

65th Meeting of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Wednesday 12 February 2024

3.15pm– 4.25pm

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		✓
Ms Suzanne Mahon	Assistant Director of Family and Childcare, WHSCT (deputising OBO Dr Tom Cassidy)	✓	
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 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		✓
Mr Colin Reid	Head of Safeguarding, EANI (deputising OBO Ms Una Turbitt)	✓	
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	✓	

Ms Donna Murphy	Interim 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 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 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 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 Sarah Mason	CEO, Women's Aid

Summary of Actions

Action No.	Action:	To be completed by:
1	Board comments on the Terms of Reference for Area Safeguarding Panel CMR Sub Groups will be incorporated.	Professional Officer for CMR

BM65-02.25PM

Summary of Board Approval

The minutes from the Board Meeting on 04 December 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
The timeline and commencement of the planning process for the Strategic Plan 2026-2030 was approved.
The Risk Register was approved.
Recommendation 11 and Recommendation 16 of the CMR Process Review were approved.

Preliminaries: Apologies, Quorum, Conflict of Interest, Complaints

The chair welcomed SBNI members to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Dr Tom Cassidy, Ms Paddy Kelly, Ms Pauline Leeson, Ms Una Turbitt, Dr Ciara McKillop, Dr Joanne McClean, Ms Heather Reid and Ms Diane Hill. The chair noted that Ms Suzanne Mahon is deputising on behalf of Dr Tom Cassidy, Mr Colin Reid is deputising on behalf of Ms Una Turbitt and Ms Catherine Cassidy is deputising on behalf of Dr Ciara McKillop. The chair reported that Ms Pauline Leeson has indicated that she is retiring from Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) and consequently as a member of the Board. Ms Natalie Whelehan has subsequently been appointed as CEO in CiNI. Ms Whelehan will attend future Board meetings. Ms Leeson was wished well in her retirement. The chair welcomed new members of the Board, including D/Chief Superintendent Zoe McKee from the PSNI and Ms Donna Murphy from the SHSCT. Ms Donna Murphy has been appointed as Interim Director of Children and Young People's Services. The chair further noted that Mr David Douglas has joined the membership of the Board as Interim Independent Safeguarding Panel Chair for the Belfast and Southern areas.

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 65/25P Previous Minutes

- 1.1 Members agreed the minutes from the last Board meeting on 04 December 2024 as a factual and accurate representation of the meeting.

2 65/25P Matters Arising

- 2.1 Complete

2.2 Complete

3 65/25P Women's Aid SAY Project

- 3.1 The chair welcomed Ms Sarah Mason, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (WAFNI) to present on the Social Action Youth (SAY) Project. This work was undertaken with children and young people who have experience of domestic violence and abuse, and aimed to give these young people a voice on issues that affect them. WAFNI attended the SBNI Board Meeting in December 2023 to present on this project, and agreed that a further presentation would be given following the launch of their "Be like SACC" ('Social Action Children's Champions') animation.
- 3.2 Ms Mason showed a PowerPoint presentation in relation to the SAY Project. She advised that this was a Youth Social Action project funded by Children in Need and encompassed the voice of a diverse group of young people from Women's Aid across Northern Ireland. A series of participation workshops were carried out with these young people, with a balance of therapeutic work and social action. The project has been immensely successful for the children and young people involved. Ms Mason highlighted that as part of the project, the SAY group developed their project plan for change, designed their brand, responded to 3 government policy consultations, informed the development of the SBNI Learning and Development Framework, developed educational resources for young people, participated in research on children and family courts, helped WAFNI to develop training programmes, developed a trauma informed training animation and celebrated their work at Stormont.
- 3.3 The chair thanked Ms Mason for her presentation to the Board, and congratulated her on a powerful piece of work. The chair noted that, as domestic violence and abuse is a current strategic priority for the SBNI, hearing from children and young people is vital to the work of the Board. The chair acknowledged that work undertaken in the domestic abuse field often centres around the voice of adult women, and whilst this is absolutely crucial, there was a recognised gap in also considering the voice of children affected by domestic violence and abuse. She thanked WAFNI for assisting to bridge this gap.

