



July 2024 SMT Minutes

MEETING: Thursday 25th July 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
Sarah Sherry – Secretariat; SS

Agenda Item	Minutes
1.	Apologies and Conflicts of Interest Apologies received from Andrew Ruston – Head of Communications 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 6 th June 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.
3.	Outstanding Actions <i>ARC Recruitment</i> –ARC recruitment for Chairperson and new member is to be progressed. <i>Staff Day</i> – Directors to discuss the draft programme at next Directors Meeting <i>Lunch and Learn</i> – AR to provide staff with a calendar of dates, and Corporate Services to co-ordinate the lunch, room bookings etc
4	NIPSO Trainee Investigating Officer Working Group Update SM reported that the working group has formally met twice and is progressing with its key activities. SMT agreed quarterly updates, or sooner if decisions are required
5	24/25 Business/Operational Plan SMT to re-check the business plan and KM to provide a final check before Wed 7 th August.
6	NIPSO Risk Register

	Directors have looked at their key areas and updated the register. MK/SM to look at the key risks.
7	<p>Corporate Policy Database</p> <p>KM highlighted the policies which require renewal soon:</p> <p><i>Parental Leave Policy</i> <i>Job Evaluation Policy</i> <i>Retention/Disposal Schedule</i> <i>Hybrid Working Policy</i> <i>Menopause Policy</i></p>
8	<p>Contract Register</p> <p>KM to speak to CN/SM regarding independent service standards reviewer contract. KM to address the issue of LGES legal services contract.</p>
9	<p>Quarterly Audit Recommendations Update</p> <p>KM confirmed the only outstanding Audit recommendations are the Finance Manual, People Strategy and the Complaints Standards Procedures document. Draft Standing Financial Rules are to go to August ARC.</p>
10	<p><i>Investigations and LGES Update</i></p> <p>CN highlighted complaint numbers and KPI's from her report.</p> <p>The recent IO recruitment exercise was extremely successful and 7 permanent posts have been offered and accepted. All new staff will be in post by the end of August. She commented that this is positive, both for performance and team morale and will bring some much-needed stability to both mal teams.</p> <p>Quality Assurance – 80% of the cases selected have been reviewed and no significant issues have been identified.</p> <p><u>LGES Update</u></p> <p>A full-time IO will join the team in late August.</p>
11	<p><i>Complaint Standards and ASSIST Update</i></p> <p>Liaison with PHSO is ongoing and SST and CN are traveling over to PHSO on the 2nd-3rd October.</p> <p>The interim arrangements to support stage one have now been stepped back as full complement of staff have returned to their posts.. SSt commented that she was very grateful for the support provided.</p> <p>Recruitment for a fourth Senior Casework Officer is in progress</p> <p>An engagement session took place with BHSC Complaint handling team personnel and management.</p> <p>Directors of Investigations met with PHSO's Lead Clinician, Mental Health Nurse and Operations Manager to discuss their internal mental health related learning labs for</p>

	<p>Casework/Investigating Officers to include bespoke support material. The process has commenced to tailor the delivery of learning labs and support material to NIPSO's needs.</p> <p><u>Complaints Standards</u></p> <p><i>LG Sector</i> – CEOs have been contacted seeking submission of CHPs. CS team meets with LGBPN members every quarter.</p> <p><i>HSCTs</i> –1st meeting of the Operational Network took place on the 7th June.</p>
12	<p>Communications Update</p> <p>In AR's absence the Communications Report was taken as read</p> <p>Information Governance Paper to be brought to the September SMT.</p> <p>Annual Comms Plan to be circulated to SMT</p>
13	<p>OI and Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</p> <p><u>Own Initiative Update</u></p> <p>The OI team met with MK and SM and currently working on a draft proposal for the next focused investigation.</p> <p><i>Covid Inquiry</i> – The hearings regarding the current phase will commence in Sept 24, and JH has been advised that MK will not be called as a witness.</p> <p><u>Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Update</u></p> <p>JH advised that the Impact team will be taking part in Belfast PRIDE on the 27th July. Dates for the fresher events are being finalised and JH will be asking for volunteers for these events when details are confirmed. Dates have been agreed to hold 6 GP Practice Staff Sessions for the GP Federation Support Unit across NI.</p> <p><i>NIPSO Patient Safety Conference</i> – draft follow up report ready, hoping to launch on the 17th September 'Patient Safety Day'. MK to share report with Minister of Health</p> <p><i>Care Home Case Digest</i> – Completed.</p> <p><i>Vulnerability Training Resource</i> – launched at the OA Conference, and received positive feedback</p>
14	<p>Finance and Corporate Services Update</p> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>KM provided an update on the current financial position.</p> <p><i>Prompt Payment Rate</i> for 2024/25 is 88% of invoices have been paid within 10 days and 100% within 30 days.</p> <p>SS to arrange an SMT budget meeting</p>

	<p>External Audit – 23-24 annual report and accounts are completed with an unqualified audit opinion.</p> <p>Legal</p> <p>Procedures for dealing with FoI/SAR requests were discussed.</p>
15	<p>AOB</p> <p>No AOB</p>
11	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Tuesday 17th September at 10 am at Progressive House</p>