



**Minutes of NIAS Trust Board held on Thursday 23 October 2025 at
12.40 in the Boardroom, Ballymena HQ 120-130 Antrim Rd,
Ballymena BT42 2HD**

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

1 Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Conflict

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies received.

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.

2 Previous Minutes (TB23/10/2025/01)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 June 2025 were **APPROVED** on a proposal from Mr Corrigan and seconded by Ms Paterson.

3 **Matters Arising (TB23/10/2025/02)**

Members **NOTED** the Matters Arising.

4 **Chair's Update**

The Chair updated Trust Board on matters since the previous meeting and advised she took part in a comms video to staff on the issues discussed at the Board meeting, facilitated by Mr McPoland on 4 September. She attended a PSCF Forward Planning Meeting, met with Mr Jim Wilkinson from DoH, RQIA Roundtable event regarding 'Being Human' framework on patient safety, AACE Council meeting and NHS Confed Meeting as well as other meetings.

The Chair attended a CEF event on 16 September which was regionally represented and was a very informative event about how AI is being used and the legal implications of this and advised as board members, there is the need to become more familiar with the possibilities and challenges. On the same day the Chair met with the NIFRS Chair and the PHA Chair Colin Coffey, discussing moving towards prevention of the reset plan and working collaboratively to achieve this.

The CiC meeting took place on 10 September and there are a number of meetings established between now and November to identify key challenges and priorities within the system with the expectation that Task and Finish groups will report back at the next CiC meeting in November. The Chair reminded Board Members that herself, The Chief Executive and Mr Quinn attend the CiC meetings to represent the NIAS Board, where the decision making authority still rests.

The Chair has asked Leahann Morgan from RQIA involved in the 'Being Human' Framework to speak at the NIAS Strategy Day and suggested it may also be useful ~~but will also seek~~ for her to present at a future Trust Board meeting.

At the meeting with the Permanent Secretary the Chair sought an update regarding the Korn Ferry review to address the interim positions in NIAS with the view the Board are keen to move to recruitment of permanent positions. She also raised the NED establishment and pending changes, seeking his support to fill emerging vacancies.

At the NED workshop on 9 October, they discussed the feedback from members regarding the new Committee structure and the Chair asked Ms Beggs to forward the feedback form to Executive Directors to seek the full board membership views feedback in relation to that and the intention is then to discuss as a Board and consider any recommendations and thoughts for implementation.

ACTION: Ms Beggs

The Chair visited the NIAS analytical team and has a follow up meeting planned in December. It is important to understand as an Organisation what NIAS have regarding data and how they are considering developments with IA and she recommended other members to visit Ms Averys team.

The Chair attended the two-day NICON Conference, which at a time of complexity and challenge across the health service, was one of the best NICON conferences in terms of all Trusts and stakeholders committing to working collaboratively.

Mr Corrigan conveyed he was impressed with the speakers at NICON and noted that despite the financial constraints within Trusts and the health service, the conference was well attended.

The Chair highlighted the preparatory work by the team for the Strategy Day tomorrow and reminded members to ensure they read the papers in advance of the Strategy Day which provide

extensive insight on consultation to date and to be fully prepared with an open mind to participate.

5 **Chief Executive's Update**

Strategic Overview

Since the August Board meeting, Ms Paterson's focus has been on maintaining stability and visibility across the organisation while progressing work that strengthens patient safety, staff wellbeing, and NIAS' role in system reform.

NIAS have continued to demonstrate credibility within the system and the ability to influence change constructively particularly in areas such as handover reform, culture, and leadership alignment.

NIAS continue regular engagement with the Department of Health and SPPG through formal accountability and bilateral processes. NIAS is recognised as a stable and constructive partner, with ongoing oversight of delivery, finance, and reform priorities.

Handover Reform and System Performance

As reported in August, NIAS participated in the Regional Handover Workshop, which initiated a coordinated approach to implementing the Department's guidance on eliminating handover delays exceeding two hours.

