

Minutes of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 10th March 2021 at 2.00 pm. This meeting was held via Zoom.

Present: Professor C Curran, OBE, Chair
Mrs A McLernon, OBE, Chief Executive
Mrs A Baxendale, Deputy Chair
Professor C McArdle, Chief Nursing Officer
Mrs D Oktar-Campbell
Mr P Davidson

Attendance at the Meeting: Ms J Jackson, Head of Corporate Services

Secretariat: Mrs D Meleady, Personal Assistant

1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs L Houlihan, Ms D O'Donnell, Mrs C Rice and Dr V Tohani.

2.0 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

2.1 To welcome members of the public to the meeting

It was noted that no members of the public attended the online meeting.

2.2 It was noted that there were no Conflicts of Interest from any of the Council Members.

2.3 A copy of the DoH Board of Governance Self-Assessment Document 2020/21 had previously been circulated for approval at today's meeting. It was noted that Professor Curran would discuss further this Self-Assessment document with Council Members in the Confidential Section.

2.4 Council Members noted that the papers for Agenda Items 6.1 and 7.2.2 were circulated via email ahead of the meeting.

3.0 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on the 18th November 2020 (NIPEC/4/2020) for consideration.

A copy of the Minutes of the virtual meeting held on the 18th November 2020 (NIPEC/4/2020) had been previously circulated for consideration. Professor Curran asked Council Members if they had any matters of accuracy of which there were none.

Council Members accepted and agreed the Minutes from the virtual meeting held on the 18th November 2020.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 Detailed in updated Action Plan

A copy of the updated Action Plan had previously been circulated. It was noted that items had been actioned and the Action Plan was updated to reflect this.

At this point in the meeting Professor Curran asked Professor C McArdle, Chief Nursing Officer, if she would like to give her update, to facilitate her attending another meeting.

Professor McArdle updated Council Members on the following:

- Surge Planning
- Waiting Lists
- Rebuild Plan
- Vaccination Programme
- Mental Health
- Clinical Supervision
- Nursing and Midwifery Task and Finish Group
- Nursing and Midwifery Workforce
- Staff Pay Legislation
- International Recruitment
- Clinical Framework for Care Homes

Professor Curran acknowledged and thanked Professor McArdle's compassionate leadership during the pandemic.

5.0 CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.1 It was noted that a letter dated 4th December 2020 had been received from Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.2 It was noted that a letter dated 11th December 2020 had been received from Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This letter had previously been circulated.

- 5.3 It was noted that a letter dated 31st December 2020 had been received from the UK CMOs, regarding the UK Covid-19 Vaccination Programmes. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.4 It was noted that a letter dated 4th January 2021 had been received from Mrs C McArdle, CNO regarding an Extension to NIPEC's Corporate Plan. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.5 It was noted that a letter 8th January 2021 had been received from Dr M McBride, CMO regarding Timing of Interval between Covid-19 Vaccinations. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.6 It was noted that a letter dated 15th January 2021 had been received from Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.7 It was noted that a letter dated 27th January 2021 had been received from Mrs C McArdle, CNO, regarding NMC Emergency Education Standards. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.8 It was noted that a letter dated 18th February 2021 had been received from Robin Swann, MLA, Minister for Health regarding Rebuilding HSC Services. This letter had previously been circulated.
- 5.9 It was noted that a letter dated 23rd February 2021 had been received from Ms Gemma Loughran, Chair, NIGALA regarding Chief Executive Announcement. This letter had previously been circulated.

6.0 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Chief Executives Report *(To be tabled)*

A copy of the Chief Executive's Report had previously been circulated.

Mrs McLernon updated Council Members on the report noting the following:

- Request to involve professional staff in delivery of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.
- Risk Assessment - Will be updated for Return to Office in line with Governance Guidelines as these are updated.
- NIPEC's new website – Data from the feedback of the survey to be gathered.

Mrs McLernon referred members to details in her report regarding publications co-authored by Mrs A Reed and Council Members congratulated Mrs Reed on these.

