



**Minutes of NIAS Trust Board held on Wednesday 26 March 2025 at
10.35am in NIFRS Learning and Development College, 120
Dungannon Road, Cookstown, BT80 9BD**

Present:	Mrs M Larmour	Chair
	Mr D Ashford	Non-Executive Director
	Mr P Corrigan	Non-Executive Director
	Mr J Dennison	Non-Executive Director
	Mr P Quinn	Non-Executive Director
	Mr M Bloomfield	Chief Executive
	Ms R Byrne	Director of Operations
	Dr N Ruddell	Medical Director
In		
Attendance:	Ms L Charlton	Director of Quality, Safety & Improvement (QSI)
	Ms M Paterson	Director of Planning, Performance & Corporate Services/Deputy Chief Executive
	Ms L Donnelly	Assistant Director of Finance
	Ms S Beggs	Temporary Board Secretary
Apologies:	Dr P Graham	Non-Executive Director
	Ms M Lemon	Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR & OD)

Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Conflict

The Chair noted the apologies.

The Chair reminded those present that they should declare any conflicts of interest at the outset or as the meeting progressed.

The meeting was declared as quorate.

The Chair congratulated Ms Paterson and Ms Donnelly on their recent appointments.

2 **Previous Minutes (TB26/03/2025/01)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 February 2025 were **APPROVED** on a proposal from Mr Corrigan and seconded by Mr Quinn.

The Chair thanked Mr Ashford for chairing the previous meeting in her absence.

Mr Quinn commended the last minutes.

3 **Matters Arising (TB26/03/2025/02)**

Members **NOTED** the Matters Arising.

Mr Quinn suggested at the last meeting that Ms Charlton should approach the NI Human Rights Commissioner to support the proposed audit of ambulance care. Ms Charlton confirmed that NIAS will link with the NI Human Rights Commission following external discussions with other HSC Trusts, she advised of current engagement with the Southern Trust in relation to proposed audit to ensure NIAS is following the appropriate methodology.

At the last meeting it was suggested that the number of changes within Senior Management should be included as a risk on the Corporate Risk Register. Ms Paterson provided a paper under matters arising with the suggested wording of the risk.

Mr Quinn suggested addition of a further control in respect of supporting and mentoring staff transitioning to senior roles. The Board agreed the proposed wording of the risk, subject to the addition, and this will be tabled at GARAC for formal approval.

ACTION: Ms Paterson

4 **Chair's Update**

The Chair recently attended both the AACE Chairs meeting and AACE Council meeting. The recently announced changes to consolidate NHS England with the Department of Health, and the associated potential disruption, were discussed, and it is anticipated that a ten-year plan will be developed to manage this transition.

Other key priorities discussed at the meetings were in relation to finance, budget, emergency care, elective care and winter planning.

The Chair noted a presentation from the new cabinet secretary in Wales who is seeking to prioritise performance and cardiac arrest outcomes, in terms of looking at different measures and bringing academia to assess their pilot.

Bron Biddle also presented on the risks of sexual safety. The Chair suggested that the Board needs to consider as a risk and how the Board can have assurance about sexual safety. Ms Lemon confirmed that Ms Biddle will be working with NIAS for two days per week from April 2025 to support the ongoing cultural improvement programme.

5 **Chief Executive's Update**

Mr Bloomfield attended the 'big discussion event' at the start of March to commence Winter Planning for this year. The focus of the event was to identify challenges and ambulance handovers was identified by attendees as one of the priorities to be addressed. It is anticipated that an initial Winter Plan will be ready by June 2025.

Mr Bloomfield commented on the NIAO's recently published report on delayed hospital handovers. Mr Bloomfield acknowledged that NIAS welcomes the report and its findings – including the significant risks posed to patients and public finances because of the intractable delayed handover position. Mr Bloomfield further advised that the GIRFT Report was published by the Department of Health yesterday along with an action plan.

Mr Bloomfield commented on the recent media attention regarding hospital handovers that has been influenced, in part, by publication of the NIAO's report.

