

66th Meeting of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Wednesday 16 April 2025

3.05pm– 4.30pm

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 Zoe McKee	Detective Chief Superintendent, Public Protection Branch, PSNI	✓	
Ms Amanda Stewart	CEO, Probation Board NI	✓	
Ms Natalie Whelehan	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 Lyn Preece	Director of Children's Services & Executive Director of Social Work, SEHSCT	✓	
Mr Colm McCafferty	Director of Children & Young People's Services and Executive Director of Social Work, 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 Alicia Toal	Chief Executive Officer, VOYPIC	✓	
Ms Maura Dargan	Director of Women, Children & Families Division/Executive Director of Social Work, NHSCT		✓
Mr Lee Wilson	Assistant Director of Children's Services, NHSCT (deputising OBO Ms Maura Dargan)	✓	
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 Northern Ireland		✓
Mr Richard Harvey	Acting Director of Environmental Services, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council		✓
Mr Andrew Thomson	Independent Chair of the CMR Panel	✓	
Ms Mary Rafferty	Independent Safeguarding Panel Chair, Western and Northern areas	✓	
Mr David Douglas	Interim Independent Safeguarding Panel Chair, Belfast and Southern areas	✓	
Mr Simon Rogers	Non-Executive (Lay) Member	✓	
Mr Gerard Guckian	Non-Executive (Lay) Member	✓	

In Attendance

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
Mr Oisin Martin	Assistant Director of Children's Services, NHSCT
Ms Ugne Girciute	Presenter for Empowering Youth Wellbeing Programme, Resurgam Trust
Ms Mabel Scullion	Early Intervention Manager, Barnardo's NI

Summary of Actions

Action No.	Action:	To be completed by:
1	Any comments on the draft agenda for Board Development Day on 14 May 2025 to be sent to Alex.McCoy@hscni.net by Monday 28 April.	All members
2	Local Area Safeguarding Panel Chairs to ensure learning from individual internal reviews are shared on a multiagency basis.	Independent Chairs of Local Area Safeguarding Panels
3	The SBNI CST to consider a response in respect of the consultation Framework for Learning and Improvement from Patient Safety Incidents Consultation Department of Health , with a view to requesting the potential inclusion of any learning obtained, in respect of a child protection matter, to be shared with the SBNI, as appropriate.	SBNI CST

BM66-04.25PM

Summary of Board Approval

The minutes from the Board Meeting on 12 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
The SBNI Business Plan 2025-2026 was approved.
The draft agenda for Board Development Day on 14 May was approved.
The Declaration of Assurance Year End Statement was approved.

Preliminaries: Apologies, Quorum, Conflict of Interest, Complaints

The chair welcomed SBNI members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Ms Bronagh Muldoon, Dr Joanne McClean, Ms Heather Reid, Ms Maura Dargan, Mr Philip O'Hara, Ms Edel McKenna and Mr Richard Harvey. The chair noted that Mr Lee Wilson is deputising on behalf of Ms Maura Dargan. The chair welcomed new members of the Board, including Ms Alicia Toal from Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) and Ms Natalie Whelehan from Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI). Ms Whelehan has replaced Ms Pauline Leeson as representative on the Board, following Ms Leeson's recent retirement. The chair further welcomed Mr Colm McCafferty back to the Board, and reminded members that Mr McCafferty had been temporarily replaced by Ms Donna Murphy whilst he was acting as Interim Chief Executive Officer for the SHSCT.

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 66/25P Previous Minutes

- 1.1 Members agreed the minutes from the last Board meeting on 12 February 2025 as a factual and accurate representation of the meeting.

2 66/25P Matters Arising

- 2.1 Complete

3 66/25P Empowering Youth Wellbeing Programme - development of a trainer manual and local research on what it is like to grow up in Lisburn (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P1)

- 3.1 The chair welcomed Mr Oisin Martin, Chair of the SBNI Mental Health Committee to introduce the Empowering Youth Wellbeing Programme.