Professor Curran commended and thanked Mrs McLernon for her leadership and work undertaken by the staff of NIPEC.

6.2 Consultation Activity Report

A copy of the above Report had previously been circulated. Council Members were invited to respond to any of the consultations listed.

7.0 CORPORATE CONTROL & FINANCE

7.1 Head of Corporate Services Report

A copy of the Head of Corporate Services Report had been circulated.

7.2 Report from Standing Committee

7.2.1 A copy of the confirmed Minutes of A&R Meeting A&R/4/2020 held on the 13th October 2020 had previously been circulated.

7.2.2 A copy of the unconfirmed Minutes of the A&R Meeting A&R/1/2021 held on the 16th February 2021 had been circulated via late mailing.

Secretary's note:

Mrs D Meleady contacted Dr V Tohani to ask if there was anything he wished to raise from the Audit and Risk Meeting held on the 16th February 2021. Dr Tohani informed her that he had nothing to raise.

7.3 Financial Management Summary

7.3.1 Financial Summary of Expenditure – Month 10 (***Circulated***)

A copy of the Financial Summary of Expenditure for Month 10 had previously been circulated.

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on the following:

It was noted that at Month 10, NIPEC showed a projected surplus of £36k at year end. This figure reflected total retractions of £210k (£30k from Future Nurse Future Midwife along with £180K from NIPEC's core budget).

Council Members noted that NIPEC was on target to achieve the break-even position £20k or less. Requisitions were being processed to include expenditure for mandatory accommodation, health & safety works.

Ms Jackson would be attending the month 11 Budget meeting with Business Services Organisation, Finance, on the 11th March 2021.

7.4 Corporate Risk Register 2020-21

A copy of the above Risk Register, Version 11 was previously circulated.

Ms Jackson gave an update on the following risks:

Risk 3 – Cyber Security Breach at QUB;

It was noted that there had been a Cyber Security Breach in Queen's University, Belfast. Senior HSC Representatives had met with Queen's Senior Managers and it was agreed that to mitigate any effect of the breach on HSC, a temporary cessation of the email service in/out to Queen's had been introduced across the service. This cessation would remain in place until further assurances were received from the University about the extent of the breach. Staff in NIPEC have been advised.

Risk 5 – Delay in advertising Council posts

This risk remains at Medium but Ms Jackson proposed that consideration be given to escalating the classification to High to reflect the imminent end of extensions for a number of Council members. It was agreed that the risk should be re-classified to High.

Council Members noted that two new risks have been added since the last version presented to Council. These are:

Risk 11 - Risk of potential disruption to NIPEC support functions due to turnover of corporate staff.

It was noted that a number of staff are due to retire in 2021-22 and that this has presented an opportunity to examine the current structure and consider if it meets the future requirements of the organisation. Ms Jackson advised that a Scoping Exercise was underway to look at the structure, with all staff being engaged to seek their views. Once a report is produced and consulted on with the relevant stakeholders including staff and Union representatives, recruitment will commence to fill any vacancies.

Risk 12 - Risk of lack of /or insufficient support from BSO HR SLA.

It was noted that there have been concerns over the timeliness of responses to NIPEC requests by BSO HR and given the impending changes to the NIPEC staff structure during 2021-22, it would be more crucial to have robust support in place. These issues will be raised at the annual SLA meeting with the HR Director in April 2021.

7.5 KPIs

A copy of the KPI Report for the period up to 31st January 2021 had previously been circulated.

Council Members noted that NIPEC were on target for all areas. The Invoice payment figures and both 10 and 30 day targets were all at 100%. There had been a rise in Staff Absence between October and December however this has reverted back to well within the target.

