

64th Meeting of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Wednesday 04 December 2024

3.00pm – 4.20pm

MS Teams

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

Name	Title & Organisation	Present	Apology
Ms Bernie McNally	Independent Chair Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland	✓	
Dr Tom Cassidy	Director of Women & Children's Services, WHSCT	✓	
Dr Naoimh White	GP representative of N.I. General Practice Committee	✓	
Ms Bronagh Muldoon	NSPCC Head of Services NI	✓	
Ms Mary Aughey	Director of Woodlands JJC, YJA	✓	
D/Chief Superintendent Lindsay Fisher	Detective Chief Superintendent, Public Protection Branch, PSNI		✓
T/D Superintendent Jordan Piper	T/Detective Superintendent, Public Protection Branch, PSNI (deputising OBO D/Chief Superintendent Lindsay Fisher)	✓	
Ms Paddy Kelly	Director, Children's Law Centre		✓
Ms Amanda Stewart	CEO, Probation Board NI	✓	
Ms Pauline Leeson	Chief Executive Children in Northern Ireland	✓	
Ms Una Turbitt	Assistant Director of Pupil Wellbeing and Protection, EANI	✓	
Dr Ciara McKillop	Director of Hospital and Community Care and Social Services, SPPG		✓
Ms Catherine Cassidy	Deputy Director of Social Care, SPPG (deputising OBO Ms Ciara McKillop)	✓	
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	✓	
Dr Joanne McClean	Director of Public Health, PHA		✓
Ms Heather Reid	Interim Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions, PHA		✓
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	✓	
Ms Kerrylee Weatherall	Interim Director of Children's Community Services, BHSCT	✓	
Mr Philip O'Hara	Interim Director and DLP, Down & Connor Safeguarding Office representing the SBNI Interfaith Committee	✓	
Ms Edel McKenna	Chief Executive Officer, Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland	✓	
Mr Richard Harvey	Acting Director of Environmental Services, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council		✓
Ms Diane Hill	Chief Executive Officer, Include Youth	✓	
Mr Andrew Thomson	Independent Chair of the CMR Panel	✓	
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	✓	

In Attendance

Ms Helen McKenzie	Director of Operations, SBNI
Ms Alex McCoy	Board Secretary SBNI
Ms Teresa McAllister	Professional Officer SBNI
Dr Jacqui Montgomery Devlin	Professional Officer SBNI

Ms Deirdre Grant	Professional Officer SBNI
Ms Pamela Fagan	Chair of the National Independent Review Panel, HSE Dublin
Ms Lynsey Armstrong	Head of Child Protection and Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy Unit, DoH
Ms Claire Campbell	Head of Policy Victims and Witnesses Branch, DoJ
Mr Thomas Hutchinson	Principal Social Worker for Joint Protocol and ABE, SPPG
Ms Pamela Mooney	Social Work Lead for Family Support and Safeguarding, SPPG

Summary of Actions

Action No.	Action:	To be completed by:
1	The standards and principles of Barnahus to be shared with Ms McCoy at Alex.McCoy@hscni.net , for onward dissemination to members.	DoH/DoJ
2	Members to be advised when the SBNI Annual Report 2023-2024 has been laid before the Assembly and can be shared with members.	SBNI CST

BM64-12.24PM

Summary of Board Approval

The minutes from the Board Meeting on 11 September 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
The SBNI Annual Report 2023-2024 was approved.
Further exploration by the Policy and Procedure Committee to consider a revision to the 'Guidance of Children on the Child Protection Register Who Go Missing' was approved.

Preliminaries: Apologies, Quorum, Conflict of Interest, Complaints

The chair welcomed SBNl members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from D/Chief Superintendent Lindsay Fisher, Ms Paddy Kelly, Dr Ciara McKillop, Dr Joanne McClean, Ms Heather Reid, Ms Emily Roberts, Ms Lorna Ballard, Mr Richard Harvey and Mr Simon Rogers. The chair noted that T/D Superintendent Jordan Piper is deputising on behalf of D/Chief Superintendent Lindsay Fisher and Ms Catherine Cassidy is deputising on behalf of Dr Ciara McKillop. The chair welcomed Ms Edel McKenna to the membership of the Board, as the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland. Ms McKenna was congratulated on her post. Furthermore, the chair welcomed Ms Pamela Fagan to this meeting, and noted that Ms Fagan is attending in an observational capacity as Chair of the National Independent Review Panel at the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Dublin.

