



# NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

**MEETING 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025, NIPSO, Progressive House**

**Members Present:**

Dónall Curtin – Chair; Independent Member (DC)  
Patricia Snell - Independent Member, (PS)

**In Attendance:**

Margaret Kelly – Accounting Officer/Ombudsman; (MK)  
Sean Martin –Deputy Ombudsman; (SM)  
Kirsty McCool – Director of Governance and Support Services (KM)  
Nitka White – NIAO (NW) - virtually  
Scott McCready - WBG (SMcC)  
Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS)

Item	Minute
1.	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies from Graham Gillespie, WBG and Kathy Doey, NIAO  DC advised that due to other commitments TM, an Independent Member, resigned from the committee, effective from Dec 2024. DC recorded his thanks for his contribution to the committee.
2.	<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>  DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda.  No conflicts were noted.
3.	<b>Minutes</b>  Minutes from 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 were agreed.
4	<b>Update on Action Points</b>  SM updated the following on outstanding actions:  <b>Advisory Committee</b> – still under consideration

	<p><b>Risk and Assurance Mapping</b> – Ongoing and will be completed before March 25</p> <p><b>New Global Standards Training for Members</b> – on pause until a new committee is established</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Ombudsman Update (verbal)</b></p> <p>MK provided a verbal update to ARC on a range of issues. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Latest agreed budget with the NIAAC including discussion of pay and grading.</li> <li>- A staff development day and a full-day SMT meeting to shape the new Strategic Plan for 2025–2029 and the Business Plan for 2025/26. It is anticipated that both plans will to be finalised by the end of March.</li> <li>- A recent article in Agenda NI on the role of the Ombudsman and access to justice.</li> <li>- Evidence sessions to both the Health and Education Committees</li> <li>- Update on proposed international conference on; Seeking Safety, Accessing Public Services and the Ombudsman's office for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.</li> <li>- Brief update on on-going legal cases.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Financial Management</b></p> <p>KM advised that the projected full year underspend is 1.5% (£75k). LGES is projected a full year underspend of £11k.</p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Case Performance Management</b></p> <p>SM reported that all KPIs were met, however, there has been considerable effort by staff to maintain this position. It is projected that all targets will be met at the end of the financial year.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p>SMcG provided an overview of the NIPSO Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Audit.</p> <p>Following the review, WBG provided a satisfactory level of assurance in relation to NIPSO's business continuity and disaster recovery planning and their associated policies, procedures and controls. 5 recommendations have been accepted. KM and SM agreed with DC's suggestion to seek external assistance with the testing of the updated Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity arrangements.</p> <p>SMcG advised that WBG were providing a satisfactory level of assurance in relation to the audit of NIPSO's Governance Framework. The report included one recommendation and two observations.</p> <p>The Annual Report was added to the meeting papers, and MK noted that it is beneficial to receive this document at this time of year. The report provides a summary of the audit work conducted during the 2024/2025 period.</p>

<b>9</b>	<b>External Audit – NIAO Update</b>  NW advised that she will be leading the audit this year and will be hoping the audit will progress on a similar timetable as last year. Confirmed dates will be circulated before the next meeting.
<b>10</b>	<b>Business Plan – Q3</b>  The trainee investigator programme has been delayed due to staff turnover and absences, but work is now underway. The peer review exercise has not progressed as the IOI peer review process is unlikely to meet NIPSO's requirements.  PS recommended considering the Health Service Safety Investigation Body, noting that they have some valuable resources available online.
<b>11</b>	<b>Risk Register – Q3</b>  KM confirmed there were no changes to the scoring of risks and advised that SMT members have ownership of their risks, and these are discussed at each quarterly SMT meeting.
<b>12</b>	<b>Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update</b>  KM highlighted the recent progress by SMT in relation to the older recommendations, which are almost complete.
<b>13</b>	<b>Comment on Information Items</b>  No comments
<b>14</b>	<b>AOB</b>  PS advised that the engagement team is currently working with the health service, and several individuals have mentioned NIPSO and its work on the Complaints Standards process to her in recent days. MK thanked PS for the update and stated that she would relay this information to the relevant teams.  DC hoped this is not the last meeting with PS and thanked her for her excellent contribution over the years. PS agreed to stay for the next meeting and would review then.
<b>15</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b>  <b>Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 – Progressive House, Pre-Meet at 9.30 am for Chairperson, Committee Members, Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman</b>