

**Board Meeting held on Friday, 31 March 2023,
Brunel Building HSQ, Dublin 8.**

Name	Title	Attendance
Board Members		
Pat Rabbitte	Chairperson	Present
Anne O'Gara	Deputy Chairperson	Present
Paul White	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Patricia Doherty	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Charles Watchorn	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Liam Irwin	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Avril McDermott	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Sean Holland	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Sean Quigley	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Susan Bowman	Ordinary Board Member	In Part
Teresa McDonnell	Ordinary Board Member	Present
Board Office:		
Kay Keilthy	Board Secretary	Present
Emma Dodrill	Board Administrator	Present
In Attendance:		
Kate Duggan	I/Chief Executive	In Part
Clare Murphy	I/National Director Services & Integration	In Part
Pat Smyth*	National Director Finance & Corporate Services	In Part
Rosarii Mannion	National Director People & Change	In Part
Fergus Ó Cuanachain	Chief Information Officer	In Part
Cróna Barry*	GM, AFS, Governance & Compliance	In Part
Paul Hayden*	Estates Manager	In Part
Tarik Laher	IPSOS	In Part
Aidan Horan	IPA	In Part

* Attended via Video Link

Signed:



Chairperson

Date: 27 April 2023

1. Opening Remarks

- 1.1 The Chair noted the presence of a quorum and duly convened the meeting.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 None.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 No declarations of interest were made in relation to any of the agenda items before the Board for consideration.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (03/02/2023)

- 4.1 The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting held on 3 February 2023. Proposed by P. Doherty, Seconded by L. Irwin and approved by the Board.

5. Action Log / Matters Arising

- 5.1 The Board noted the Action log as of 30 March 2023.

6. Board Private Session

- 6.1 The Chair updated the Board in relation to the CEO recruitment process.
- 6.2 A motion was put to the Board to approve the payment of a stipend in the amount of €2,000 to non-executive external committee members. Proposed by P. Rabbitte, Seconded by A. McDermott and approved by the Board.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 The Board considered risk under the National Corporate Risk Register and as comprehended in the reports submitted for consideration at the meeting.

8. Board Annual Performance Report 2022

- 8.1 The Board approved its Annual Performance Report for 2022 subject to agreed minor amendments. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by P. Doherty and approved by the Board.

9. Board Governance Statement (2022)

- 9.1 The Board approved its Governance Statement for inclusion in Tusla's Annual Report 2022. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by P. Doherty and approved by the Board.

10. SQC Chair Report on Committee Meeting of (23/03/2023)

- 10.1 The Chair reported on the SQC meeting held on 23 March 2023 in Finglas West FRC. The SQC received presentations by the Dublin North East and Dublin Mid Leinster regions showing the collaborative work between Barnardos and Tusla in delivering services. Presentations showcased Barnardos' and Tusla's partnership in providing integrated pathways for vulnerable children and families to access Tusla funded support services in their community and new approaches to rising demands with Barnardos completing initial assessments on behalf of Tusla on low-risk referrals under an appropriate governance structure.

- 10.2 The SQC raised the lack of visible recognition of Tusla funding with Barnardos and requested that the matter should be addressed as part of the commissioned service's current SLA review. The SQC was of the view that the Agency's funding requirement protocol for commissioned services should be reviewed within the current revision of SLA's.
- 10.3 An update was provided on the supply of social workers and retention. The SQC welcomed the efforts being made, however, raised some concerns in relation to the proposed sponsorship programme. The Chief Social Worker was asked to provide a business case for the targeted sponsorship scheme for the April Board meeting.

11. ODC Chair Report on Committee Meeting of (10/03/2023)

- 11.1 The Chair reported on the ODC Special Purpose Meeting held on 10 March 2023. At the meeting the ODC reviewed the External Monitors Tusla Case Management Programme Quality Assurance Review and formally accepted the Review as the final report on the TCM Programme to the Committee. The Chair of the Board thanked the ODC for their oversight of the TCM programme and acknowledged the achievement of the CIO and the TCM Project Team on the successful implementation of the programme.
- 11.2 The ODC also reviewed the findings of the Tusla Staff Engagement Survey. The Committee welcomed the high response rate by staff to the survey and was of the view that the findings provided valuable insight and direction to the Agency to build on the learning and improve the lived experience of staff across the agency. While the ODC noted many positives, there were significant areas for improvement that the committee recommended be aligned to the existing Practice, Culture and Structure reform programme.
- 11.3 The Board considered the Staff Engagement Survey under agenda item 15.