- 3.4 Ms Murphy advised that she is a member of the Department of Health (DoH)/Department of Justice (DoJ) Domestic Violence Expert Reference Group, and she commended the group on this powerful piece of work. She highlighted that it is very encouraging to see that the voice of children and young people involved with the SAY project influenced government policy decisions.
- 3.5 Ms Muldoon commented on an excellent piece of work which is a reminder to all agencies that staff should be supported to ensure that they are empowered to become SACCs. As the chair of the SBNI Domestic Violence and Abuse Committee, Ms Muldoon thanked the SAY project for carrying out this work which has subsequently informed the Domestic Violence and Abuse Learning and Development Framework.
- 3.6 In terms of next steps, Ms Mason advised that with the support of the SBNI, Women's Aid is developing capacity training to enable sharing of the tools developed by the SAY project with all agencies. In addition, as part of the change fund from the Executive Office (TEO), the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) team is keen to support further roll out of workshops, to include bringing new children and young people onto the project.
- 3.7 The chair thanked Ms Mason for taking the time to deliver an excellent presentation to the Board.

4 65/25P McCartney VS King criminal trial – DoH communication with SBNI (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P1A, BM65-02.25P1B & BM65-02.25P1C)

- 4.1 The chair drew members' attention to communication received from the Department of Health (DoH) in relation to the highly publicised Alexander McCartney criminal trial, and the SBNI's subsequent letter of response, both of which are contained within papers circulated in advance of the meeting. The chair noted that the SBNI response outlines actions taken by the SBNI, detailing ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing the understanding and prevention of online risks. The planning in respect of the majority of these initiatives' pre-date the sentencing in the Alexander McCartney vs King criminal trial. She

welcomed Ms Roberts, Chair of the SBNI Online Safety Steering Group to present an overview of this work.

4.2 Ms Roberts shared a PowerPoint presentation in relation to initiatives undertaken. The Marcella Leonard Learning Seminars, which were hosted in each Safeguarding Panel area to help professionals to better understand, discover and risk assess, technology-assisted child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour, saw over 300 multiagency and cross-sectoral staff attend and feedback has been excellent. In addition, Ms Roberts highlighted the 'Stay Safe Online Campaign' which is a SBNI and PSNI campaign on online abuse and reporting, with a focus on education in relation to sextortion, grooming and sharing nudes. This campaign ran from January – March 2024 and its primary aim was to reduce the number of children falling victim to crimes whereby an offender tricks them into sending images, and to reassure these children that support is available. Ms Roberts reported that over the 3 months that the campaign ran, organic posts reached a total of 869,351 people and paid snapchat ads aimed at 13-24-year olds gained over 4.5 million impressions. The campaign won a NI Social Media Award in October 2024, and was recently shortlisted for a PSNI 'Problem Solving Award.' There are also plans to extend the campaign further in the coming months. Ms Roberts further highlighted that Safer Internet Day was on 11 February 2025, and there has been important work carried out in relation to prevention education. The SBNI has worked with partners to raise awareness of online scams, and activities undertaken have included the following:

- Produced and promoted educational resources tailored for use with 3-18 year olds. This included age appropriate learning about strangers online, catfishing, grooming, sextortion and victim blaming.
- Organised a webinar to promote the resources to schools.
- Written to education settings with a letter for parents and carers encouraging online safety conversations at home and signposting to the Online Safety Hub.

Ms Roberts reported that the Online Safety Steering Group has progressed all 15 actions attributable to the SBNI in the NI Executive's Online Safety Strategy year 3 Action Plan. In addition, she highlighted that the Steering Group collaborated with the National Crime Agency (NCA) in April 2024 to issue an alert to schools and parents/carers about sextortion. This was very positively evaluated, and will extend further in the coming months, with a focus on sextortion aimed at boys. Ms Roberts further reminded members that the National Children's Bureau (NCB) is undertaking a Training Needs Analysis on behalf of the SBNI and this will be disseminated through the Safeguarding Panels. She encouraged all Board members to disseminate this widely through their own internal channels.

- 4.3 The chair congratulated Ms Roberts and the SBNI Online Safety Committee and Steering Group for the excellent work they are undertaking in this area. The chair further noted that the SBNI Online Safety Coordinator, Ms Orla O'Hagan has been nominated to attend a garden party in Buckingham Palace in May 2025 in recognition of her work on the Online Strategy. The chair expressed congratulations to Ms O'Hagan on her exemplary work.
- 4.4 Mr Reid advised that he attended a helpful discussion on online radicalisation, led by the SBNI. He emphasised that there is an overlap between radicalisation and the online world, and this new and emerging issue will require consideration moving forward.
- 4.5 Ms Muldoon thanked Ms Roberts and team for the excellent work undertaken. She highlighted that it is worrying that only four young people spoke out about the abuse they experienced at the hands of Alexander McCartney, given the vast numbers of children and young people who were targeted. There is some more work to be undertaken in this regard, particularly in relation to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) that is taught in schools, as there is a very clear message being relayed by both teachers and young people who contact the NSPCC's Childline service that young people do not always receive appropriate messaging in a timely way. The NSPCC are in discussions in relation to this issue, and have undertaken a new programme called 'Talk

Relationships.’ Ms McKenzie agreed and advised that the SBNI is in the process of commissioning work in relation to barriers to reporting. Within this work, it is considering opportunities to improve the information and services given to children and young people, to subsequently improve their confidence to report these types of crimes.