- 3.2 Mr Martin welcomed Ms Gircuite, and advised that she has designed an Empowering Youth Wellbeing Programme, which is a young person led, emotional health and well-being, strength-based mentoring and support programme for children and young people of post-primary age, and was developed in the Lisburn area. Mr Martin highlighted that the work aligns with the SBNI Strategic Priority 4: To provide a voice for children and young people affected by mental health issues and is funded by the SBNI through the Mental Health Committee. The purpose of the programme was to address what Ms Gircuite saw as a gap in mental health education in post-primary schools. Mr Martin reported that Early Intervention Lisburn commissioned 'Stats & Stories' to evaluate the programme's effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the programme and to identify areas for further development. The development of a trainer manual for this programme was a recommendation in expanding the peer-led approach. This will support the roll out of the programme, enabling other young people the opportunity to deliver this programme in their school, youth setting, or church. A second element to the work is to undertake a follow-up consultation from one conducted in 2018, involving 286 young people, which highlighted the severity of the mental health crisis facing young people. Mr Martin highlighted that Ms Gircuite is a talented orator, and thanked her for presenting to the SBNI Board.
- 3.3 Ms Gircuite showed a PowerPoint presentation and advised that the Empowering Youth project is a priority for the Early Intervention Lisburn (EIL) partnership. EIL is a locality planning group that consists of partners from the community, voluntary and statutory sector with the aim of collectively working to improve outcomes for children and young people 0-24 years old. Ms. Gircuite has developed a Youth Wellbeing Programme, which was inspired by her own personal experience including that of her friends and peers in school, her involvement in the Secondary Students Union of Northern Ireland (SSUNI) and the Connected Minds Youth Committee. Ms. Gircuite was further inspired by her experience in the post-covid period where pressure of exams and anxiety was perceived to only be increasing for pupils. Ms. Gircuite advised that in 2023, she co-led the Learning for Life and Work (LLW) working group that produced the 'Let Us Learn' report. This highlighted the lack of mental health

education in schools, whereby only 28% of young people said they received adequate mental health education. Ms. Gircuite has been determined to bridge this gap ever since and is working to develop a Youth Wellbeing Training Manual which will be available to all schools, youth centres and others who are interested in delivering mental health education to young people. The target audience will include sixth form students, youth workers/leaders, youth volunteers and will be made available to all young people who are passionate about mental health, or are interested in working in education or other youth settings.

- 3.4 The chair thanked Ms Gircuite for an excellent presentation, which highlighted perfectly the superb work that she is undertaking.
- 3.5 Ms Turbitt thanked Ms Gircuite for an excellent presentation, which is exactly what the Lundy Model is about as it gives young people the space to influence and for action to be taken accordingly. Ms Turbitt advised that the Education Authority (EA) has a group of people who are employed to promote the health and wellbeing of pupils in schools, using trauma informed practice and nurturing approaches. Ms Turbitt highlighted her interest in connecting with Ms Gircuite, alongside Ms Arlene Kee, the Assistant Director for Youth Service in the EA. Ms Turbitt advised that she is keen to consider how this valuable information can be incorporated within schools Pastoral Care teams.
- 3.6 Ms Preece commented on an exceptional piece of work, and congratulated Ms Gircuite. She believes that the project gives a voice to children and young people, and can help to provide strategic direction to the Board. Ms Preece feels that there is real opportunity to expand the project, and for Health and Education services to work together effectively.
- 3.7 Mr Guckian commented on an excellent piece of work delivered by an exceptional orator. It is great to see such a powerful message delivered by such a passionate young person.

- 3.8 Ms Janes commented on an exceptional presentation, and highlighted her pride in Ms Gircuite for the excellent work she is undertaking.
- 3.9 The chair thanked Ms Gircuite for taking the time to deliver an excellent and uplifting presentation to the Board.

