



# Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust



**Minutes of NIAS Trust Board held on Wednesday 27 May 2020 at  
2.00pm via Zoom (due to Covid-19)**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Mrs N Lappin	Chair
	Mr W Abraham	Non Executive Director
	Mr D Ashford	Non Executive Director
	Mr A Cardwell	Non Executive Director
	Mr J Dennison	Non Executive Director
	Mr T Haslett	Non Executive Director
	Mr M Bloomfield	Chief Executive
	Ms M Lemon	Interim Director of HR
	Mr P Nicholson	Interim Director of Finance
	Dr N Ruddell	Medical Director
	Mr R Sowney	Interim Director of Operations

## **IN**

<b>ATTENDANCE:</b>	Mr B McNeill	Clinical Response Model (CRM) Programme Director
	Ms L Charlton	Director of Quality, Safety & Improvement
	Ms R O'Hara	Programme Director – Strategic Workforce Planning
	Ms M Paterson	Director of Planning, Performance & Corporate Services
	Ms S Sellars	Board Apprentice
	Mrs C Mooney	Board Secretary

### **1 Welcome, Introduction & Apologies**

The Chair thanked members for facilitating this additional meeting and noted that there were no apologies.

### **2 Previous Minutes (TB27/05/2020/01)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 May 2020 were **APPROVED** on a proposal from Mr Dennison and seconded by Mr

Haslett subject to the following amendment (pages 9/10) requested by Ms Sellars in order to clarify that the processes being referred to were HR processes:

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*Ms Sellars acknowledged that the document would evolve over time. She asked for further detail in relation to the modifications to be made to the HR process and how one would know that it was the right time to restart certain pieces of work.*

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*In terms of modifications to the HR process, Ms Lemon cited the example of Employee Relations and said that, at the outset of the pandemic, a number of hearings involving panels had been due to take place.*

**3 Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising.

**4 Chair's Update**

The Chair reminded those present that, despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, it remained her intention to establish a Finance Committee to be chaired by Mr Dennison. She advised that Mr Dennison and Mr Nicholson had met recently to discuss this and she invited Mr Dennison to provide an update.

Mr Dennison thanked Mr Nicholson for meeting with him and said that their discussions had focussed on his understanding of the requirements, the restrictions and the challenges associated with managing a budget to deliver services. Mr Dennison said that their discussions had also touched upon the areas of work which might be taken forward by a Finance Committee. He suggested that it might be worthwhile for Non-Executive Directors to have a brief training session to clarify any issues they may have and said that Mr Nicholson had agreed to take this forward.

Mr Dennison emphasised that the creation of a Finance Committee would not replace the Audit Committee but would complement it and said that Mr Nicholson had undertaken to develop a draft terms of reference for the Committee which he would share with members for their consideration.

Agreeing with Mr Dennison's comments, Mr Nicholson said that, while the Committee would mainly focus on financial elements, he would envisage its remit also encompassing aspects of performance and other resource issues.

The Chair sought clarification on whether the training alluded to by Mr Dennison would be targeted at members of the Finance Committee or involve all Non-Executive Directors.

In response, Mr Dennison said that he thought it might be helpful for all Non-Executive Director colleagues to participate in such a briefing session.

Mr Nicholson advised that, in their discussions, he had mentioned the HFMA course entitled 'Introductory Guide to HSC Finance' which could be completed online.

Mr Abraham commented that the financial elements to be covered by the Finance Committee appeared very similar to those of the Audit Committee and he questioned how the two Committees would operate. He suggested that consideration might be given to have the Finance Committee as a sub-Committee. However Mr Abraham stressed that it would be important to ensure that the role of each Committee was clearly delineated.

The Chair believed that the finance training might help to provide some clarity and agreed the importance of ensuring there was no overlap. She added that Mr Dennison was very keen that work was not duplicated across the two Trust Committees.

She reminded the meeting that the Board had some time ago discussed the division of Committee work and had been of the view that there were areas of work that would benefit from an additional forum. The Chair said that, as alluded to by Mr Nicholson earlier, the initial remit of the Finance Committee would be finance, however, she too would see this widening to include elements of performance.

Mr Bloomfield confirmed a workshop in January 2019 had identified the need for a third Committee, for example a General Resources Committee, with a view to considering issues such as HR, finance and performance. He said that the intention had been to hold a

further workshop to work through the remit of each Committee and added that there was clearly still merit in doing so.

Mr Dennison suggested that it might be helpful for Mr Abraham and him to meet as Committee Chairs to ensure complementarity between Committees.

