

**NCSE Council Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2019**  
**114<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council**

**Trim Castle Hotel, Trim**

**Attendance:**

Council Members

Joe Hayes (Chairperson)  
Don Mahon (Deputy Chairperson)  
Anne Tansey  
Antoinette Nic Gearailt  
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin  
Peter Archer  
Deirbhile Nic Craith  
Pat Goff  
Eileen Daly  
Dharragh Hunt  
Eamon Clavin  
Carol Cuffe

**Apologies:**

Áine Lynch

**Also in Attendance:**

Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive  
Mary Byrne, PO  
Jennifer Doran, PO & Board Secretary  
Mary McGrath, PO  
Tadgh O'Leary, PO

**1. Reminder – Declaration of interests (standing governance item)**

The Chairperson reminded members about declaring interests, as per the Code of Conduct for Council members. There were no items to declare.

**2. Draft minutes of the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June and matters arising**

The draft minutes were approved. It was noted that all actions had been completed.

**3. Chief Executive Report**

The report was circulated with the papers. There were a number of further updates added at the meeting:

- The staff conference is taking place on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September in Mullingar. The conference dinner is usually attended by the Chair. This year, the Minister has agreed to attend also, so all Council members are being invited to attend to meet with the Minister.
- The annual accounts were signed by the CEO and Chairperson on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September.
- A meeting of the Steering Committee for the School Inclusion Model (SIM) took place on 10<sup>th</sup> September. While the intention was to commence the project by now, the sanction to recruit staff was delayed. The recruitment therefore is only taking place now with training to follow once the staff are in place. It is likely therefore that the project won't fully commence until January. This will have an impact on the evaluation as the project will be running for a shorter period of time.
- An update on the two day training for the SNAs in the 75 sites in the SIM was provided. The training aimed to outline what the SIM project would do and what an SNA's role would be in the context of the other new services. It was clarified that the role of the SNA doesn't change under the SIM. There appeared to be a misunderstanding and different

expectation among the participants regarding their role and the level at which the training would be placed. The NCSE will reflect further on the session and feedback received.

- Madeline Hickey's new appointment as Specialist Lead was noted and members congratulated her on her appointment.

**4. Strategy and Policy Committee report & policy advice paper on special schools/classes**  
*Information under this item/point relates to an ongoing deliberative process and is thus not being published at this time.*

**5. Therapy demonstration project- evaluation**

The researchers provided a presentation on the initial findings of the evaluation of therapy demonstration project. In the discussion that followed, a number of points were made.

- Future presentations should provide more detail on what the tiers of provision look like with some practical examples.
- School readiness to engage with the model was important in terms of expectations and understanding of what the support could provide for schools and students at each level.
- Relationship building was critical as the project was often the first experience for education professionals working with health professionals and vice versa in this manner. Time was needed to understand roles and build a working relationship.
- The researchers are considering the evidence with regards to the allocation of therapists per setting. Many factors contribute to this such as the size of sites, the level of needs within them and the state of readiness of sites.
- The evaluation will be important in identifying what worked well, the benefits arising for students, schools and the system and areas that need to be improved and changed if the model is to be rolled out further.

**6. Audit & Risk Committee report**

It was noted that there was no Committee meeting since the last Council meeting. The ARC are due to meet again next week.

**7. 2020 Risk register and update on top risks**

An update on the top four risks was provided with the papers and noted.

Council's initial views were sought on the 2020 risk register. A number of points were noted regarding the 2019 register which should be considered for the 2020 register.

- Risk 3 regarding the interim structure is no longer likely to be needed as we now have sanction for the permanent structure.
- It may be necessary to consider raising the risk rating on communications given the current media focus on special education and the Government branding initiative. It was suggested to consider getting an external person to talk to Council regarding our risk register.
- It may also be necessary to consider raising the risk rating on policy advice. This was reduced last year as there was no new policy advice published. However, the current advice on special schools and classes to be published next year will be significant.