7.6 NIPEC Accommodation – James House Project

At the November 2020 Council meeting members were advised that NIPEC and other Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) had been instructed by the Department of Health (DoH), Property Management Branch (PMB) that engagement with the James House project should be paused. This was due to the initiation of the Department's Business Continuity Plan in order that they could prioritise their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, PMB had advised that due to the pandemic, they planned to reassess the requirement for office space for DoH ALBs in James House who were then asked to reconsider future office space requirements and forward revised requirements to PMB for consideration. A response which reflected the discussion at the November 2020 Council meeting was submitted following consultation with and approval by Sponsor Branch. To date no feedback has been received by NIPEC from PMB.

In February 2021, the James House Project Team provided an update to NIPEC and other potential tenants of James House and confirmed that work on the project has been progressing. Information was shared on indicative relocation dates to James House, with NIPEC scheduled to move in June 2022. NIPEC have also been advised that the Transition Management Working Group are recommencing their meetings from March 2021 and the team will be engaging with Organisations between March and June 2021 to agree final furniture, branding and signage requirements. Advice had been sought from PMB as to whether NIPEC can resume engagement with the Project and this had been confirmed.

The next Project Board meeting is taking place on the 11th March 2021. One of the issues to be discussed at the meeting is the provision of car parking spaces for staff and visitors, an issue which is affecting all the ALBs. An interim NI Civil Service Car Parking Policy, issued in December 2020, directed that only Blue Badge holders or individuals with disability requirements would automatically be allocated a parking space.

7.7 COVID-19 Risk Assessments and SOPs

Risk Assessment:

Council Members noted in line with Government advice, all staff continue to work from home however, remedial measures have been put in place should any NIPEC staff or essential maintenance operatives need to access the offices. External visitors are still not permitted into the offices. Centre House Management have clear signage for one-way systems and the use of facilities within the building.

The remainder of outstanding actions on the risk assessment relate to a return to full office working and will be actioned when that happens.

Standard Operating Procedures:

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on the following sets of Operating Procedures:

- **Office Working during Covid-19** procedures were reviewed and issued to staff in January 2021. They will be reviewed again in April.
- **Home Working SOPS during Covid-19** were reviewed and approved by the Health & Safety Committee and Business Team in February 2021. Due to the extended home working period, these have been expanded to include a Home Working Checklist for all staff to complete. This must be discussed with the Employee's Line Manager, including any problems identified, and the line manager should be satisfied that the employee can continue to work safely at home; It was noted that the Home Working checklist had been issued and responses were due back from staff by 16th March 2021. Any issues arising would be discussed by the Senior Team.
- **Return to Office Working Procedures** were in draft form however, due to ongoing Government advice for employees to continue to work at home where possible, the review of these was deferred until March 2021. It was noted that a Situation Reporting Meeting (SITREP) agreed that these would be reconsidered again following the next Executive announcement from the Comprehensive Formal Review on 16th March 2021.

7.8 NIPEC Websites

Ms Jackson updated Council Members on new website and Compliance with Accessibility Legislation.

NIPEC Website:

Council Members noted that NIPEC launched their new website on the 11th February 2021 and although some issues had been encountered with broken links, action was taken to address these and overall the site has been positively received.

One issue that emerged was the private log in a section of the website which was set up to allow Council Members to access their papers via their personal internet as an alternative to receiving their papers via email. Testing on access to the page flagged a security risk with logins to the site from outside the HSC network and was deemed to represent a risk of hacking. ITS have therefore decided that the login page should be blocked entirely from external access.

Several alternative solutions were received from ITS, which were emailed to Council Members, who were asked to consider and agree a way forward.

One of the proposed alternatives would result in the Chief Executive's Personal Assistant password protecting every document, correspondence, etc. before uploading to the website. Download links would have to be published on a hidden page which would require input from ITS, who may not always be immediately available.

Professor Curran suggested to Council Members deferring this decision and reviewing it at a later stage as there were other priorities which were more pertinent and the current arrangement remains appropriate.

Council Members agreed with this suggestion.

Accessibility Legislation for Websites and APPs:

An update was provided to Council Members at their November 2020 Council meeting, on the legislative requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. NIPEC's position at that time was of partial compliance. Council was advised that BSO ITS had engaged with a supplier to carry out an audit of the main WordPress Framework and the original indicative completion date for deployment of the changes was given as February 2021.