Conflict of Interest

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

Complaints

The chair advised that no complaints have been received.

Chair's Business

The chair did not raise any additional business.

1 64/24P Previous Minutes

- 1.1 Members agreed the minutes from the last Board meeting on 11 September 2024 as a factual and accurate representation of the meeting.

2 64/24P Matters Arising

- 2.1 Complete

- 2.2 Complete

- 2.3 Complete

2.4 Complete

2.5 Agenda Item 5

3 64/24P Barnahus Working Group Update (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P1)

- 3.1 The chair welcomed Ms Lynsey Armstrong, Department of Health (DoH), Ms Claire Campbell, Department of Justice (DoJ) and Mr Thomas Hutchinson (SPPG) to present on the progress of the regional Barnahus Working Group.
- 3.2 Ms Armstrong, Ms Campbell and Mr Hutchinson showed a PowerPoint presentation in relation to the progress of the regional Barnahus Working Group. Ms Armstrong advised that Barnahus, which is Icelandic for 'Children's House', is an interdisciplinary, multi-agency and child-centred service for children and young people who have experienced some form of sexual abuse, including exploitation. It is based on the "one door" principle and is a place where professionals work together under one roof to investigate suspected child sexual abuse cases and provide appropriate support to child victims. The model focuses on getting children and young people the right help at the right time in a place that is designed for their needs. In its purest form, Barnahus delivers medical, forensic, investigative, advocacy, social care and therapeutic support in a homely, child-friendly and safe environment. The rights of the child to protection, support and to be heard without being exposed to risks of re-traumatisation are central to Barnahus. The model has been implemented in many European countries and is considered to be best practice internationally. More recent examples of Barnahus models established in ROI and other parts of the UK include Barnahus West (Galway), the Lighthouse service in London and the North Strathclyde Bairns House.
- 3.3 Ms Armstrong added that The Gillen Review of the Law and Procedures in Serious Sexual Offences in NI (2019) included a recommendation that the DoJ urgently consider a Barnahus model for Northern Ireland. In 2019, the DoJ undertook a scoping study examining key features of Barnahus models and existing services in Northern Ireland. The report from this scoping study was

considered by the cross-departmental Child Protection Senior Officials Group (CPSOG) in early 2020 shortly before the covid-19 pandemic, but further work was paused due to pandemic pressures. Engagement between the DoH and DoJ, post pandemic, resulted in the establishment of a Barnahus Working Group to consider a Barnahus model in the Northern Ireland context. Chairing of the group rotates between the DoH and DoJ, and membership has been expanded to include the Rowan Regional Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Health and Social Care Trusts, Childcare Centre Belfast, Victim Support Northern Ireland, NEXUS and NSPCC. Ms Armstrong outlined that key work so far has included the following:

- Health & Social Care Stakeholder Workshop was held in May 2023
- study visits to Barnahus West in Galway (September 2023), Barnahus service in Reykjavik, Iceland (October 2023) and the Child Care Centre, Belfast (December 2023)
- a mapping paper has been produced following benchmarking workshops with Health and Justice stakeholders against the 10 Barnahus Standards
- a workshop with working group members took place in October 2024 to consider possible options for a Barnahus approach suitable for Northern Ireland, considering the scoping work undertaken to date
- a paper will be developed reflecting feedback from the workshop and developing more detail around some of the options discussed including costings. The Working Group is aiming to submit a paper, including costed options, to the CPSOG sub-group for consideration by March 2025. Following approval, options would then be presented to Health and Justice Ministers for approval.