- 4.7 Mr Guckian commented on the phenomenal numbers of interactions on the ‘Stay Safe Online Campaign.’ He highlighted that, as an outcome, the fact that the campaign has reached these numbers of children and young people is outstanding. He extended congratulations to Ms Roberts, Ms O’Hagan and the team, and noted that, although it is essential to continue to build upon the work undertaken, it has been an excellent and rewarding initiative.

5 65/25P Voluntary Organisation Membership of the Board (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P2)

- 5.1 The chair advised that the selection process for Voluntary Organisation membership of the Board, as agreed with the DoH, commenced on Thursday 30 January 2025. Applications close on Thursday 27 February 2025, with interviews to take place on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 March 2025. It is intended that the successful applicants will take up their position on the Board by the Board Development Day on 14 May 2025. The chair urged all members to disseminate the application widely within their internal networks.
- 5.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to Voluntary Organisation Membership of the Board.

6 65/25P Strategic Plan 2026-2030 Timeline (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P3A & BM65-02.25P3B)

- 6.1 The chair advised that the SBNI is in the final year of its current Strategic Plan 2022-2026. Planning for the development of the SBNI Strategic Plan 2026-2030 has started and identification of strategic priorities will take place at the SBNI Board Development Day on 14 May 2025. Stakeholder engagement will then be carried out between June – September 2025, with Board approval to proceed to public consultation to be sought at its meeting on 03 December

2025. This public consultation will extend for a period of 10 weeks, from 10 December 2025-23 February 2026. The SBNI Strategic Plan 2026-2030 will be commended to the Board for approval at its meeting on 15 April 2026. The chair sought the Board's formal approval to commence the planning process.

- 6.2 The timeline and commencement of the planning process for the Strategic Plan 2026-2030 was approved.

7 65/25P Risk Register (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P4A, BM65-02.25P4B & BM65-02.25P4C)

- 7.1 Mr Guckian advised that there are two risks which have been updated. The first (Risk 1422) is in relation to the lack of timely and specialist procurement support, which may delay publication of tenders and result in the SBNI being unable to meet delivery targets and budget spend in year. Mr Guckian acknowledged that the risk likelihood has been changed to likely, and this is because this is the end of the financial year and the award of one Direct Award Contract (DAC) remains outstanding. The impact of Risk 1422 remains as major, and the overall rating remains high. The second risk which has been updated (Risk 1824) is in relation to the delay in agreeing a recruitment pathway by the DoH and PHA for the CMR Panel Chair replacement and Safeguarding Panel Chair vacancy, which could result in the SBNI being unable to meet its statutory objective and statutory functions. Mr Guckian noted that there has been some progress in this regard, given that the CMR Panel Chair has agreed to extend his tenure for a period of 6 months and an Interim Safeguarding Panel Chair was appointed in January 2025. Mr Guckian advised that the likelihood of this risk has now been downgraded to possible, but as the impact remains as major the overall rating remains high.
- 7.2 The chair emphasised the impact of these risks on the functioning of the SBNI. In terms of risk 1422, in relation to the lack of timely and specialist procurement support, the chair stressed that a delay in the processing of DACs could mean that the SBNI is unable to spend its budget in year and may subsequently lose this allocated budget. In relation to Risk 1824, the chair thanked both the CMR Panel Chair and Interim Safeguarding Panel Chair for undertaking to bridge the

gap and assist to mitigate this risk. The PHA, SBNI and DoH are actively pursuing a resolution to this Risk with proposals currently under consideration.

7.3 The Risk Register was approved.

8 65/25P Finance Update (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P5A & BM65-02.25P5B)

8.1 The chair advised that all budget has been profiled for spend and a break-even position is anticipated at financial year end. She thanked SBNI staff who have worked closely with colleagues in the PHA Finance Department to ensure effective financial management and oversight.

8.2 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the finance update.