ITS has since advised that the timeline for auditing of the site has been put back for several reasons including Covid-19 related provision of services resulting in stretched resources. There has also been a change in the support of the WordPress Framework, with ITS being obliged to issue a tender for future support which resulted in a new 5 year contract being awarded in November 2020. The company who won the tender has been allowed time to familiarise itself with the WordPress theme and would be co-operating with the auditing partner to take forward the audit, which is due to commence in March 2021. ITS are unable to provide a completion date for the audit as it depends on the initial findings and any remedial work required. However, we have an assurance that once the work has been completed and tested, any recommended updates would be applied to the NIPEC website.

In addition to the main website, NIPEC has two smaller sites, the Online Portfolio and Careers websites, both of which were commissioned from an external provider. Following an initial audit of these sites in September 2020, NIPEC commissioned remedial works to the sites to improve compliance. These works were completed in October 2020 and a written report was received in January 2021 outlining further work required to achieve full compliance. NIPEC has asked the provider for a quotation on the cost of the changes.

7.9 NIPEC 5 Year Review of Equality Scheme

It was noted that NIPEC is currently undertaking a Five Year Review of its Equality Scheme which was originally due for completion by the end of March 2021. However, given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the regional HSC Organisations, BSO Equality Unit had approached the Equality Commission to enquire about the potential of an extension for submission of the summary report to June 2021. While the Commission cannot extend the deadline, it has been confirmed that a report would not be sought until end of June 2021. NIPEC is now working with BSO to prepare the Report for approval by Council in June.

The nature of the Review is based on evidence and would include the collection and consideration of additional quantitative and qualitative data alongside previous Annual Progress Reports. As part of the evidence gathering, BSO Equality Unit has proposed an engagement session with Council Members; while this is not mandatory it is believed that it would provide a timely opportunity for Council Members to offer feedback on

NIPEC's Equality agenda. Ms Jackson asked Members to consider if they thought this would be a useful exercise and how this could be facilitated. Council Members were asked to let Mrs D Meleady know via email by the 16th March 2021.

ACTION:

Council Members to let Mrs D Meleady know if they would wish to attend an engagement session with BSO Equality Unit by the 16th March 2021.

It was noted that the Senior Team has considered and approved the self-assessment to inform the Report. This has been forwarded to the BSO Equality Unit who will commence drafting the Report. The first draft was expected to be ready in May 2021.

7.10 NIPEC Corporate Plan – Statement for 2021/22

Council Members agreed that an Extension cover sheet should be added to the NIPEC Corporate Plan for 2021/2022. A copy of the Plan along with the statement is to be put onto the NIPEC website.

7.11 NIPEC Draft Business Plan 2021/22

A draft copy of the NIPEC Business Plan for 2021/22 had previously been circulated. It was noted that there has been no indication from Sponsor Branch on when the draft should be formally submitted for approval.

7.12 NIPEC Scoping Exercise of the NIPEC's Corporate Services Organisational Structure

NIPEC is facing significant internal change in 2021-22, particularly within its Corporate Services Team where a number of post holders have indicated their intention to retire in the next 12 months.

Following advice from HR, it was agreed that a time-limited, internal scoping exercise should be undertaken with the aim of gaining a current understanding of NIPEC's Corporate Services' functions. The scoping exercise is being supported by a NIPEC Associate and a paper has been developed, approved by Business Team and shared with the Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee. The paper outlines the remit of the exercise which includes engagement with all staff across the organisation to assess the impact of change, including that with anticipated retirements.

Once the engagement process is completed, the information will be collated and a report prepared to include recommendations on the way forward for consideration by the Senior Team. This will ensure that the Corporate Services team can function effectively and efficiently and remain fit for purpose over the longer term. Should those recommendations include any change to the corporate team structure, then the organisation will enter a change management process which will involve engagement with staff, HR and Trade Unions.