3.4 The chair commented on statistics presented by Mr Hutchinson, particularly the staggeringly low number of children on the Child Protection Register in categories that reference sexual abuse, in a trend that has been reflected for a number of years, both regionally and across the UK. She commented that these figures indicate underreporting of children on the Child Protection Register who may have experienced sexual abuse, and noted that this could display a lack of recognition of the trauma that this abuse may be causing to them.

- 3.5 Ms Dargan commented that the NHSCT manage the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre on behalf of the region, and this sits under her line management. Ms Dargan highlighted that she feels the implementation of a Barnahus model is an important step for victims and there may be an opportunity for the development of the Rowan to meet the additional need.
- 3.6 Mr McCafferty reported that he completely endorses the development of a Barnahus model for Northern Ireland to better support child victims.
- 3.7 Ms Muldoon advised that she sits on the Barnahus Working Group representing NSPCC. She highlighted that there are challenges with the project, and emphasised that there is a need to recognise the gaps and scope services that are already in existence. There are ongoing conversations regarding the best option for Northern Ireland, and this is dependent on budget allocation. Ms Muldoon further pointed out that consideration is being given to location of the Barnahus service as distance of travel for service users can provide a challenge in Northern Ireland. In addition, there has been discussion in the Working Group in relation to the standards and principles of Barnahus and how these may be able to be adapted for Northern Ireland until the model has been approved and implemented. She added that the NSPCC 2011 research study into the prevalence of child maltreatment in the UK is to be repeated, and updated statistics will be made available in this updated study. Ms Muldoon reported that the NSPCC are very keen that a Barnahus is implemented in Northern Ireland.

ACTION 1 – The standards and principles of Barnahus to be shared with Ms McCoy at Alex.McCoy@hscni.net, for onward dissemination to members.

- 3.8 Ms Mooney advised that the next stage for the Working Group is to develop an options appraisal including costings, taking into account mapping exercises that have been undertaken to date. The Working Group is keen to use existing services, and build upon this to create a bespoke and specialised service for children and young people.

- 3.9 Mr Cassidy emphasised that there needs to be equality of access to the Barnahus service for those across the region, to ensure that all service users are able to travel and avail of the facility. Ms Mooney assured members that this is being taken into consideration, and the Working Group has examined how service users travel to the Rowan Centre and the Trust areas that use the Rowan Centre more frequently.
- 3.10 The chair sought clarity as to the views of the Judiciary in Northern Ireland on the use of Barnahus. Ms Campbell advised that the Judiciary are on a journey. She referenced the previous implementation of Remote Evidence Centres (REC) in Northern Ireland and highlighted that in the beginning of their implementation these were not used, but judges were later encouraged when they visited the centres and were able to see the benefit to children and young people, and the justice process.
- 3.11 The chair thanked Ms Armstrong, Ms Campbell and Mr Hutchinson for an excellent and informative presentation. She emphasised that the SBNI is very supportive of a Barnahus in Northern Ireland and looks forward to its further development.

4 64/24P SBNI Annual Report 2023-2024 (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P2A & BM64-12.24P2B)

- 4.1 The chair advised that the SBNI Draft Annual Report 2023 – 2024 is presented to the Board for approval following review by the Department of Health and with the inclusion of all additional, photographs, info graphics and hyperlinks.
- 4.2 The chair thanked all staff and members involved in the development of the SBNI Annual Report, noting that it showcases tremendous working across an extremely wide variety of areas. She advised that, on its approval by the Board, the Annual Report will be submitted to the DoH to be laid before the Assembly by the end of December 2024.

- 4.3 Ms Preece commented that she feels the SBNI Annual Report is an excellent report, which showcases tremendous work being undertaken. Ms Preece sought clarity as to when the SBNI Annual Report can be shared internally by member agencies. Ms McKenzie clarified that the Annual Report will not be available for sharing until it is laid before the Assembly. The SBNI Central Support Team (CST) will advise when this process has been undertaken.
- 4.4 The SBNI Annual Report 2023-2024 was approved.

