

NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

MEETING Thursday 1st May 2025, NIPSO, Progressive House

Members Present:

Dónall Curtin – Chair; Independent Member (DC)
Patricia Snell - Independent Member, (PS)
Trevor Nulty - Independent Member (TN)
Emma Shields - Independent Member (ES)

In Attendance:

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

Item	Minute
1.	Apologies Apologies from Graham Gillespie, WBG and Nitika White, NIAO DC welcomed the new members TN and ES. Attendees introduced themselves to the new members.
2.	Conflicts of Interest DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.
3.	Minutes Minutes from 30 th January 2025 were agreed.
4	Update on Action Points KM updated the following on outstanding actions: Advisory Committee – still under consideration. Risk and Assurance Mapping – Ongoing but deferred into the 25-26 business plan.

	<p>Accessibility Plan – Document currently being designed and KM to circulate to ARC.</p>
5	<p>Ombudsman Update (verbal)</p> <p>MK began by welcoming TN and ES.</p> <p>MK provided a verbal update to ARC on a range of issues. These included:</p> <p>Complaints –1333 complaints received a rise of 14% in complaints in the year just ended, representing an increase of 132% since 2016. A further 334 represented complaints were also received</p> <p>OI Proposal – In Feb the NI Housing Executive and media were advised that NIPSO were proposing to undertake an own initiative investigation into public housing. The intended focus of the proposed OI would be to consider whether relevant standards were being met, and that the condition of properties is appropriate.</p> <p>Welsh Senedd – MK has been invited to give evidence to the Welsh Senedd regarding a review of PSOW legislation.</p> <p>NIPSO hosted an international conference on; “Seeking Safety, supporting asylum seekers and refugees” which took place on 20th March, with approximately 100 delegates attending. The event was the culmination of a year long project funded by the British Academy which was undertaken in conjunction with Professor Chris Gill from Glasgow University.</p> <p>Media – significant increase in media coverage of all aspects of the office.</p> <p>Patient Safety – NIPSO continue to focus on the issue of patient safety and the importance of candour and the introduction of statutory.</p>
6	<p>Financial Management</p> <p>KM advised that the overall underspend for the year is approximately £36k, which is within the KPI.</p> <p>DC reflected on the significant change and improvements, including the introduction of the new finance system and an increase in both reporting and accuracy.</p> <p>The draft Annual Report and Accounts were tabled for information, DC reminded members that a meeting will take place in June to consider final accounts.</p>
7	<p>Case Performance Management</p> <p>SM reported that all KPIs were met, and staff performed extremely well. SM highlighted the important role of the Directors and their focus on quality and performance.</p> <p>PS expressed her thanks to the teams for their hard work, and the excellent reflection on the office, in meeting all KPIs</p>

<p>8</p>	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>SMcG provided an overview of the NIPSO Internal Audit Plan 25-26</p> <p>Agreed Audit Areas of review are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety – September 25 • Follow Up Review – September 25 • Budgetary and Financial Reporting – November 25 • Performance Management – November 25 <p>SMcG proposed the following possible 26/27 audit areas for consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • Contract Management • Information Governance • Follow Up Review <p>And other possible audit areas to consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll • Climate Change • Cyber Security <p>DC commented on the importance of organisational culture and the need for consideration of this issue.</p> <p>There was further discussion regarding the risks of cyber attack and the need to keep this under review by internal audit. SM explained to the new members NIPSOs cyber security approaches.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>External Audit – NIAO Update</p> <p>KD advised the overall account materiality for NIPSO. All misstatements, whether adjusted or unadjusted above £1,600 will be reported.</p> <p>In terms of the NIAO Audit approach, it is risk-based, and KD confirmed that they are independent of NIPSO in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to the audit.</p> <p>The audit is due to commence on the 6th May, with a final report to those charged with Governance issued by 31st July 25.</p> <p>DC confirmed that the members had no knowledge of any: actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting NIPSO.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Business Plan – Q4</p> <p>SM advised of the 73 proposed actions, 54 were completed, 17 were not completed and were moved into 25-26 plan and 2 are red.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Risk Register – Q4</p> <p>KM confirmed there were no significant changes to the scoring of risks, with only a slight change to the wording.</p>

12	Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update KM highlighted the recent progress by SMT in relation to the older recommendations, which are almost complete.
13	Comment on Information Items No comments
14	AOB As this was DC's final in-person meeting as Chair, he expressed his gratitude to MK and her team, for the manner and approach to the role of the ARC. He reflected on the significant changes he has observed over the past six years and the journey that NPSO has undergone. In response, MK thanked DC for the journey they have shared, appreciating his challenge, support, encouragement, and personal guidance throughout that time.
15	Date of next meeting NIPSO Special ARC Meeting (Accounts) Thursday 19th June 2025 at 9.15 am