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**Northern Ireland Social Care Council
Registrants' Committee
Minutes**

**25 November 2008 at 2.00pm
In Millennium House, Belfast**

Present

Dr Jeremy Harbison (Interim Chair)	Damien Campbell (UNISON)
Frank Carter (Student Representative)	Eithne Darragh (BASW)
Janette Ferguson (UNISON)	Damien Maguire (NIPSA)
Geraldine Mullan (NIPSA)	Paul O'Donnell (UNISON)
Brian Smyth (NIPSA)	Sharon Woods (UNISON)
Sam Murphy (NIPSA)	

In Attendance

Brendan Johnston (Chief Executive)	Patricia Higgins (Director of Registration)
Lily Kerr (UNISON)	Kevin McCabe (NIPSA)
Peggy Carlile (Personal Secretary/ Administrator – Note Taker)	Siobhan Craig (PA to Chair & Chief Executive)
	Andre McKeown (Communications Officer)

Action

(1) Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee. He stated that he would be chairing the initial meeting today, and that it was important that the Committee agreed a Chair and Vice Chair as early as possible.
- 1.2 Introductions were given by all present.
- 1.3 The Chair invited Lily Kerr (Unison), Kevin McCabe (NIPSA) and Eithne Darragh (BASW) to speak on the role of the Registrants' Committee, especially what is and is not appropriate business for the Committee.

1.4 Mrs Kerr stated that it was important for the Committee to focus on the right issues. She noted that:-

- It would be the Committee Members' role to bring the views of those they represent to the Committee, and to bring information back.
- The Members should consider the training, development and concerns of registrants and those who are to register.
- It would not be appropriate to bring negotiations on staff terms and conditions to the committee as there is a regional Joint Negotiation Forum for this purpose.
- Individual cases should not be brought to the Committee.

Mrs Kerr felt that the expertise required to make the Committee work was well represented in the Members.

1.5 Mr McCabe broadly agreed with Mrs Kerr. He noted that Members would need to look closely at what had been agreed between NISCC, the DHSSPS and NIPSA, and what was contained in the Standing Orders. He gave examples of a number of key issues NIPSA thought were important for the group to focus on:-

- The senior practitioners' role;
- The Assessed Year in Employment; and
- General issues within childcare and vacancies within social work.

Focus should be very much on the context of the Terms of Reference.

1.6 Mrs Darragh stated that BASW were concerned with protection issues. She felt it was important that there should be direct contact by the Council with registrants, as well as feedback from the Committee. She highlighted issues such as the Assessed Year in Employment and information regarding Conduct Hearings.

1.7 Mrs Kerr commented that the Committee should not lose sight of the overall role of the Committee as a forum for all registrants, and not hone in on single professions.

(2) General Discussion

2.1 Mr Maguire agreed with Mr McCabe. It was his intention to represent his members and bring their views forward, and to progress issues for all registrants.

2.2 Both Mrs Kerr and Mr McCabe expressed interest in attending the Committee in the future.

(3) The Role of Council

3.1 The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the role of the Council, which included information on its specific functions and powers. He will have a copy of the presentation sent out with the minutes of the Committee.

**Chief
Executive**

3.2 Queries were raised regarding the relationship between the NISCC and the RQIA. The Chair reported that the RQIA, on behalf of the NISCC, ensure employers follow the Codes of Practice for Employers through their inspection process. The Chair and the Chief Executive of Council meet with the Chair and Chief Executive of the RQIA on a regular basis. The Director of Registration also meets regularly with Ms Theresa Nixon of the RQIA to share issues of concern and monitor the Codes of Practice for Employers.

3.3 A query was raised in relation to the registration of domiciliary care workers. It was noted that awareness in relation to registration has been raised in this workforce through work the Council has undertaken with employers, and communication materials have been designed. The Council anticipate that the Registrants' Committee will be an integral part of carrying out this work. The Chief Executive stated that he felt that the registration of the domiciliary care workforce is very important, and would be a challenging issue for the NISCC.

(4) Background to Registrants' Committee

4.1 The Chair gave a background to the establishment of the Registrants' Committee. He noted that the Council has been aware of the need to improve channels of communication with registrants. This need for two-way communication came to the forefront in early 2008 with the re-registration of social workers. Following detailed discussion in June 2008 the DHSSPS directed the NISCC to establish a Registrants' Committee which reflected the members of the Register.

4.2 The Chair noted that the Committee is made up of 10 members:-

- 4 NIPSA members;
- 4 Unison members;
- 1 BASW member;
- 1 Student member (representing QUB/UU).

He noted that Northern Ireland was leading the way in regard to communication with registrants.

(5) Terms of Reference

5.1 The Chair reported that the Council formally endorsed the Terms of Reference at its meeting in September, and the monitoring group endorsed them following this. He then went through the Terms of Reference with the Committee.

(6) Induction

6.1 The Chair reported that as a NDPB the NISCC is required to ensure proper induction for Committee Members. He noted that CIPFA offers half day "On Board" seminars, which cover all the necessary aspects of induction. He had made provisional arrangements for this and asked Members to hold Thursday 15 January 2009 in their diaries for this session.

CHAIR

(7) Development of Working Arrangements

- 7.1 The Chair noted that, as per the Standing Orders, the frequency of meetings should be a minimum of three per year, two of which will be with Council. The Committee would need to agree between themselves and with the Director of Registration how many additional meetings they would wish to hold. He noted that the Council is keen to work with the Registrants' Committee to improve communication with registrants, which may mean meetings held outside of the NISCC offices across Northern Ireland.
- 7.2 The Chair suggested that the Committee join Council for lunch on 20 January 2009, and meet with Council Members, the Senior Management Team and senior staff in the afternoon.
- 7.3 Critical issues mentioned which would undoubtedly emerge might include:-
- Safeguarding the Public;
 - Baby P;
 - Roles & Tasks of Social Work in Northern Ireland;
 - Roll out of Registration;
 - Social Work outside of Child Care.

(8) Any Other Business

- 8.1 The Committee elected Brian Smyth as Chair and Sharon Woods as Vice Chair of the Registrants' Committee.
- 8.2 It was requested that a list of Committee Members with their contact emails be circulated to the Committee with the minutes. **PC**

(9) Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting was agreed for 20 January 2009 at 11.30am in the Officials Suite, NISCC, with lunch and discussions in the afternoon with Council Members, the Senior Management Team and senior staff.

Dr Jeremy Harbison
Interim Chair, Registrants' Committee
Northern Ireland Social Care Council