Since then, NIAS have established bi-weekly operational meetings with each Trust, coordinated by the RCC. The purpose is to monitor progress and address emerging barriers to the implementation of regional guidance on handovers. The RCC has been tasked with the implementation of the new protocols, ensuring consistent interpretation and delivery across all acute sites and NIAS.

Last Friday marked a very encouraging moment for the first time since early 2022, there were no ambulances waiting more than two

hours across any of the nine acute sites. While NIAS are under no illusion that the problem is solved, it demonstrates what is possible when teams across the system pull together around a common goal.

This progress directly supports the Reset Plan's system-wide objectives on flow and strengthens winter resilience.

Sustaining this progress will require continued collective focus and flexibility in how Trusts work. It also signals to staff and the public that improvement is achievable which is vital for confidence, morale, and winter readiness.

System Leadership and External Engagement

NIAS has continued to play a visible and constructive role across the wider HSC system and beyond. On 9 September, Ms Paterson represented NIAS at the Emergency Responders' Day Flag-Raising Ceremony in Lisburn, alongside blue-light and voluntary partners which was a valuable opportunity to reaffirm shared purpose and collaboration.

On 10 September, the Chair and Ms Paterson attended the first Committee-in-Common (CiC) meeting. Governance and assurance were the main focus, and NIAS will now lead the RCC as a Provider Collaborative, reporting formally in November. This is an important role for Trusts, ensuring operational delivery and system resilience remain connected at regional level. Preparatory work is now under way for the November meeting, where the RCC will be presented as one of the first live examples of shared accountability in practice.

Ms Paterson attended the Graduate Leadership Induction on 12 September, meeting new HSC trainees and reinforcing NIAS's commitment to developing people and growing future leaders.

On 15 September, Ms Paterson represented the Falls Workstream at the CMO/CNO Masterclass in Stranmillis, highlighting the

collaborative work under 'The Big Discussion' to reduce unnecessary conveyance and improve outcomes for older people.

On 16 September, Ms Paterson met Paramedic Science students at Magee, many of whom are NIAS EMTs advancing through to degree-level training, a strong signal of internal progression.

On 18 September, Ms Paterson participated in a Neighbourhood Health Model workshop at Stormont and chaired the NIAS Organisational Culture Programme Board the same day. The workshop explored prevention and community-based care, while the Culture Board focused on leadership behaviours, inclusion, and staff voice, aligning the internal culture work with system expectations.

On 19 September, Ms Paterson attended the Civil Service and Public Sector Chief Executives' Forum (CEF), discussing leadership across the public sector in the context of financial constraint.

Collectively, these engagements reflect NIAS's growing influence in system planning and its reputation for stability and partnership.

Partnerships, Public Voice and Learning

On 26 September, Ms Paterson attended the "This is Health" Steering Group chaired by Mike Farrar. This forum focuses on how the HSC communicates with the public about what services can provide and the shared responsibility we each have in sustaining health and care. NIAS has a clear role in this space given the visibility and public contract NIAS have particularly around responsible 999 use and understanding system pressures.

Ms Paterson also met with Siobhan Casey, Commissioner for Older People (COPNI), to explore opportunities for collaboration. With around half of NIAS emergency calls involving people aged 65 or over, this partnership offers valuable insight and advocacy for improving outcomes for older patients.

At the end of September, Ms Paterson met privately with a patient's family to listen to their experience of care. While the details remain confidential, the discussion was constructive and focused on learning and improvement. The case highlights the importance of openness, communication, and continued reflection in how NIAS deliver services.

Workforce, Culture and Engagement

Staff visibility, wellbeing, and partnership working have been at the forefront over recent weeks. On 1 October, Ms Paterson visited several Emergency Departments to listen to staff experiences, particularly around patient flow and collaboration with hospital colleagues. Really helpful insights and helps to take things forward.

Over recent weeks, there has been significant public and media attention on the work of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Ms Paterson has been clear that NIAS stands behind their staff and that any learning will be taken forward sensitively and constructively. NIAS continue to engage closely with colleagues to support wellbeing and maintain confidence in their professionalism.

