

NI GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY - BOARD MEETING
20th February 2020

- Present:** Mr Bernard Mitchell, *Chair*
Mr Peter Reynolds, *Chief Executive*
Mrs Gillian McGaughey, *Non-Executive Director*
Mr Fred Smyth, *Non-Executive Director*
- In Attendance:** Mr Sean Brown, *Corporate Services Manager*
Mr John Sheldon, *Quality Assurance & Training Manager*
- Apologies:** Mr Lee Wilson, *Non-Executive Director*
- Minute Taker:** Mrs Ann Andrew, *Administration Manager*

START TIME: 9.30am

1.20 SERVICE DELIVERY PRESENTATION

- 1.20.1 The Service Delivery presentation was postponed to the next meeting as Ms McGinn was unavailable.

2.20 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.20.1 Mr Mitchell provided an opportunity for the Board members to identify any conflict of interest in respect of today's agenda. None were noted.

3.20 MINUTE OF LAST MEETING – 12th DECEMBER 2019

- 3.20.1 The minute and confidential minute of the previous meeting of 12th December 2019 was agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and approved.

4.20 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.20.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the action list from the previous meeting noting that each action was complete. A summary of each action was provided.
- 40.20.2 Mr Mitchell referred to the action list from the confidential minute and confirmed the action point as complete.

5.20 CHAIR AND NON-EXECUTIVE'S BRIEFING

5.20.1 **Vacancies on the NIGALA Board:** Mr Mitchell advised that formal offers were now being made for the positions of Chair and Non-Executive Director, and that the matter should be finalised within the next 2-3 weeks.

6.20 CHIEF EXECUTIVES BRIEFING

6.20.1 Mr Reynolds referred to his *CEO Board Paper* providing an update on NIGALA activity since the period since the last meeting of the Board.

- **Shadow Family Justice Board:** Mr Reynolds referred to the issue of delay and confirmed that Ms O’Kane attends a sub-group to look at same. Mr Reynolds also sits on a sub-group to look at Article 56 appointments; at a recent hearing a judgement was made in respect of Article 56 appointments by The Honourable Mr Justice O’Hara. Mr Reynolds indicated he was meeting with counsel next week to review this.
- **SOS:** Mr Reynolds indicated that Signs of Safety is at year 2 of a 5 year implementation plan. Guidance for NIGALA staff is drafted.
- **NIGALA Conference ‘Are We Listening?’:** The NIGALA conference took place at Titanic Belfast on 14 February 2020. Mr Reynolds noted that this went well and highlighted the key points of feedback. Mr Smyth highlighted the importance of NIGALA being a voice for change. There was discussion about the NIYAB (NIGALA Youth Board) and Mr Mitchell noted he was keen that the Youth Forum be developed.
- **Boardroom Apprentice Scheme:** Mrs McGaughey indicated she had recently provided a presentation to those on the boardroom apprentice scheme. She emphasised the importance of NIGALA facilitating such an opportunity in order to help provide young people with the skills necessary to join Boards and have the ability to speak up in the future. Members were supportive and agreed to consider further when nominations were sought.

Mr Mitchell suggested it may be helpful to also consider promoting an annual ‘care day’ and run a series of events for looked after children, social workers, guardians and other stakeholders jointly.

- **Industrial Action:** Mr Reynolds updated the Board in respect of industrial action.

7.20 ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

- 7.20.1 Mr Reynolds reported that he and Mr Brown had attended the Agency’s ground clearing meeting in December 2019. He confirmed he had also attended the Accountability Meeting rearranged for 3rd February 2020 (the Chair having a hospital appointment at the time in question) where he discussed in year pressures, finance, etc. He noted this was a useful discussion.

8.20 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 8.20.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Finance and Performance Report* and Mr Brown spoke to this covering the areas of KPI performance, workflow management, financial performance and an environmental scan.
- 8.20.2 Mr Mitchell queried if the additional monies required to meet the Landlord demands had been met by the DoH. Mr Brown indicated this was the case. The lease at Centre House now runs until August 2022.
- 8.20.3 The Board discussed the workflow management, with considerable time being given to caseload and duration of cases. Mr Smyth emphasised the need for further analysis of cases with a duration over 400 days, indicating that information detailing the court/case type/Trust/analysis of the reason for delay would be helpful. Mr Reynolds indicated work in this regard had been completed and the reasons for delay varied. Mr Mitchell suggested that some reflection be given as to how more in-depth information might be given to the Board. He requested that a revised report/options on how to report come back to the next Board meeting.
- 8.20.4 Mr Brown summarised the financial situation and indicated that the Agency is on track to break-even at year end. He indicated that two guardians were retiring in April 2020 and work is underway to replace same.
- 8.20.5 Mr Brown confirmed the Agency recently held a *mental health awareness* session for staff to attend.