9 65/25P CMR Process Review Recommendations Update:

- **Terms of Reference for Area Safeguarding Panel CMR Sub Groups**
- **Trust membership of CMR Panel**

(Please Refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P6A, BM65-02.25P6B, BM65-02.25P6C & BM65-02.25P6D)

9.1 Mr Thomson drew members attention to Board Paper BM65-02.25P6B and noted that the majority of recommendations in respect of the CMR Process review (2024) have now been completed. He noted Recommendation 11; in relation to the consideration of a proposal to amend 35 (e) of the Regulations to enable 5 Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Assistant Directors for Safeguarding to attend the CMR Panel, as only one is required to attend as per the current regulations. Mr Thomson advised that a Working Group was convened, and a consultation undertaken in relation to this recommendation; Trust Assistant Directors are keen that they continue to attend. This was supported by the membership of the CMR panel who commend to the Board, a recommendation that the Regulations are amended to enable such attendance. Mr Thomson also noted Recommendation 16; in relation to the development of a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Local Safeguarding Area Panels CMR Sub Group. He advised that some comments have been received

from Board members in respect of the ToR and these amendments will be made accordingly. Mr Thomson further sought Board approval to proceed accordingly in respect of Recommendation 11 and Recommendation 16 of the CMR Process Review.

ACTION 1 – Board comments on the Terms of Reference for Area Safeguarding Panel CMR Sub Groups will be incorporated.

- 9.2 The chair congratulated the CMR team on their hard work to progress recommendations made in the CMR Process Review.
- 9.3 There were no further comments or queries in relation to the CMR Process Review Recommendations Update.
- 9.4 Recommendation 11 and Recommendation 16 of the CMR Process Review were approved.

10 65/25P Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach Conference and Awards (Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P7)

- 10.1 Mr Rogers advised that the SBNI recently held two events on Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach (TIA). The first was a recognition and celebration event held on 22 January 2025, to recognise the work undertaken by many organisations to embrace and progress a TIA in Northern Ireland. In addition, there was a Trauma Informed Approach Conference, entitled, 'Systems to Support our People- Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach', held on 23 January 2025, Mr Rogers reported that Junior Ministers, Aisling Reilly and Pam Cameron, attended to open the conference and discussed the critical role of trauma informed practices in government policy. In addition, the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), Dr Jayne Brady, attended to close the conference and in her closing remarks she reiterated the NICS's commitment to leading and modelling the embedding of a trauma informed approach. Mr Rogers further highlighted that the draft Programme for Government now has in the region of eight references relating to developing a 'trauma informed

Northern Ireland' and it is hoped that this will continue to be included when the Programme for Government is finalised.

10.2 Mr Rogers noted that SBNI colleagues attended the Justice Committee on 12 December 2024 and provided a brief on a trauma informed approach. This was very successful, and the Justice Committee have now requested further training in relation to same. In addition, on the 06 February 2025 the Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) team also attended the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) launch of their research project on 'The Prevalence and Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Northern Ireland.' This is a landmark study which provides an understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the population. Mr Rogers highlighted that the report indicates that there are 61% of people in Northern Ireland who have experienced one ACE, compared with 53% in England. More starkly, the report indicated that 18% of people in Northern Ireland have experienced 4 or more ACEs, compared with 8% in England and 14% in Wales.

10.3 Mr Rogers reported that the TIP Committee is now pursuing further work in relation to assisting member and partner agencies and government departments in the use of the Trauma Informed Toolkit and is working to update training materials and developing a revised Training Framework. Furthermore, work is to be undertaken with Departmental colleagues to explore how best to progress the recommendations from the SBNI commissioned QUB research on embedding a TIA in Northern Ireland. Mr Rogers emphasised that the SBNI has harnessed a great deal of momentum in relation to TIA and it is hoped that this can be sustained in the work to be undertaken going forward.

10.4 The chair thanked the TIP team for their excellent work. She noted that it is spectacular to have a trauma informed approach referenced in the Programme for Government.

11 65/25P AOB

- **Sudden and Unexpected Deaths in Infants: Promoting Safer Sleeping Resources**

(Please refer to Board Paper BM65-02.25P8)

- 11.1 Ms Roberts advised that the PHA has issued updated Guidance in respect of Safer Sleeping, and noted that this provides very clear and evidence-based guidance to professionals working with families. Ms Roberts highlighted that this guidance includes advice on both safer sleep and safer bed sharing tips, as the evidence suggests that the vast majority of parents will take babies into their bed. The updated guidance also includes advice for professionals as to when they can seek legal advice in relation to co-sleeping concerns. Furthermore, the PHA has been running a suite of continuous social media campaigns across all platforms to provide tips on safer sleeping. Ms Roberts further highlighted that printed copies of the updated guidance leaflet are now out for distribution and will be widely distributed across Trusts, GP practices, pharmacies and Women's Aid etc.
- 11.2 The chair closed the Public section of the meeting at 4.25pm and thanked members for their attendance.

Bernie McNally

Independent Chair SBNI