4 66/25P SBNI Business Plan 2025-2026 (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P2A & BM66-04.25P2B)

- 4.1 The chair drew members attention to the SBNI Business Plan 2025-2026 which was circulated in advance of the meeting, and noted that this has now been approved by the Department of Health (DoH). The chair highlighted that the Business Plan details the objectives and associated actions to be progressed through the business year to support the final year of delivery of the current SBNI Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026. The Business Plan has been developed by the SBNI Committees, Panels and the Central Support Team. It is presented to the Board for approval having been reviewed by the Governance Committee.
- 4.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the SBNI Business Plan 2025-2026.
- 4.3 The SBNI Business Plan 2025-2026 was approved.

5 66/25P Draft Agenda for Board Development Day on 14 May (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P3A & BM66-04.25P3B)

- 5.1 The chair drew members' attention to the draft agenda for Board Development Day on Wednesday 14 May, which was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. This will be held in the Dunsilly Hotel, 20 Dunsilly Rd, Antrim BT41 2JH. The chair advised that Mr David Nichol has been appointed to facilitate the event, and Ms Martina Moore has been invited to outline key areas that she believes are important to safeguarding from the perspective of the DoH. In addition, Ms Marcella Leonard has been invited to present on the key themes emerging in her work. The chair advised that an overview of the breadth of work undertaken by the SBNI in the current strategic planning cycle will be delivered, before Board members are asked to identify and brainstorm their views on the

key areas that they believe should be considered in the SBNI Strategic Plan 2026-2030.

ACTION 1 – Any comments on the draft agenda for Board Development Day on 14 May 2025 to be sent to Alex.McCoy@hscni.net by Monday 28 April.

5.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the draft agenda for the Board Development Day on 14 May.

5.3 The draft agenda for Board Development Day on 14 May was approved.

6 66/25P Timeline for SBNI Annual Report 2024-2025 (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P4A & BM66-04.25P4B)

6.1 The chair advised that the SBNI has agreed with the DoH a timeline for completion of the Annual Report 2024 – 2025 in order for it to be laid before the NI Assembly in December 2025.

6.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the timeline for the SBNI Annual Report 2024-2025.

7 66/25P Declaration of Assurance Year End Statement (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P5)

7.1 The chair drew members attention to the Declaration of Assurance Year End Statement that was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The chair noted that discussions are ongoing with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and DoH in relation to the corporate hosting responsibilities of the PHA to the SBNI, as the PHA have some concerns in relation to their role. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to be reviewed, and it is hoped that this issue can be resolved soon.

7.2 The Declaration of Assurance Year End Statement was approved.

8 66/25P CMR Process Review Recommendations Update (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P6A & BM66-04.25P6B)

- 8.1 The chair advised that following the completion of the CMR Process Review undertaken by Ms Marie Roulston in 2024, the Case Management Review Panel (CMRP), supported by the SBNI Central Support Team (CST), has been addressing the 18 recommendations contained within said review. Recommendation 18 of the review is presented to the Board for consideration, which states “*The SBNI Central Support Team and members of the CMR Panel should explore whether it would be beneficial to introduce Rapid Reviews into Northern Ireland and the SBNI Board should consider said findings.*”
- 8.2 Mr Thomson advised that Recommendation 18 was informed by a desktop review of the CMR processes in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The CMR Process review, at that time, determined there was considerable variation in the reviews across the four nations considered, and then additional variation within local authorities in how reviews were undertaken. In summary, Ms Roulston concluded that there are aspects of each of these processes which are similar to processes undertaken in Northern Ireland but there are also areas which she believed may be beneficial for exploration and learning by the SBNI CST. She highlighted that most countries seem to operate either a ‘Rapid or Concise review’ in certain cases and Ms Roulston suggested that it may be worthwhile for the SBNI CST, in conjunction with the CMRP, to explore further. She did note that the SBNI currently undertakes Concise reviews where appropriate and this is to be welcomed.
- 8.3 Mr Thomson further advised that the CMRP, supported by the SBNI CST, has undertaken a further exercise scoping the equivalent CMR processes within England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland to inform the Board’s decision making in respect of Recommendation 18. He drew members attention to Board Paper BM66-04.25P6B (CMR Rapid Reviews April 2025 Scoping paper in response to Recommendation 18 – CMR Process Review) and the recommendations noted therein. Mr Thomson reported that it is the view of the CMRP that the current process in respect of CMRs, in particular, the setup, function and deliverables of the CMRP are similar to other Rapid Review