5 64/24P CMR Process Review Update (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P3)

- 5.1 Ms McAllister advised that a Steering Group has been set up to progress recommendations made in the CMR Process Review and an Action Plan template has been developed accordingly to monitor completion of recommendations. This Action Plan template was disseminated to members in advance of the meeting. Ms McAllister reported that all discussions undertaken in the Steering Group are brought to the CMR Panel for consideration before recommendations are operationalised.
- 5.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the CMR Process Review Update.

6 64/24P Renewal of SBNI Board Membership (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P4)

- 6.1 The chair advised that, as part of the DoH revision of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Regulations 2012, the Chair has agreed with the DoH to undertake a renewal of voluntary organisation Board membership. The Chair has advised the existing voluntary organisation Board members of the decision to renew the Board membership and has met with these members regarding same. It is anticipated that the recruitment process will commence in January 2025 and be concluded with an updated Board membership, in time for the April 2025 Board meeting. A draft process is currently with the DoH for review and approval. As part of the review of the Regulations, the DoH will also be updating the specific member agency representative role/job title on the Board. It has

further advised that it will be seeking updates on attendance at Board meetings of the designated representative to ensure compliance with the legislation and associated regulations.

- 6.2 The chair further noted that in light of capacity issues within the Public Appointments Unit (PAU), the DoH has requested that she extends her tenure as Independent Chair of the SBNI until the end of June 2026, which she has agreed to facilitate. She noted that a new strategic planning cycle for the SBNI will commence imminently and will be concluded in March 2026, with new strategic priorities agreed, consulted upon and reported by this time. In addition, whilst discussions are ongoing between the DoH, the PAU and the PHA, as to the recruitment of a new Independent Chair of the Case Management Review Panel (CMRP) and an Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Panel, the DoH has agreed to interim arrangements. The tenure of the current CMRP Chair, Mr Andrew Thomson, will be extended to May 2025 and a temporary replacement can be progressed to fill the Safeguarding Panel Chair post.
- 6.3 Mr Guckian expressed thanks, on behalf of members, to the chair for agreeing to extend her tenure. He noted that he is pleased to be able to continue to work with her into 2026.
- 6.4 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the renewal of SBNI Board membership.

7 64/24P Review of Guidance of Children on the Child Protection Register Who Go Missing (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P5A & BM64-12.24P5B)

- 7.1 Ms Dargan advised that in 2016 guidance was developed for Social Work staff on the notification process of reporting the 'missing' status of children and families who are assessed as being 'at risk' and whose whereabouts are unknown. Recently, a number of Trusts have indicated that they believe the guidance requires a more contemporaneous update. This is particularly relevant with the development of the 'Epic Encompass' electronic health record system across the region. Trusts have also requested the development of additional guidance to assist them in determining how long 'missing' children

should actively remain subject to the six-monthly review, as part of the Child Protection Review Case Conference process, or if an alternative process is better suited to review this situation. The Policy and Procedure Committee request approval from the Board to further explore the requirement for revision of the guidance.

- 7.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the review of Guidance of Children on the Child Protection Register Who Go Missing.
- 7.3 The further exploration by the Policy and Procedure Committee to consider a revision to the Guidance of Children on the Child Protection Register Who Go Missing was approved.

8 64/24P Development of a Safer Recruitment Directory for Child Safeguarding (Please refer to Board Paper BM64-12.24P6)

- 8.1 The chair advised that recent public debate has highlighted the need to provide clarity as to the processes to be applied pertaining to 'safer recruitment' but also an explanation as to what information can and cannot be shared as part of that process. The DoH has asked the SBNI to progress development of a Directory and help address assumptions associated with the 'safer recruitment' process and associated information sharing in order to best safeguard children and young people. Ms McAllister and Mr Thomson have been working to commence development of this Directory, and the chair advised that this will be progressed through the SBNI Policy and Procedure Committee.
- 8.2 Mr Thomson commented that it is important to note that there is already a wealth of guidance which sets out the stages of a safer recruitment process. He advised that the role of the SBNI in the development of a Safer Recruitment Directory for Child Safeguarding will be to develop a document which can signpost the reader to areas where they can obtain more detail if required, and to clarify some of the misleading assumptions that people have in relation to the vetting process. It is hoped that the Directory will clearly set out the pathway and considerations that organisations should be making when engaging in safer recruitment.

