

**55<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland**
**Wednesday 15 February 2023**
**2.20pm – 3.45pm – Zoom Virtual Platform**
**P u b l i c M i n u t e s**
**R E C O R D O F A T T E N D A N C E**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title &amp; Organisation</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Apology</b>
Ms Bernie McNally	Independent Chair Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland	✓	
Mr Tom Cassidy	Director of Women & Children's Services, WHSCT	✓	
Dr Naoimh Whyte	GP representative of N.I. General Practice Committee	✓	
Ms Bronagh Muldoon	NSPCC Head of Services NI		✓
Mr Paul McStravick	Director YJA	✓	
D/Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally	Head of Public Protection Branch, PSNI	✓	
Ms Paddy Kelly	Director, Children's Law Centre	✓	
Ms Amanda Stewart	CEO, Probation Board NI	✓	
Ms Pauline Leeson	Chief Executive Children in N. Ireland	✓	
Ms Una Turbitt	Director (Interim) Children and Young Peoples Services, EANI		✓
Ms Elaine Craig	Interim Assistant Director for Pupil Wellbeing and Protection, EANI	✓	
Ms Catherine Cassidy	Deputy Director of Social Care, SPPG	✓	
Ms Lyn Preece	Director of Children's Services & Executive Director of Social Work, SEHSCT	✓	
Mr Colm McCafferty	Director of Children & Young People's Services SHSCT		✓
Ms Mary Logan	Assistant Director, SHSCT (deputising OBO Colm McCafferty)	✓	

Ms Emily Roberts	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Young People, PHA	✓	
Ms Lorna Ballard	Director NI, Action for Children		✓
Ms Maura Dargan	Director of Women, Children & Families Division/Executive Director of Social Work, NHSCT	✓	
Ms Michele Janes	Director of Barnardo's NI		✓
Dr Joanne McLean	Director of Public Health, PHA		✓
Ms Kerrylee Weatherall	Interim Director of Children's Community Services, BHSC	✓	
Mr Paddy Mooney	Director, Include Youth		✓
Dr Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin	Head of Safeguarding, Council for Social Witness, Presbyterian Church in Ireland representing the SBNI Interfaith Committee	✓	
Ms Dawn Shaw	Chief Executive Officer, NIGALA	✓	
Ms Heather Moore	Director of Environmental Services, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council		✓
Mr Andrew Thomson	Independent Chair of the CMR Panel	✓	
Ms Yvonne Adair	Independent Safeguarding Panel Chair, Southern, South Eastern and Belfast Areas	✓	
Ms Mary Rafferty	Independent Safeguarding Panel Chair, Western and Northern areas	✓	
Mr Simon Rogers	Non-Executive (Lay) Member	✓	
Mr Gerard Guckian	Non-Executive (Lay) Member	✓	
<b>In Attendance</b>			
Ms Alex McCoy	Board Secretary SBNI		
Ms Helen McKenzie	Director of Operations SBNI		
Ms Teresa McAllister	Professional Officer SBNI		
Ms Joanna Brown	Professional Officer SBNI		

**Summary of Actions**

<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>To be completed by:</b>
1	The SBNI will write to the TEO to ascertain if a representative would be able to attend the SBNI Board Meeting to speak to Members and advise as to progress on safeguarding issues for asylum seeker children and families living in contingency accommodation, raised by the SBNI to TEO in June 2022.	Ms Helen McKenzie
2	Ms McCoy will share the Online Safety Executive Strategy Update presentation given by Ms Emily Roberts with Board Members.	Ms Alex McCoy
3	SPPG to provide an updated organisational chart to the SBNI for dissemination to members.	Ms Catherine Cassidy
4	SPPG representation on the SBNI Board, in view of SPPG amalgamation with the DoH will be raised at the SBNI and DoH Accountability Meeting.	Chair

**Summary of Board Approval**

The minutes from the Board Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

The Finance Update Report was approved.

### **Preliminaries: Apologies, Quorum, Conflict of Interest, Complaints**

The chair welcomed SBNI members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Ms Lorna Ballard, Dr Joanne McClean, Mr Paddy Mooney, Ms Heather Moore, Ms Michele Janes and Mr Colm McCafferty. The chair noted that Ms Mary Logan is deputising on behalf of Mr Colm McCafferty.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The chair requested that members declare any Conflicts of Interest as and when they arise throughout the meeting.