Council were asked to send in any further thoughts on the register in the coming weeks. The ARC will review it next in advance of coming back to Council for approval.

**8. Reflection on communications**

There is currently a strong focus on special education in the media. It has been some time since the Council reflected on the NCSE's communications and media strategy. In the

discussion, Council reflected on whether the NCSE should take a more proactive role with and in the media, or continue with a more passive role. There are times when both approaches have been taken by the NCSE; the nature of the communications or media issue can influence this.

The government branding initiative requires further consideration also. The NCSE has an independent status for some of its work such as policy advice. There may be a need to take a different and independent approach to branding some of our work. This will require discussion with the DES.

It was agreed that the Research Committee would consider these matters in more detail and report back to Council in October.

Action Point 2: TO'L to discuss with the Research Committee and present paper to Council.

**9. Operations update on activities**

*Information under this item/point relates to an ongoing deliberative process and is thus not being published at this time.*

**10. Council self-evaluation process**

A paper outlining the required annual self-assessment process for Council was circulated with the papers. Members will receive the self-assessment templates on 16<sup>th</sup> September for return by 30<sup>th</sup> September. Committees are required to complete their self-assessment at a meeting scheduled during September and October.

Action Point 4: Members to complete and return self-assessment templates.

**11. Finance Committee report**

**11.1 Expenditure to date**

The finance report was circulated with the papers indicating expenditure to date, which is generally on track. An underspend is expected in the SIM project due to the late commencement of the project and a small underspend is also expected in the therapy demonstration project. Detail on this will be provided at the October meeting.

The Council noted the expenditure to date.

**11.2 External audit of 2018 accounts**

The accounts were signed by the Chair and CEO on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September.

The Council noted the status of the accounts.

**11.3 Financial procedures**

In line with the delegated sanction, the Chair and CEO approved 3 members of staff (Assistant Principal Officers) to become payment authorisers for online banking payments.

The NCSE arranges payments via Electronic Funds Transfer to the maximum extent possible. Some services and contracts ran through the former SESS were paid for using a credit card. One of the services (a Google service to facilitate online booking of CPD courses) is still required and Google only permits payment via a Credit or Debit Card.

Council was advised of the intention to procure an alternative provider, the timeline for this procurement, the need to acquire a bank debit card to facilitate payments to the current provider and the security measures undertaken to safeguard the use of the card.

Council approved the acquisition of the card for these payments on a retrospective basis as it accepted there was insufficient time to seek approval in advance.

#### **11.4 Committee self-evaluation**

The Committee completed its self-evaluation and also reviewed the terms of reference (ToRs). Some minor amendments were made to the ToRs. It was agreed that the amended ToRs will be circulated for approval at the October meeting.

#### **12. Research Committee report**

The minutes from the previous meeting were circulated with the papers. The items covered were outlined and there were no items for Council approval.

Council members were provided with the finalised Research Conference agenda and reminded of the pre-conference dinner in Croke Park hotel the evening before with the presenters at 7pm.

#### **13. Expansion of service and regional teams update**

The NCSE received sanction from the DES to recruit the management structure on a permanent basis. Sanction was also received for the 10 permanent staff to replace the support staff in the Education Centres. Recruitment for these posts has commenced. Two Specialist Leads posts have also been advertised.

#### **14. AOB**

##### **14.1 SNA RFT**

The tender to develop the national training programme for SNAs has been approved by the School Inclusion Model Steering Group and was presented to Council for approval to advertise and procure.

Council approved the tender for advertising subject to some changes.

##### **14.2 Consultative Forum**

Council approved the appointment of Ciaran Finlay, Policy Adviser, NDA to the Consultative Forum to replace an earlier appointee who no longer could attend the Forum.

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**Joseph Hayes**  
**Chairperson**  
**30<sup>th</sup> October, 2019**

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**Teresa Griffin**  
**Chief Executive**  
**30<sup>th</sup> October, 2019**