On 3 October, Ms Paterson met with Trade Union colleagues to reaffirm the partnership arrangements and discuss fatigue, safe staffing, and the wellbeing of colleagues impacted by recent media coverage. Engagement remains positive, and both are working together to ensure staff voices are heard and reflected in ongoing improvement work.

Ms Paterson has also recorded several staff VLOGs, focused on culture, wellbeing, and strategy which is a means of maintaining direct communication and connection across the organisation.

The Organisational Culture Programme Board has now moved from design into delivery, with clear priorities around wellbeing, inclusion, and leadership behaviours, aligned to the vision.

To aid in that, NIAS had a visit from Tracy Myhill, the former Welsh Ambulance Service Chief Executive, who met with a number of SLT to talk about her experiences (first as Dir of HR and then as Chief Executive) of implementing wide scale culture change in a uniformed organisation which has deep rooted behaviours. Ms Myhill conveyed her journey across five years. It was really beneficial, and Ms Myhill has been invited to speak to the NIAS Culture Board in November to share some of that learning.

On 7 October, the NIAS Senior Leadership Team (SLT) held a team development and strategy day. It was a valuable session that allowed us to reflect on how they lead collectively and strengthen the coherence and discipline needed to deliver in the significant challenging operational and financial environment.

On 17 October, Ms Paterson attended the Emergency Operations Centre Recognition Event, celebrating exceptional performance and teamwork across NIAS EOC and EMD colleagues. It was an inspiring occasion that captured the compassion and professionalism of NIAS people.

These activities reflect progress toward a more connected and values-led culture, supported by open dialogue and visible leadership.

Strategic Collaboration and Reform

On 30 September, NIAS and SPPG held the Bilateral Framework meeting, covering performance, handovers, workforce, and finance. NIAS will submit their ORH workforce optimisation plan at the end of October as evidence of the progress in aligning modelling, workforce, and service improvement.

On 3 October, Ms Paterson met Jenny Keane to discuss the national Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) agenda, ensuring NIAS' priorities remain aligned to UK-wide reform.

That same week, Ms Paterson met Robert Morton (NAS) to progress the North/South Specialist Ambulance Response (NSSAR) programme, focusing on shared training and governance.

Earlier this month, NIAS also supported the Southern HSC Trust during a regional IT systems outage. The response was calm and coordinated, demonstrating strong contingency arrangements and effective collaboration through the RCC. A formal debrief will capture any learning to further strengthen system resilience.

Although Ms Paterson was unwell and unable to attend NICON 2025, NIAS presentations on the Falls Pathway, which is a key workstream in the Big Discussion and Cross-Border Collaboration, were very well received, highlighting tangible progress in system integration and cross-jurisdictional working.

These engagements underline NIAS's increasing role not just as a delivery partner but as a system leader in service transformation.

Summary

NIAS continues to demonstrate strong, values-based leadership within the system. Performance and reform efforts are showing early positive signs, staff wellbeing remains a central focus, and NIAS' reputation for collaboration and transparency continues to strengthen.

The Chair thanked Ms Paterson and commended her on taking time with the team and welcoming the findings and discussions to bring to the strategy day tomorrow. She welcomes her expertise, knowledge and input into tomorrow which is fundamental in bringing that forward.

Ms Paterson referred to the BMA scheduled care access, and whilst they manage the contractual challenges which is still in

progress, they have started to see some resolution and Dr Ruddell has developed a protocol with nursing homes.

6 **Performance Report (TB23/10/2025/03)**

Trust Board Members **NOTED** the Trust Performance Report and welcome the positive metrics and improvements compared to other ambulance service trusts.

In relation to H&T and S&T, Mr Sinclair said they have continued an upward trajectory and have set improvement measures. The challenges with long term sickness have now been resolved and they are getting into the improvement piece to ensure the standard of practice is continued.

Ms Charlton referred to the number of query SAI's being brought forward and advised that she planned to present a paper at the next Safety Committee in relation to notified SAI's, as there is a variation of cases to highlight to the Committee.