Mr Bloomfield noted a recent motion debate in the Assembly which included a discussion of the W45 handover model used by the London Ambulance Service. Ms Charlton recently represented NIAS as part of an SPPG-led delegation to London to view how the model operates.

Mr Bloomfield has written to SPPG asking for an update following the visit.

On 11 and 12 March 15 NIAS staff attended the ALF Conference in Leeds: two recently qualified paramedics won the exceptional pre-registration student award, and the Board congratulated them on this achievement.

Mr Bloomfield advised that the draft 2025-26 financial plan, which had been considered by the Board at the last meeting, had been shared with SPPG and no changes were requested by SPPG.

Mr Bloomfield advised that he, along with the NIFRS Chief Officer, had met with Ms Sheenagh Weir whose daughter's unfortunate death had led to Maggie's Call in 2022 – a proposal that NIAS and NIFRS would co-respond to cardiac arrest situations. This initiative has not progressed, but NIAS is continuing to engage with NIFRS on the proposal.

Mr Bloomfield further noted that an MoU has been put in place for NIAS to use the NIFRS Learning and Development College for a range of training events for staff, including classroom teaching and for the use of some of the facilities for scenario-based training.

Mr Bloomfield, on behalf of the Board, formally recorded his thanks to Mr Christie, who commenced with NIAS nine months ago and has provided excellent support to the finance function, as well as the wider team.

Mr Bloomfield advised members that Ms Byrne will be moving to SPPG on secondment for a period of two years from 1 May 2025 in the role of Director of transformation within unscheduled care. All members extended their sincere thanks to Ms Byrne for her hard work and dedication to NIAS.

Mr Sinclair will take on the role of interim Director of Operations from 1 May.

Mr Bloomfield has been visiting stations during the last five weeks prior to his retirement and plans to meet with other staff within corporate functions tomorrow. He has spoken to at least 200 members of staff, which has been positive and uplifting.

Mr Bloomfield recollected several issues which have been progressed during his tenure as Chief Executive, including the significant improvement in the Trust's infection prevention and control practices and the resolution of the agenda for change pay dispute which enabled NIAS staff to achieve parity of Banding with their counterparts elsewhere in the UK. Mr Bloomfield noted that these changes supported the organisation's ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, Mr Bloomfield noted the continued advancement of the AAP programme, and that the 17th course is due to start shortly. This has significantly expanded the development opportunities for NIAS staff.

Mr Bloomfield also noted the advancements that have been achieved through the establishment and expansion of the Integrated Clinical Hub, which is helping to reduce hospital conveyance rates, and the wide range of corporate functions at the Trust which are supporting the delivery of safe services.

Mr Bloomfield expressed his gratitude for being able to lead the Trust for the last seven years and commented that NIAS is an amazing organisation with very dedicated professionals. Mr Bloomfield thanked the Senior Management Team and Board members for their commitment, support and dedication and extended his thanks to Carol Mooney for her excellent support as Board Secretary.

The Chair thanked Mr Bloomfield for his leadership and noted that Mr Bloomfield has contributed to an impressive list of achievements of which he can be very proud.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Mr Christie for his support over the last nine months, and Ms Byrne for her professionalism, dedication and work as Director of Operations.

The Chair thanked Mr Bloomfield for his update which was **NOTED**.

6 **Performance Report (January 2025) (TB26/03/2025/03)**

Ms Paterson presented the high-level summary for February 2025.

Despite reduced demand, NIAS's call response times remain prolonged and far out with ARP targets. Category 2 call responses have improved slightly but remain at an unacceptable level. NIAS continues to experience lengthy hospital handovers, and the position is deteriorating.

Ms Paterson noted that ORH will be benchmarking NIAS's performance measures against other organisations, with the intention of highlighting areas where operational response can be improved. Ms Paterson will provide an update in May.

ACTION: Ms Paterson

Mr Paterson noted that compliance with digital enablers (use of ePCR) is around 93%, which will support the organisation to monitor clinical practice and outcomes.