The Chair agreed that this would be helpful and asked Mrs Mooney to liaise with Mr Dennison and Mr Abraham to make the necessary arrangements.

Mr Ashford pointed out that elements of HR fell within the remit of the Assurance Committee. However he acknowledged the importance of avoiding duplication and ensuring clarity between the roles of the Finance and Audit Committees in the first instance. Discussions as to the role of other Committees could then follow.

## **5 Chief Executive's Update**

Mr Bloomfield advised that the Trust was now in the recovery phase following its main response to the first phase of Covid-19. He said that the health and wider public sectors were now scaling back the structures put in place to manage Covid-19. For the Trust, this meant reducing the frequency of a number of meetings including NIAS Gold which more recently had met three times per week and this was now reduced to once per week. Mr Bloomfield advised that Tactical Command which had operated 16 hours per days on a seven day per week basis would, with effect from 1 June, operate in shadow form. He explained that staff would continue to operate on a rota basis but would return to their substantive roles and be available to reconvene should the need arise.

Mr Bloomfield said that it was clear that attention was now turning to recovery or 'rebuilding' services. He said that, later in the meeting, members would consider the Trust's Corporate Plan which signalled a return to key areas of work which had been paused to allow the Trust respond to the pandemic. However he pointed out that home working and social distancing remained priorities.

Continuing, Mr Bloomfield reported that, since the Trust Board meeting on 7 May, the Chief Medical Officer had asked the Trust to play a role in supporting care homes in testing all residents and staff. He said that arrangements had been put in place within three

days for testing as well as arranging training for a number of staff. He expressed his appreciation to Ms Charlton for taking this forward and to those NIAS staff who had undertaken the testing.

Mr Bloomfield advised that he had been asked by the DoH to lead a piece of work around urgent and emergency care, in particular to look at how changes could be introduced to the unscheduled care system to accommodate social distancing. He explained that there had been concerns over the last number of weeks in relation to increasing ambulance turnaround times which were a direct consequence of changes in hospitals around social distancing. Mr Bloomfield believed that there were significant challenges for Trusts in terms of meeting social distancing requirements at a time when the general public was being encouraged to attend EDs.

Mr Bloomfield added that his involvement with this work would provide an opportunity to ensure that the issue of turnaround times remained high on the agenda.

Concluding his report, Mr Bloomfield advised that a virtual staff engagement session had been held on the afternoon of the last Trust Board with over 50 staff participating.

The Chair thanked Mr Bloomfield for his report which was **NOTED** by members.

## **6 Draft Corporate Plan 2020-21 (TB27/05/2020/02)**

At the Chair's invitation, Mr Bloomfield introduced this agenda item. He explained that an element of the recovery phase now being taken forward by the Trust was to ensure that there was a clear plan setting out what the Trust intended to do this year. He acknowledged that work continued to deal with Covid-19 related issues but said it was important to have a clear plan of the priority issues to be progressed during the year.

Mr Bloomfield said that it was regrettable that the Trust had launched its Strategic Plan, 'NIAS Our Strategy to Transform 2020-2026', on 5 March and shortly thereafter had to pause significant pieces of work to respond to the pandemic. He reminded the meeting that the key priorities had been identified for year one as well as timescales and said that, whilst it remained the Trust's intention to progress these, it would be important to be mindful that

the year ahead would be uncertain and that these priorities might be subject to change.

Ms Paterson indicated that, over the last 12 months, colleagues had contributed to extensive work in supporting the design and development of the NIAS Strategic Plan 2020-2026 which was intended to support the 'Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together' Strategy and addressing many of the priorities in it for NIAS.

Drawing members' attention to the Corporate Plan, Ms Paterson explained that the plan reflected the key enablers to deliver the Corporate Strategy but also included the following;

- outstanding actions from 2019-20 Plan
- actions to deliver significant control or governance issues
- objectives to manage any substantial areas of risk.

Ms Paterson advised that it was intended the Plan would deliver on the Corporate Strategy whilst managing the challenges and limitations to achieving the objectives.

She indicated that there were several key transformation workstreams supporting the implementation of the NIAS Strategy and said that the Corporate Plan had been aligned with these workstreams.

Ms Paterson drew members' attention to the additional objective around the development of a comprehensive strategy for the management of aggression towards NIAS staff which had been shared with members and said it would be important to include this within the Plan.

The Chair said that she was conscious of the significant amount of work involved in bringing the Corporate Plan to the Board meeting in the context of Covid-19 and she extended her thanks to all concerned.