Mr Dennison asked to discuss board reporting at the Strategy Day to review what they need to see. They may not be required to see all of the risks included and perhaps just the higher level of risks. He is conscious of information overload and the need to think about outcomes and to find a better way of reporting. Mr Mullen advised that he is currently reviewing this function.

Mr Quinn referred to the issue regarding CAT 2 response times and notes there is going to be a verbal briefing. He recalled this was requested at the last Committee to be presented at Trust Board due to the significant concerns about perception of what is impacting on this. NEDs have always believed most of the influences are external but there may be some internal impacts and that changes the perception about what needs to happen and therefore welcomes the presentation.

Mr Corrigan referred to hospital handovers on slide 24 and he suggested at the SPF Committee for there to be focus on intervention for the two-hour backstop to be reflected in the Performance Report.

Ms Charlton added that they don't want to see the 45-minute performance deteriorating, and overall lost capacity is still very important. She understands the trajectory is vital, but they also want to see traction and improvement in other areas.

Mr Sinclair alluded to the increasing response times and that he and Mr Walker are meeting twice weekly with Unscheduled Care Directors in EDs to implement a new framework to include operational focus, variables and forecasting.

Mr Sinclair said that August 2025 had the same CAT 2 response times as November 2024 which was significant. They are starting to see improvements in some metrics and the work the team is doing is starting to impact the variables and increase productivity and staffing. There are plans within the next two to three weeks to have as much operational oversight on the ground as possible and hopefully extract. Mr Sinclair appreciates it is a verbal report, however, going forward it would be a tangible report via the SPF Committee and added to the forward Workplan.

7 Finance Report (TB23/10/2025/04)

Trust Board Members **NOTED** the Finance Report.

Ms Donnelly reported that at August 2025 (Month 5) NIAS are working with a total allocation of £133.542m which includes that the Trust has received a funding allocation from SPPG of £116.040m (inclusive of £0.104m from PHA and net of £2.475m of savings). There is a further assumed funding of £15.398m which includes £14.336m for WFP. The Month 6 figure is £133.439m, RRL £2.475m of savings and an additional £1m for shortfall in NIC allocation.

For the period ending August 2025, the Trust is reporting year-to-date (YTD) expenditure of £55.355m, resulting in a year-to-date underspend of £0.004m when compared to the profiled budget. The month six overspend (£413k) is mainly driven by IAS variance to the profiled budget which will be discussed with Operations at the FBP meeting next week.

NIAS is forecasting a break-even position at the end of the financial year and Capital Resource Limit (CRL) allocation for 2025-26 of £6.181m, which the majority is allocated to fleet. NIAS has developed a plan to deliver a breakeven position for 2025-26.

Work is still ongoing to finalise the business cases and once they are concluded that money will be released into the allocation.

Mr Corrigan conveyed his concern with the overspend reported at Month six and Ms Donnelly advised that SLT are fully aware and have developed templates to understand their plans to date and going forward to make sure NIAS are making the most of resources and finances. They continue to ensure a plan is in place to achieve a statutory break even.

The Board referred to the overtime spend and said that sometimes overtime becomes normal and expected and there needs to be more control to manage that. Mr Sinclair said that the team are managing the control regarding this to ensure it is as affective as possible and are actively recruiting which will assist in a tangible reduction in overtime.

Ms Paterson referred to the overspend information being new information and they need to investigate if this is a reporting matter or an actual overspend. Ms Donnelly added that in terms of 6.3% variance, it's not alarming but they need to be aware of the trajectory, if it becomes a consistent rate it's worrying. Dr Graham welcomes that the Board have been alerted to this as previously they haven't.

Ms Paterson advised that NIAS recognised this and flagged a number of issues to the Board that require spend and investment and there is a contingency pot if required.

8 SCORR Assessment (NIAO Recommendations)

The Board **NOTED** NIAS's return to the DOH regarding progress made against the March 2025 NIAO hospital handover report. Letter

Each Trust were asked to give an update on the recommendations and eight of them applied to NIAS and the letter reflects NIAS' response and significant contribution.