### **Chair's Business**

The chair advised that Ms Catherine Cassidy is replacing Mr Brendan Whittle on the SBNI Board temporarily as Mr Whittle has been seconded for a period of time. Ms Cassidy was welcomed to the SBNI Board.

### **1 55/23P Previous Minutes**

1.1 Members agreed the minutes from the last Board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 as a factual and accurate representation of the meeting.

### **2 55/23P Matters Arising**

2.1 Complete

2.1.1 Ms McKenzie advised that the SBNI had written to the Mears Group reiterating requests that were sent in June 2022 regarding their safeguarding and complaints policies. The SBNI have received a holding response to this, but are currently awaiting a full response. In addition, Ms McKenzie has requested that the issue of the Access NI clearance of staff is added to the agenda for the TEO Strategic Planning Group (SPG) Sub-Group on Contingency Accommodation. The SBNI has since been advised that there are different levels of checks for staff who are employed in the contingency accommodation, including domestic staff, hospitality staff, and security staff. It was agreed at the TEO SPG Sub-Group that a change is required in what constitutes 'regulated' activity, but this would require an amendment to regulations to be enacted by the

NI Assembly. The Sub-Group has undertaken to request that the Home Office provides a report on the role and function of all staffing responsibilities within hotels. In addition, the SBNI is seeking clarification from the TEO regarding the interim management of risk.

- 2.1.2 Ms McKenzie noted that the issue of the Home Office sharing data with relevant statutory agencies is ongoing and she has requested an update on this. In addition, the development of a Terms of Reference for an Inspection on Contingency Accommodation is ongoing and the TEO and Home Office are working to progress this with the Independent Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration (ICIBI). It is expected that the SBNI Board will be included in the consultation of these Terms of Reference.
- 2.1.3 Ms Kelly enquired as to the status of fire safety audits in all hotels housing asylum seeking children and families in Northern Ireland. In addition, she expressed concern that the remit of the ICIBI does not extend to safeguarding and they do not have the power to publish their own reports, which means that findings from an inspection may not be accessible to the SBNI. She posited the possibility of this being conducted as a joint inspection, alongside a body in this jurisdiction such as RQIA.
- 2.1.4 Ms Weatherall advised that in BHSCT, family clinics have been set up in hotels on a fortnightly basis. These are run by Health Visitors and Nurses and also include the Education Authority (EA), Sure Start and Barnardo's. In addition, psychology teams are reviewing cases on a 6 weekly basis and social work teams are reviewing cases on a monthly basis to identify any safeguarding issues. In the absence of data and information sharing from the Home Office, interagency meetings between the Trust and EA have been established to identify safeguarding concerns. Roundtable discussions between all agencies involved have been hosted by Mr Colin Reid (EA) and Ms Edel McKenna (BHSCT) to ensure clarity of process for safeguarding pathways. Ms

Weatherall advised that the CEO of BHSCT Dr Cathy Jack has written to Mr Peter Toogood (Deputy Permanent Secretary DOH) and Ms Sharon Gallagher (Deputy Secretary, SPPG) to highlight the issues surrounding a lack of investment and planning, as well as to express her concerns as to how the healthcare and safeguarding needs of this growing population can be met. Dr Jack has highlighted the need for more robust vulnerability screening and also emphasised the lack of information sharing from the Home Office. Ms Weatherall advised that the BHSCT has submitted a Data Sharing Agreement to the Home Office, but have not yet received any response.

- 2.1.5 Ms Craig advised that the Chief Executive of EA has also written to the Home Office in light of concerns raised at the EA Child Protection and Safeguarding Sub-Committee. Issues that were highlighted included the vetting of hotel and security staff; the supervision of adults visiting hotels such as workmen, contractors etc; and the need for clarity in relation to the level of training provided in the area of child protection and safeguarding. In addition, EA have expressed concern with the suitability of the accommodation for children and the issues that can arise with school places when children and families are moved frequently between contingency accommodations across Northern Ireland.
- 2.1.6 Ms Preece echoed the concerns raised by other Members, particularly in relation to the vetting of hotel and security staff. She noted that work is ongoing with healthcare teams in terms of screening and the SEHSCT have also written to the Permanent Secretary highlighting their concerns with the increasing volume of asylum-seeking children and families living in contingency accommodation. Since the last meeting of the SBNI Board in December, there have been two additional family hotels which have opened in the SEHSCT area and there has now been an internal group set up to monitor and try to address some of the emerging issues. Ms Preece acknowledged that Trusts are working hard to combat issues, but this is being done in a more ad hoc fashion and she would like to see more strategic leadership around this area. This is a cross-cutting area

which involves several health and social care facets, including Mental Health, Adult, Primary Care and ED and the SEHSCT aim to set up a Working Group to include all Professionals where there can be a collective effort to tackle emerging problems.