Given the potential impact of staff turnover throughout this period, a new risk has been added to the Corporate Risk Register to support management of the process. Council will receive regular updates on progress. It was noted that most of the engagement with staff has been completed, Ms Jackson and Mrs McLernon were due to meet with Mrs G Henry on the 12th March 2021.

It was agreed to source a date to hold a Council Workshop to discuss the proposed updated Risk Register.

ACTION:

Mrs D Meleady to check with Council Members regarding their availability to attend a Corporate Risk workshop.

7.13 NIPEC Bank Account, Periodic Review

NIPEC has a bank account with Bank of Ireland UK and to comply with legal and regulatory requirements and to ensure that the bank's records are kept up to date, the Bank is required to periodically review and update its Customer Due Diligence on all customers that it maintains a relationship with. In order to successfully complete this customer due diligence review, the Bank has asked NIPEC to complete an Unincorporated Organisational Application Form which is being taken forward by the Head of Corporate Services supported by BSO Finance. The bank has also asked for a list of Council members on letter headed paper to include the name, date of birth (can be month & year only) and country of residence for each member. Both documents should be signed by Chair and returned to the bank.

To comply with this request, Ms Jackson asked Council Members to confirm their name, date of birth and country of residence to the Chief Executive's Office.

ACTION:

Ms D Meleady to request Council Members personal details be sent to the Chief Executive's Office to complete this process.

Professor Curran thanked Ms Jackson for all her hard work and indicated that the Cover Sheet for the agreeing of Policies was very helpful. Ms Jackson thanked all the Council Members for their input and time in completing outstanding Policies.

8.0 SAFETY AND QUALITY

8.1 NIPEC Professional Work Plan 2020/21 – Business Plan objectives progress Monitoring Report 1st November 2020 to 31st March 2021.

A copy of the above Plan had been previously circulated. Mrs McLernon indicated to Council Members that there were eight Amber Statuses due to Covid. These were:

- Recording Care
- Quality Assurance of non-NMC approved Education Programmes
- Enabling Professionalism Framework
- NI Collaborative – Strengthening the Commitment
- Preceptorship Framework
- Link Nurse Framework
- Competent Assessment Tools
- Delegation Framework

These projects would be carried over into next year and would be considered for inclusion in the new Work Plan from 1 April 21 in consultation with DoH sponsor branch in agreement of organisational priorities for 2021-22.

8.2 Presentation from Senior Professional Officers

Professor Curran welcomed the Senior Professional Officers to the Council Meeting and invited them along with Mrs D Meleady to give a five minute presentation on Covid-19 related work they had undertaken since March 2020. The following presentations which represented some of NIPECs contribution to the Covid-19 response were given:

- Supporting Nursing & Midwifery Practice during Covid-19

C McCusker

- Outcome of Health & Social Well-being Survey during Covid-19

F Bradley/D Meleady

- FNFM – Emergency Education Standards during Covid-19

F Cannon

- Enabling Professionalism 2020: Expanding the Capacity of the Nursing and Midwifery Workforce during Covid-19

A Reed

Professor Curran thanked the Senior Professional Officers and Mrs D Meleady for their presentations which she felt highlighted the excellent work being taken forward by NIPEC. Council Members noted that if they wish to have any further information on any of the presentations they could email Mrs D Meleady who would pass their email on to the relevant Officer.

9.0 CHIEF NURSING OFFICER UPDATE

It was noted that Professor McArdle's update was given earlier in the agenda.

10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business.

11.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted the next public meeting of NIPEC Council will be on 30th June 2021 at 11.00 am in Centre House, 79 Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4JE. It was noted that this meeting is to sign off NIPEC's Annual Report and Accounts and needs to be quorate.

At this point in the meeting Professor Curran asked Mrs McLernon, Ms Jackson and Mrs Meleady to leave the meeting due to the confidential nature of further business.



CHAIR Professor Carol Curran

DATE 30th June 2021