policies to be renewed shortly.</p> <p>AR suggested that the NIPSO staff Code of Conduct might need reviewed, even though not due for renewal until October 2025.</p> <p>Conflict of Interests Policy - Declaration of Organisations or Clubs – KM to check the wording – guidance to be completed for staff.</p>
8	<p>Master Audit Recommendations</p> <p>KM reported that there are only 4 recommendations still on-going.</p> <p>MK thanked the Corporate Services Team for the Sage implementation and for getting the finance package up and running.</p>
9	<p>OI and Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</p> <p><u>Own Initiative Update</u></p> <p>JH gave an update on the work in progress.</p> <p><u>Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</u></p> <p>JH advised that the team attended 15 Fresher events all over NI. A meeting with the Student Union Welfare Team at QUB is due to take place on 11<sup>th</sup> October. CN commented that the social media around the attendance of the fresher events was very good.</p> <p>IO Roadshow to visit areas such as Fermanagh, Derry, Newry etc. Plan to be devised for the next year and include advance notice as well as appropriate social media posts.</p> <p>BSI Kitemark – SMT to have a further discussion at next meeting.</p> <p>British Academy Project – 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop with the V + C sector took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop for policy makers scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> November.</p>
10	<p>Finance and Corporate Services Update</p> <p><u>Finance</u></p>

	<p>KM confirmed that Sage 200 reports will be available for the first time at the November SMT.</p> <p>Zivver – is causing some issues with public bodies not receiving the encrypted mail. MK would like to be kept updated on the progress.</p> <p>HR System – A new system has been procured and PT is working on a project plan.</p> <p>Contract Register – KM noted the register requires updated.</p> <p>Legal Case Handling System – training and implementation to be scheduled.</p> <p>Training Plan – KM to recirculate the training plan.</p> <p>Social Media – Separate discussion to be held regarding the naming of staff members on social media and the steps which can be taken to protect staff.</p>
11	<p>MAL and LGES Update</p> <p>CN highlighted the following</p> <p><u>Investigations</u></p> <p>CN, SSt and JMcG visited PHSO, which provided some helpful discussion around the sharing of good practices and differing approaches to managing casework.</p> <p><u>LGES Update</u></p> <p>Allegations Received: 26. This is a sizable increase from last year - 16 allegations have progressed for investigation to date.</p> <p>Operational guidance manual for Adjudications to be added to KM workplan. KM to send the current operational guidancel to MK/SM/CN</p>
12	<p>Complaints Standards and ASSIST Update</p> <p><u>Assist</u></p> <p>Complaints received year to date: 677, 157 have been re-presented, 25 new complaints per week.</p> <p>Health Trusts and NI Housing Executive – SSt to share with MK and SM the draft letter to Chief Executives to agree on a response.</p> <p><u>Complaints Standards</u></p> <p>HSCSN –1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Health Strategic Network to be held on 21-10-24.</p> <p>3-year plan – an outline of the 3 year plan for the publication of MCHPs for all public bodies by the end March 2027 was approved. Work is ongoing to build the details of this plan.</p> <p>Training Videos – Scripts have been drafted to develop CS training videos.</p>

13	<p><b>Communications Update</b></p> <p>Investigations Reports – 39 reports have been published this year.</p> <p>Ombudsman Reports – AR to arrange for the annual reports to be distributed to MLAs and councillors. Ombudsman Report posted to website once printed copies have been received.</p> <p>Information Governance – AR to look at internal control for creating containers with Director permissions.</p>
14	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Papers should be given to SS <u>by 1 pm, 4 working days</u> before the next meeting.</p>
15	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b> – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November at 9.30 am at Progressive House. Papers due by 31<sup>st</sup> October at 1pm.</p>