- 2.1.7 Ms Montgomery-Devlin advised that the Mears Group have insisted that anybody from the Faith Sector who is entering hotels to meet with or work with asylum seekers has undertaken an Enhanced Access NI check.
- 2.1.8 The chair advised that from a strategic point of view, the SBNI have been liaising with the TEO and the Home Office and are hopeful that this will provide a strategic oversight. She stated that she is reassured by the progress that has been made, particularly in relation to the practical work that is being undertaken across Trusts and other agencies.
- 2.1.9 Ms McKenzie noted that the TEO Strategic Planning Group Sub-Group on Contingency Accommodation includes representation from the DoH, DoJ, SPPG, Housing, EA and DE. She acknowledges that communication lines from the TEO Strategic Planning Group need to be improved and this can be raised at their next meeting. In relation to the sharing of information, work has been undertaken in a Data Sharing Workshop and a subsequent request was submitted to the Home Office. As of yet, the Home Office have not yet relayed a decision as to how information will be shared. With regards to concerns raised in 2.1.3 in relation to the Inspection on Contingency Accommodation, Ms McKenzie noted that she will relay this at the TEO Strategic Planning Group

2.1.10 Ms Kelly enquired about the Inter-Ministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration and what, if any, interface this has to asylum-seeking children and families living in contingency accommodation. She suggested that there may be merit in inviting a Senior Member of the TEOs Team to speak to the issues raised by Board Members and offer reassurance as to the actions that they are taking to enable Board Members to discharge their duty towards children and young people. On discussion, this was agreed by Members.

**Action 1 – The SBNI will write to the TEO to ascertain if a representative would be able to attend the SBNI Board Meeting to speak to Members and advise as to progress on issues raised by the SBNI to TEO in June 2022.**

2.2 Complete – Unable to secure an appropriate date

2.3 Complete

2.4 Complete

2.5 Complete

2.6 Complete

2.7 Complete

**3 55/23P Online Safety Executive Strategy Update (Please refer to Paper BM55-02.23P1A and BM55-02.23P1B)**

3.1 Ms Roberts presented on the ongoing work in relation to the Online Safety Executive Strategy.

**Action 2 – Ms McCoy will share the Online Safety Executive Strategy Update presentation given by Ms Emily Roberts with Board Members.**

- 3.2 The chair thanked Ms Roberts for her presentation and noted that the progress made is substantial. She enquired as to the timescale for publication of research currently undertaken by Stranmillis University College exploring Online harms. Ms Roberts advised that it is hoped that this Report will be made available in late Summer, early Autumn and this will inform work going forward.

#### **4 55/23P The Role and Function of the SPPG**

- 4.1 Ms Cassidy advised that there had been discussion at the previous SBNI Board Meeting in December regarding correspondence received whereby the DoH agreed that the statutory obligation for determining if a case meets the criteria to progress to a commissioned CMR rests with the SBNI and will be undertaken by the SBNI. Discussion had ensued regarding the presence of the SPPG on the SBNI Board due to the fact that they are now part of the DoH. Members had raised if this could lead to a conflict of interest. Ms Cassidy clarified that although the SPPG is a part of the DoH SPPG is still a member agency of the SBNI, as per legislation. She clarified that there are many different parts of the DOH and that the SPPG has a separate line management from child care policy up to the permanent secretary. She noted that the functions attributed to the previously named HSCB have now been transferred to the SPPG, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill 2021. The child care policy branch of DoH are the sponsor of the SBNI. The SPPG have no direct operational oversight of individual cases that would come to the attention of the CMR Team.
- 4.2 Ms Cassidy explained that staff in the SPPG are not civil servants and are employed under the terms and conditions of BSO. Ms Cassidy further clarified that Mr Whittle has been asked to temporarily take on the role of Director of Hospital and Community Care increasing his portfolio. As a result, there have been two new Deputy Directors appointed in the interim period in the SPPG. This includes Mr David Pettigrew with responsibility for Older People, Physical/ Sensory Disability, Learning Disability and Adult Safeguarding; Ms Ciara McKillop with responsibility for CAMHS and Emotional Health and Wellbeing; and Ms Cassidy with responsibility for Social Care and Children's Services. The

SPPG are accountable to a Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ms Sharon Gallagher.