processes and provide a comparable level of detail and rigour of the rapid review processes and procedures in other nations. The CMRP believe that the scope and breadth of a CMR should continue to be agreed in the development of the appropriate Terms of Reference (ToR) in each case. This enables the review to be focussed and concise where necessary. It is the opinion of the CMRP, that to introduce an additional layer to the CMR process, such as a Rapid Review, would not provide any additional benefit to the current CMR system. The CMRP believe that the current process, inclusive of, notification, briefing papers, verbal presentations, examination and interrogation of information and the recommendations and action planning completed by the CMRP and ultimately the SBNI Board provide a robust process which delivers equivalent benefits and actionable learning.

- 8.4 On discussion, Ms Turbitt commented that she believes that both the Internal Agency Review (IAR) and CMR process work well from an interagency perspective, particularly when the IAR process informs the CMR process. She suggested that the area where she feels that more proportionate reviews could be undertaken, is in relation to those cases that do not meet the criteria for CMR, but where there is potential for interagency learning in a more focused area of work. The chair noted that the CMR process is a legislative framework and there are other mechanisms for gleaning learning from cases, including the Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) process. She is worried that introducing a parallel procedure to the existing CMR process could lead to a “two-tier” system, resulting in duplication of work, and which does not return to the SBNI Board for consideration and is not covered by a legislative framework.
- 8.5 Mr Thomson added that the CMR process is always evolving, and ToR can be made concise to ensure that CMR authors concentrate on areas of concern that both the CMRP and Board have identified, and this can have a positive impact on the speed of the review. Mr Thomson further reported that a review process has now been piloted in cases where a CMR has not been commissioned, but learning has been identified to ensure that it can be highlighted and disseminated regionally. In addition, learning identified by agencies at the time of notification is shared immediately, with reassurance

sought from agencies that appropriate action has been taken. In addition, agencies can notify cases of positive practice, and this facility is included within legislation.

8.6 Mr McCafferty advised that, while he does not feel that the current CMR process requires to be changed, he is cognisant of the fact that this was a recommendation made in the Review of Children's Social Care Services, which was a DoH mandated review conducted by Professor Ray Jones. He is mindful that, as a Board, consideration needs to be given to practice improvement, and reflection given as to the potential improvement of existing practices. He expressed concern that the review may have been undertaken in an insular way, as it was conducted by the CMRP who is absolutely enmeshed in the process. Mr Thomson noted that the Author of the review, Ms Marie Roulston was appointed independently and it was her recommendation that a scoping exercise was carried out by the SBNI CST and CMRP members. The scoping exercise was extensive, and CMRP members are confident that the current CMR process is comparable to other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

8.7 Mr Douglas commented that it is his view that Safeguarding Panels could be better utilised, particularly in cases where a decision of 'No CMR' is recommended and an alternative review mechanism, such as the SAI process, is undertaken. He commented that individual agencies who conduct an SAI and identify multiagency learning relevant to the SBNI, should bring this learning back to the multiagency Safeguarding Panels, and the Safeguarding Panel chair can then determine relevant information that requires to be brought to the Board. Ms Turbitt expressed her support with Mr Douglas' suggestion, and it was subsequently agreed that Local Area Safeguarding Panel Chairs should ensure learning from individual internal reviews are shared on a multiagency basis.

ACTION 2 – Local Area Safeguarding Panel Chairs to ensure learning from individual internal reviews are shared on a multiagency basis.

- 8.8 Dr McKillop assured members that when an SAI notification is received by the SPPG, it is assigned a Designated Risk Officer and is reviewed by a multi-agency and multi-professional panel. All SAIs will be reviewed together, and any themes and emerging issues will be redistributed to Trusts through learning alerts. This process is currently under review, and the newly proposed process is now out for consultation. Mr Guckian suggested that it could be beneficial for the SBNI to consider a response to this consultation, indicating that learning from SAIs in respect of a child protection matter should be shared with the SBNI as appropriate.