The Board discussed recommendation 11 and cohorting at major ED's. Mr Mullen advised they haven't seen the other Trusts responses and queried if there have been any other discussions with the HSC about cohorting, and Ms Paterson responded that she has not seen any evidence of that. Mr Corrigan suggested that NIAS should encourage cohorting to be in place and Ms Paterson said it may fall in the space of corridor care and agreed to consider the point and understand the Board's position. Mr Mullen agreed to seek the other Trust's responses and share with the Board via email instead of waiting to the next Board Meeting and utilising meeting time.

ACTION: Mr Mullen

9 Demand and Capacity Implementation Plan (TB23/10/2025/06)

Trust Board Members **NOTED** the completed demand and capacity review for unscheduled care. This has provided a 10-year data driven model as to how NIAS can innovate and modernise the NIAS clinical/operational model.

Mr Sinclair has included a proposed governance slide and has provided this information to NEDs at their workshop on 9 October.

He advised this is for Board Members to note today and discuss in more detail at the Strategy Day tomorrow.

Mr Quinn alluded to the level of detail in the paper, which is quite complicated to read, and Mr Dennison agreed and that it is difficult for NEDs to note the information as they don't fully understand all of it. The Chair said that the Board have papers with in depth research and data which is challenging to understand and invites individuals to spend time with colleagues outside of the Board and Committee meetings to better understand, as there isn't time at these meetings to go into the detail.

10 Corporate Plan Mid-Year Progress Report (TB23/10/2025/07)

Trust Board Members **NOTED** the report which provides an updated position on the deliverables set out in the 24-26 Corporate Plan as at 29.09.2025.

Mr Mullen said this report sets out an assessment of where NIAS are in the final year of the corporate plan which will be discussed at tomorrow's Strategy Day. The Chair agreed and added that there is a session at the start about setting the scene so the content of this paper should be built into that session.

11 Board Governance Self-Assessment Tool

Trust Board **NOTED** the completed Annual DOH Board Governance Self-Assessment, which was also reported at the recent GARAC Meeting. The Board noted this is the last time NIAS need to complete it as it is no longer a statutory requirement and will move forward with a revised in-house version with guidance from the GARAC Committee.

12 Business Case Approval Threshold

Trust Board **APPROVED** the proposed New Business Case Approval Limits.

Ms Donnelly advised that the proposals were agreed at the recent SPF committee and explained that in some circumstances they may not have the gift of time to approve business cases at meetings and they will be approved via correspondence and presented at the next Trust Board for approval.

Mr Corrigan welcomes the improvement and level of governance which can be reviewed going forward.

12.1 Interim Fleet Business Case

Trust Board noted this has been shared with the SPF Committee, SLT and has been approved by the DoH and funds already received and is therefore retrospective approval.

Trust Board **APPROVED** the Interim Fleet Business Case on a proposal from Dr Graham and seconded by Mr Quinn.

13 Complaints Annual Report

Trust Board **NOTED** the annual report for the NIAS in relation to Service User Feedback (Complaints/ Compliments and Queries) which has been presented at the Safety Committee.

Board members commended and welcomed the report and Mr Dennison referred to the survey and that there were only 27 responses. Ms Paterson advised they try to improve responses with regular communication with other stakeholders e.g. Age NI.

Mr Corrigan referred to NIAS consistently failing to meet the 20-day target and that the new NIPSO model is going to be even tighter and sought assurance from Ms Charlton that NIAS will be able to achieve the new targets. Ms Charlton referred to previous year's compliance both regionally and internally with the 20-day timeframe and feedback to the NIPSO during the development of the new Model Complaints Handling Process regarding the

challenges with meeting the new timeframes. She advised that she was therefore not in a position to provide assurance that NIAS will meet the target but gave assurance that the team will do everything they can to try and meet the new guidelines. The Chair confirmed that progress will be reported to the Safety Committee to monitor.

14 Committee Business (TB28/08/2025/06)

The Board **NOTED** the forward workplan.

The Board commended the amount of work that has been achieved via the newly set up Charitable Trust Funds Committee.