Mr Cardwell commended the Plan. He welcomed inclusion of the objective around management of aggression and said that he hoped that the pressures arising from Covid-19 allowed this to be progressed.

Mr Dennison echoed Mr Cardwell's comments and said that the Plan was comprehensive. He referred to the agenda item re 'Rebuilding HSC Services' and asked whether the Plan was mindful of future recovery/reinstatement of services. He also sought clarification on whether the Plan had been written prior to receipt of the Permanent Secretary's correspondence in relation to the 'Rebuilding of HSC Services' and whether it was deliverable based on the changes likely to take place in the coming months.

Mr Bloomfield acknowledged the point made by Mr Dennison and confirmed that the Plan had been written prior to receiving the Permanent Secretary's correspondence. He indicated that, in writing the Plan, each Director was cognisant of the impact of Covid-19 on services. Mr Bloomfield also pointed out that it would be important that the Plan remained ambitious but also reflected on some of the changes which would be made in the coming months. He accepted that it may become necessary to amend some of the timescales referred to within the Plan but said that Directors would consider the necessity to do so. Mr Bloomfield said that it would also be important to have a clear understanding of what objectives needed to be delivered upon this year in order to ensure the overall Strategy was delivered.

Mr Dennison referred to the possibility of a second wave of Covid-19 and asked how the Trust would determine which elements of the Corporate Plan were critical and which could be deferred.

In response, Ms Paterson explained that, should such circumstance arise, those control or risk issues which could potentially inhibit the Trust's ability to deliver on its core objectives would be discussed in detail by Directors and brought to the attention of the Board.

Mr Nicholson acknowledged the ambitious nature of the Corporate Plan and said that the Trust had engaged with DoH colleagues in relation to the availability of funding for training for the year.

He highlighted two major risks to future plans. The first focussed on the Ulster University and whether it intended to open up entry to deliver training courses to all students on their degree programmes, including NIAS. The second related to the uncertainty around a potential second wave. Mr Nicholson said that all Plans and associated financial implications were caveated to a certain degree by this uncertainty.

Mr Haslett said that he shared the concerns which had been expressed by Mr Dennison and acknowledged that the Plan represented a good starting point to look into the future. He referred to the fact that there were 24 objectives to be taken forward between now and September as well as work associated with the rebuilding of HSC services and other demands placed upon the service.

Following this discussion, the Corporate Plan was **APPROVED** on a proposal from Mr Dennison and seconded by Mr Ashford.

## **7 Rebuilding HSC Services (TB27/05/2020/03)**

Mr Bloomfield advised that the Permanent Secretary had written to Trust Chief Executives on 18 May requesting them to develop by 1 June Phase 1 of a rebuilding plan which would cover the month of June and set out measures which the Trust intended to take in this regard. The plans submitted by Trusts would then be published by the DoH.

He reminded the meeting that, while NIAS had continued to provide emergency ambulance services, acute Trusts had paused a number of services, for example non-urgent elective activity had been paused. Mr Bloomfield said that the DoH was keen for priority services to resume at a steady and gradual pace.

Continuing Mr Bloomfield explained that the DoH would take the lead in progressing the second phase, ie July – September. He said that members would be aware from the briefing provided at the Trust Board meeting in early May of the work being taken forward by the Trust through the Recovery Co-ordination Group in relation to recovery. This included, for example, looking at the reinstatement of PCS services, resuming training and the redeployment of staff to their substantive duties.

Mr Bloomfield said that further detail would be provided to members at the June Board meeting in terms of how the recovery programme would be progressed over the coming months.

Ms Paterson advised that she had liaised with Directors of Operations in the other Trusts the development of the NIAS plan and said that she was currently reviewing Trusts' plans to provide



direction on how NIAS reconfigured or directed resources could support other Trusts' requirements.

The Chair explained that members' approval was not being sought to the plan but indicated that the NIAS plan was one element of a wider piece of work being taken forward. She said she looked forward to receiving more detail at the June meeting and extended her thanks for the work carried out to date.

Members **NOTED** the NIAS plan for June in terms of Rebuilding HSC Services.

**8 Date of next meeting**

The next Trust Board meeting will take place at 10am on Thursday 18 June 2020. Arrangements to be confirmed.

**9 Any Other Business**

It was noted that an Audit Committee meeting would be held on Thursday 2 July 2020 between 10am-12 noon to consider the audited uncertified accounts. This would then be followed by an In Committee meeting of the Trust Board to consider the accounts.

**THIS BEING ALL THE BUSINESS, THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 2.45PM.**

SIGNED: 

DATE: 6/7/2020