ACTION 3 – The SBNI CST to consider a response in respect of the consultation [Framework for Learning and Improvement from Patient Safety Incidents Consultation | Department of Health](#), with a view to requesting the potential inclusion of any learning obtained, in respect of a child protection matter, to be shared with the SBNI, as appropriate.

9 66/25P Child Criminal Exploitation Update (Please refer to Board Paper BM66-04.25P7)

- 9.1 The chair welcomed D/Chief Superintendent McKee to present an update on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- 9.2 D/Chief Superintendent McKee showed a PowerPoint presentation and advised that in 2023, both the DoH and Department of Justice (DOJ) led a two-year action plan to address Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) in Northern Ireland. This was done under the auspices of the Child Protection Senior Officials' Group (CPSOG), a cross-departmental strategic forum, which provided direction on existing or emerging child protection issues. On 30 September 2024, the Ministers for Health, Justice and Education launched the CCE Action Plan. This was informed by research on young people's experience of criminal exploitation, which was developed with the support of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC). The plan is underpinned by an agreed definition of CCE, which was also developed jointly with children and young people and was launched in September 2024. D/Chief

Superintendent McKee advised that Ms Deirdre Grant has now been appointed as Professional Officer for CCE, and outlined the current work of the Child Exploitation (CE) Committee in respect of CCE, as well as the planned future steps of the committee.

- 9.3 D/Chief Superintendent McKee further advised that the PSNI is currently undergoing a Criminal Justice Inspection by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) specific to CCE, and early outcomes of this are quite concerning in terms of awareness and how data is recorded. However, D/Chief Superintendent McKee highlighted that the inspection is occurring at the very early stages, when mechanisms are not yet fully developed. The chair highlighted that the inspection is positive in that it will highlight key areas of improvement in the management of CCE, and assist with the identification of gaps. Ms Grant agreed and noted that the research undertaken by Dr Colm Walsh on data collection and organisational readiness to address CCE will provide a baseline and will be fundamental in determining next steps and the identification of the correct areas to target resources. She perceives the CJINI inspection as positive, in terms of harnessing the support of other organisations, and establishing accountability mechanisms and responsibilities.
- 9.4 Dr McKillop commented that she believes this will be a very interesting piece of work as it unfolds, given the public interest in the effect of criminal exploitation on children. She believes that it is important to understand the role of Health & Social Care in safeguarding children from CCE. Ms Grant advised that a paper was presented at the last meeting of the CE Committee in respect of roles and responsibilities, and discussions have ensued in relation to the role of various agencies. These discussions have incorporated the Public Health approach, considering how to identify and respond to instances of CCE. Ms Grant emphasised that it will require a multi-agency approach, with collective responsibility required. Ms Grant further advised that in financial year 2025-2026, the focus will be on developing training material for staff, to raise awareness amongst professionals of CCE, to ensure timely and appropriate referrals, to consider how agencies can respond effectively and the interventions that can be taken to safeguard children and young people.

9.5 Ms Stewart referenced the Aspire Project, which is a project run by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) for young men up to the age of 30 who are at risk of coming to the attention of paramilitaries. The Justice Minister has written to Ms Stewart indicating that this project is coming to an end and asking that it is mainstreamed within the PBNI. Ms Stewart highlighted challenges with mainstreaming, given that no resources have been offered to enable this. She noted that there are links between the ongoing work on CCE and the Aspire Project, and she would be keen to discuss these to inform her response to the Justice Minister. Ms Grant advised that she welcomes these conversations and will assist Ms Stewart if required.

9.6 The chair thanked D/Chief Superintendent McKee for an informative and interesting presentation.

10 66/25P AOB

11.1 The chair reported that Ms Helen McKenzie, SBNI Director of Operations is currently off work on sick leave, and is likely to remain off for some time.

11.2 The chair closed the Public section of the meeting at 4.30pm and thanked members for their attendance.

Bernie McNally

Independent Chair SBNI