Mr Corrigan reminded members to ensure papers are issued on time and for the turnaround of minutes to be issued sooner, however they understand the capacity challenges preventing this.

It was emphasised that often Committees don't have the right Directors in attendance to discuss issues and the SLT need to review what Committees Directors need to attend, and the Board agreed this should be discussed at the Strategy Day within the Board effectiveness section.

13 Any Other Business

There were no matters of any other business, and the Chair thanked Non-Executive Directors and Executive Directors for their dedication and support.

14 Date & venue of next meeting

11 December 2025 at 9.30am, venue TBC

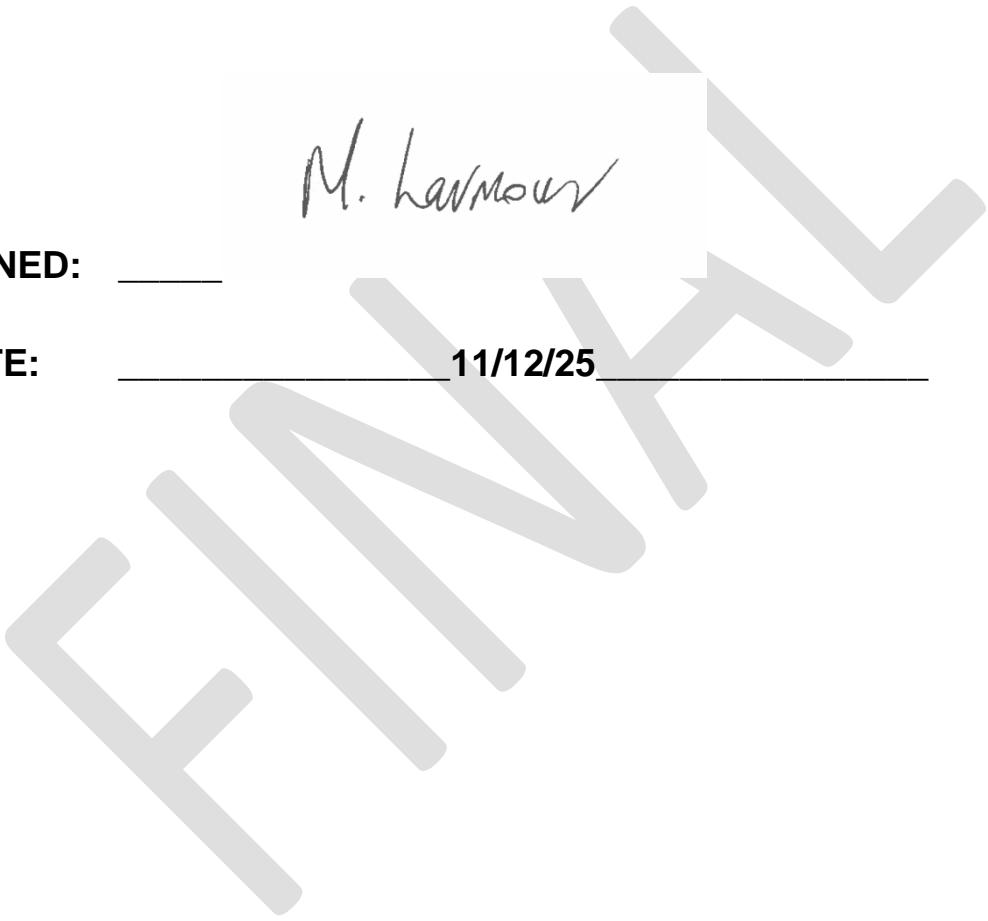
Board Members agreed to attend a Christmas lunch after the December Meeting and Mr Dennison offered to host the meeting at

Simon Community offices in Belfast. Mr Dennison will ask a colleague to liaise with Ms Beggs to confirm and book.

ACTION: Ms Beggs

Trust Board members remained to attend the Board Cyber training facilitated by BSO.

**THIS BEING ALL THE BUSINESS, THE CHAIR CLOSED THE
PUBLIC MEETING AT 2.05PM.**



M. Lawrence

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____ **11/12/25** _____