ACTION: Revised Report/Options on How to Report on cases over 400 days duration to come to the next Board meeting.

9.20 PRIORITIES FOR DELIVERING A SERVICE TO CHILDREN

9.20.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Priorities for Delivering a Service to Children*. Mr Reynolds indicated the paper provides an overview of the Role of the Guardian work-stream tasked with promoting consistency of approach in the delivery of a child focused, quality service.

9.20.2 Mr Reynolds took the Board through the papers confirming it had been discussed with staff at a recent away day in January 2020. A targeted intervention plan is currently being piloted and will be the basis of discussion with staff/Judiciary/Trusts, etc. Mr Mitchell requested details be included in the NIGALA Business Plan 2020-21.

ACTION: Priorities for Delivering a Service to Children to be included in the NIGALA Business Plan 2020-21.

10.20 RISK REGISTER

10.20.1 Mr Mitchell referred to the *Risk Register* and Mr Brown confirmed the revision follows work undertaken with Mr Wilson. He indicated it was influenced by Internal Audit and continues to be a work in progress. The Board reviewed same and agreed the new outline.

10.20.2 Mr Mitchell requested the order of the risks be amended with the *Delivery of a Quality Service to Agreed Standards* being moved to the start of the Register. Amendments are to be made to:-

- *Risk 1* is to be amended to 'medium'.
- *Risk 2* is to include the accountability meeting under the controls.
- *Risk 4* is to include that all Board members have sight of the performance report.
- *Risk 5* Mr Mitchell suggested that the Agency seek routine independent testing in regard to Cybersecurity. Mr Brown indicated he is seeking year end assurance letters from every area of BSO and will ask if such testing is done.
- *Risk 6* Workforce succession planning should include non-executive members of the Board and Senior Executives.

10.20.3 Mr Mitchell referred to the 'Operating manual' which Mr Brown confirmed would be an operational assurance framework for reference purposes by each employee.

10.20 Mr Brown confirmed the *Risk Register* will go to the Audit Committee meeting in due course.

ACTION: Mr Brown to update the Risk Register to reflect suggested amendments.

11.20 YEAR END TIMETABLE

- 11.20.1 Mr Brown advised that there has been no formal notification from the DoH about the year-end timetable for 2019-20 as yet. He confirmed that the timetable from last year is being followed.

12.20 DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE***Guidance on Proportionate Autonomy for Arm's Length Bodies***

- 12.20.1 Mr Brown referred to the *Guidance on Proportionate Autonomy for Arm's Length Bodies*, correspondence Ref: LM/12/12/19 and indicated that this template will replace the Management Statement. He noted further discussion with DoH will take place.

Progress on review of Partnerships between Government Departments and ALBs

- 12.20.2 Mr Brown referred to the *Partnership between Government Departments and Arm's Length Bodies* and updated the Board on progress. He indicated that the Agency awaits contact from the DoH to take this forward.

IHRD Report Recommendation 70

- 12.20.3 Mr Reynolds referred to correspondence received from Jim Moore, Chair of the IHRD ALB Board Effectiveness Sub-Group and confirmed attending a meeting on 5th December 2019 to discuss the concerns expressed in relation to the proposed draft publication scheme in relation to Recommendation 70 of the IHRD Programme. When further guidance is reissued this will be brought to the Board for discussion.

ACTION: Updated guidance in respect of IHRD Report Recommendation 70 to be discussed with the Board when made available.

13.20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 13.20.1 There was no other business for discussion.

14.20 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

- 14.20.1 There were no items for discussion.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 23rd APRIL 2020 AT 9.30 AM

Chair of the Board

A C T I O N L I S T

Ref	Action	By Whom	Progress Noted for Meeting
8.20 Finance & Performance Report	<i>Revised Report/Options on How to Report on cases over 400 days duration to come to the next Board meeting.</i>	Mr Brown / Mr Reynolds	<i>Carried forward to July meeting of Board</i>
9.20 Priorities for Delivering a Service to Children	<i>Priorities for Delivering a Service to Children to be included in the NIGALA Business Plan 2020-21.</i>	Mr Brown / Mr Reynolds	Complete
10.20 Risk Register	<i>Mr Brown to update the Risk Register to reflect suggested amendments.</i>	Mr Brown	Complete
12.20 Departmental Correspondence: IHRD Report Recommendation 70	<i>Updated guidance in respect of IHRD Report Recommendation 70 to be discussed with the Board when made available.</i>	Mr Brown / Mr Reynolds	Carried forward until received