- 8.3 The chair added that the SBNI has been approached by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), who has requested to meet in March 2025 to discuss how awareness can be raised in relation to their roles and responsibilities, due to the recognised gap in Northern Ireland.

9 64/24P Trauma Informed Approach (TIA) Organisational Toolkit

- 9.1 Dr Montgomery-Devlin showed a PowerPoint presentation in relation to the TIA Organisational Toolkit. She reminded members that part of the Work Plan for the Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Committee was to develop a TIA Toolkit which would provide support for organisations to apply a TIA to all aspects of their service delivery. The Toolkit was designed in consultation with the TIP Committee, a separate Task and Finish Group and those with lived experience of receiving and using services. The purpose of the Toolkit is to show existing and developing best practice locally and to reflect the whole systems journey towards being trauma informed. In addition, the Toolkit includes a self-assessment checklist whereby organisations can mark the progress that has already been made and identify areas for development. Dr Montgomery-Devlin further reported that the Toolkit was fully informed by research undertaken by Queens University Belfast. The Toolkit was launched on the SBNI website in September 2024. This was followed by the provision of information sessions on the use of it, subsequently followed by workshops on implementing a TIA. The Toolkit can be accessed online at [Trauma Informed Toolkit](#) and it was advised that there have been 1538 downloads as of 28 November 2024, including international, national and regional downloads.
- 9.2 The chair commented that it is amazing to see the number of organisations who have downloaded the Toolkit across a number of countries. She is pleased that the Toolkit seems to be gathering momentum and feels that it is indicative that organisations are becoming aware that adopting a trauma informed approach is the future.
- 9.3 Ms McKenzie added that she is extremely pleased that the need for a trauma informed Northern Ireland has been included in the draft Programme for

Government. She is very grateful for the tremendous work which has been undertaken by all members and partners involved.

10 64/24P SBNI Newsletter & Child Exploitation Newsletter (Please refer to Board Paper BM63-09.24P7A & BM63-09.24P7B)

- 10.1 The chair referenced the SBNI Newsletter and Child Exploitation Newsletter that were disseminated to members in advance of the meeting. She noted that the purpose of these Newsletters is to give an overview of the variation of the work that is undertaken by the CST. The chair thanked the SBNI CST involved in the development of these Newsletters.
- 10.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the SBNI Newsletter and Child Exploitation Newsletter.

11 63/24P AOB

- 11.1 The chair advised that the SBNI Online Safety Committee is hosting 5 seminars to consider young people's relationship with technology in terms of the risks and gains. Marcella Leonard is leading these events in each of the Safeguarding Panel areas. Information and booking arrangements have been disseminated to Board members, Panels and Committees.
- 11.2 The chair reported that she and SBNI staff attended an event on 03 December 2024 at the Long Gallery in relation to the launch of the SAY Project animation. At this event, the chair met with Tonia Antoniazzi Member of Parliament (MP) who is Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee and who has indicated her wish to meet with the SBNI to discuss online safety.
- 11.3 The chair advised that a letter was received from Mr Peter Toogood, Deputy Permanent Secretary, in November 2024 advising of a change in personnel in the DoH Policy Directorate. The chair indicated that Ms Martina Moore will replace Ms Eilís McDaniel as Director of Family and Children's Policy. Ms McDaniel will assume responsibility for implementation of the Reform Programmes within Children and Adult Social Care. This will include lead responsibility for implementation of the accepted recommendations of the

Children's Services Review. At this stage, she will also maintain responsibility for implementation of the Adoption and Children Act.

- 11.4 The chair noted that the SBNI has been asked by the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) to attend the Justice Committee alongside the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and Youth Justice Agency (YJA) to discuss a trauma informed system in Northern Ireland.
- 11.5 The next SBNI Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 February 2025. This will be held virtually via MS Teams and details will be confirmed and circulated.
- 11.6 The chair closed the Public section of the meeting at 4.20pm and thanked members for their attendance.

Bernie McNally

Independent Chair SBNI