- 4.3 Ms Cassidy explained that the SPPG are still the conduit between the DoH child care policy and the health and social care trusts. The role of the SPPG is centred around commissioning and resource management which includes allocation of funding, business cases, Investment Proposal Templates (IPTs) and procurement. The SPPG are also responsible for performance management of trusts, ensuring that services are delivered and the quality is maintained. This is carried out through both the Directed Statutory Functions (DSF) process as well as Service Delivery Plans. Currently, additional lines of work that the SPPG are involved with include the children's services review which is ongoing and due to be completed in June alongside the joint campus plans, examining how justice and health Services can work together to use resources across Lakewood and Woodlands JJC, to the best effect for children who come to the attention of both services. It was further clarified that the SPPG are still responsible for assessment of need, the children's services plan and the Children's Services Strategic Partnership Board.
- 4.4 The SPPG are in the process of updating their organisational map with those who have come into post. It was agreed that once updated, this will be shared with the SBNI Board.

**Action 3 – SPPG to provide an updated organisational chart to the SBNI for dissemination to members.**

- 4.5 Mr Thomson highlighted that one of the questions that the CMR Panel need to ask themselves is in relation to the effectiveness of persons or bodies represented on the SBNI Board. He stated that further clarity is required as to whether the DoH is now a body represented on the SBNI Board by virtue of the SPPG. Ms Cassidy accepted that this is unclear with distinct anomalies, but emphasised that although the former health board has now been amalgamated into the DoH and is now known as the SPPG, the staff of the SPPG are

employed by BSO with separate legal representation from Policy colleagues within DoH. The SPPG are represented by DLS whereas the DoH are represented by DSO. She agreed that clarity and agreement is required from the DoH as to how issues raised are taken forward, but highlighted that it is from a professional oversight perspective that colleagues in SPPG who have practice oversight can make comment on CMRs and help to determine whether CMRs should be undertaken on the basis of the learning to be gleaned and shared regionally. DoH who deal with policy have no role in this decision-making process.

- 4.6 Mr Rogers commented that there is no doubt that the SPPG bring expertise to the decision-making process involved with CMRs for example, but noted that the position had changed from one where there was no departmental involvement on the Board – with the Minister at arms length – to a situation where the Department were on the Board. The issue of conflict of interest due to participation, therefore, needed to be considered. The chair agreed that the role of the SPPG on the SBNI Board is absolutely crucial, but from a governance perspective assurance needs to be provided. On discussion, it was determined that it would be beneficial to raise these concerns at the DoH and SBNI Accountability Meeting.

**Action 4 – SPPG representation on the SBNI Board, in view of SPPG amalgamation with the DoH will be raised at the SBNI and DoH Accountability Meeting.**

#### **5 55/23P Finance Update Report (Please refer to Paper BM55-02.23P2)**

- 5.1 The chair advised that the SBNI is working towards and end of year position and is very confident that the SBNI will be in a break-even position by the end of this financial year.
- 5.2 There were no further comments made in relation to the Finance Update Report.

5.3 The Finance Update Report was approved.

**6 55/23P SBNI Newsletter (Please refer to Paper BM55-02.23P3)**

6.1 The chair commented that there is considerable work currently being undertaken by SBNI's Committees, and is demonstrative of the collaborative engagement of all Members.

**7 55/23P AOB**

7.1 Ms McKenzie reported that the SBNI are finalists in the Digital DNA Awards Tech for Good Project of the Year in conjunction with INEQE Safeguarding for the SBNI Safeguarding app.

7.2 Ms McKenzie advised that the SBNI commissioned a 'Growing Up Online' survey for Stranmillis University for children and young people aged 8 – 18 years, which will close on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023. In addition, Members were reminded of a request which had been sent by the Trauma Informed Practice Committee requesting examples about how agencies are already working in a trauma informed way that could be added to the Online toolkit. Ms McKenzie encouraged all Members to respond as the SBNI are keen that this reflects and showcases the work of Members and Partners.

7.3 The next SBNI Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 April 2023.

7.4 The chair closed the Public section of the meeting at 3.45pm and thanked Members for their attendance.

**Bernie McNally**

**Independent Chair SBNI**