Ms Charlton reported on complaints 20 day response performance and noted that the new NIPSO framework for management of complaints is scheduled to come into effect in the Summer.

The Chair noted that the implementation of the new complaints procedure was discussed at the Monthly Trust Chair's meeting yesterday, where it was agreed that there is a need for coordination across the system. Issues have been highlighted regarding the timescales for implementation and HSC Chief Executives have written a letter to DoH expressing this concern.

Mr Quinn queried whether the downturn in demand could potentially be related to reduced public confidence in accessing the service, given the well-reported issues regarding response times and hospital handovers. Mr Quinn suggested that it would be useful to try and gauge public opinion on this and that there is a need to educate and inform the public about what a modern ambulance service does, including H&T and S&T pathways.

Ms Paterson advised that NIAS uses social media to inform the general public of waiting times and that the Trust recently completed work with its patient group and has developed videos explaining what the public can expect from the service.

Mr Corrigan noted that a lot of performance data is collated and there is a need to prioritise what can and should be focussed on, and that the new Committee structure might provide an opportunity

to do this. Mr Corrigan also commented positively on the improvements that have been made in respect to absence management.

Mr Dennison sought assurance on delivery of mandatory safeguarding training. Ms Charlton confirmed that 579 staff have been trained thus far and a further session is scheduled for next week. Ms Charlton noted the limited capacity within the safeguarding team to provide this training and highlighted the importance of having capacity within the organisation to ensure we have the level of support needed for our staff, provided by individuals with the essential skills and knowledge.

The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and the Performance Report was **NOTED** by the Board.

7 **Finance Report (Month 10) (TB26/03/2025/04)**

Ms Donnelly highlighted the key points within the report.

In relation to RRL as at Month 10, the Trust was reporting YTD expenditure of £100m, with an underspend of £0.5m when compared to YTD profiled budgets.

The Month 11 figures are now complete. The main change from the Month 10 position is the allocation of the pay award funding, increasing the Trust allocation from SPPG from £119.116m to £124.270m.

As at Month 11, the Trust was reporting YTD expenditure of £110.396m, with an underspend of £ 0.168m when compared to YTD profiled budgets. (£10.381m monthly spend).

To date £4.5m has been returned to SPPG and the financial plan has been updated accordingly.

In Month 11, the plan to deliver £2.475m of savings is also on track to be achieved in full.

Month 12 expenditure is expected to increase in line with expenditure profiles and because of the 2024-25 pay award. At

this stage, NIAS remains on track to deliver a break-even position at year-end.

As at Month 10, the Trust has received a CRL of £8.599m. This includes the additional £1.1m to support pressures. At this stage, the forecast is a break-even position at year-end.

8 Committee Business: (TB20/02/2025/12)

Members **NOTED** that the Committee minutes were not finalised and circulated as yet. Ms Beggs has circulated draft minutes to Committee Chairs to aid with an update at today's meeting.

Safety Committee tee – 30 Jan 2025

Mr Ashford explained the meeting was a very full agenda which included the RQIA communications in relation to the independent ambulance services. The Committee also discussed EPRR and HART capacity and received a positive update in respect of pharmacy.

PFOD Committee - 13 Feb 2025

The Committee noted the draft financial plan for 2025-26. The Committee received an update on the Operations Restructure and Cultural Improvement work, and these will be priorities going forward.

ARAC Committee – 6 Feb 2025

Committee members advised that most of the items discussed had been considered at the previous Trust Board meeting.

Internal Audit had presented on the organisation's performance in terms of recommendation implementation, and a positive result is anticipated for end of year.

9 Any Other Business

The Chair closed the meeting by formally thanking Mr Bloomfield for 38 years of service, and for his excellent leadership and friendship throughout her time as Chair.

**THIS BEING ALL THE BUSINESS, THE CHAIR CLOSED THE
PUBLIC MEETING AT 12:40PM.**

SIGNED:  _____

DATE: 15/5/25

FINAL