12. ARC Chair Report on Committee meeting of (24/03/2023)

- 12.1 The Chair reported on the ARC meetings held on 24 February and 24 March 2023. The Chair brought to the Board's attention the Internal Audit Division Annual Report and the overall audit opinion of "Moderate Assurance" for 2022. This represented an improvement in the overall "Limited Opinion" provided in 2021.
- 12.2 The Chair updated the Board on the Head of Internal Audit's proposed methodology to make audit reports more concise, and close out reports quickly.
- 12.3 The Chair appraised the Board that Tulsa had received closing letters in relation to the three tax reviews undertaken by Revenue in relation to Tulsa. Revenue was satisfied with all responses provided and compliance checks were completed and closed with a small charge of €3768.70 relating to underpaid VAT. No penalties or fines were applied, or disclosures required. The Board welcomed the outcomes of the inquiries and congratulated the staff involved.

13. ARC Terms of Reference

- 13.1 The Board formerly approved the Audit and Risk Committee's Terms of Reference as recommended by the ARC. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by L. Irwin and approved by the Board.

14. CEO Report

- 14.1 The Chair welcomed the I/CEO to the meeting.
- 14.2 The CEO reported on activity and significant items of note since the last Board meeting providing updates on key operational and strategic issues across each of the Directorates.
- 14.3 The CEO advised that Tusla was invited to attend the Oireachtas Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on 25 April in respect of St. John's Ambulance (SJA). The I/CEO updated the Board on her meeting with the Board and the CEO of SJA and is awaiting confirmation by the Special Rapporteur for Child Protection on a meeting date. The Board noted that the Agency does not have the legal power to investigate organisations such as SJA and also noted that Dr. Shannon's report made no findings or recommendations in respect of Tusla.
- 14.4 The CEO highlighted the reduction in Residential Care capacity due to 8 closure notices issued in private services attributed to the imbalance in cost provision and the budget provided by Tusla with indications by providers of the possible closure of a further 83 beds. The CEO made reference to the significant risks associated with special emergency placements, however, assured the Board that the risks were being managed.
- 14.5 The Board noted the contents of the CEO's report.

15. Staff Engagement Survey (Update)

Tarik Laher, Director, IPSOS joined the meeting.

- 15.1 Ipsos presented a high-level overview of Tusla's Employee Engagement Survey findings to the Board. The Board welcomed the 62% response rate by staff to the survey. The objective of the survey was to measure employee engagement levels across a range of themes. The Board noted many positives, however, there were significant areas for improvement identified. The Board was of the view that additional time was required to reflect on the results and requested that discussion time be scheduled at the April Board meeting to review recommendations for improvement to drive satisfaction and engagement and ensure alignment to the existing Practice, Culture and Structure reform programme. The Chair thanked the Director of IPSOS for his presentation.
- 15.2 Following a wide discussion the Board recommended that, given the dependency on managers in communicating the results and understanding their role, that a 'playbook' be prepared to support them in their delivery along with manager briefings.

Tarik Laher, Director, IPSOS left the meeting.

16. HR Data Report

- 16.1 The Board noted the HR Board Report – Key Metrics Overview as of 19 January 2023

17. Strategic Plan for Aftercare Services for Young People and Young Adults 2023-26

- 17.1 The Board approved the Strategic Plan for Aftercare Services for Young People and Young Adults 2023 - 26 as recommended by the SQC. Proposed by A. O'Gara, Seconded by S. Holland and approved by the Board.

18. Procurement of Psychological and Therapeutic Services (Business Case)

- 18.1 The Board approved the procurement of Psychological and Therapeutic Services as recommended by the SQC. Proposed by L. Irwin, Seconded by S. Holland and approved by the Board.

19. Residential Services for Separated Children Seeking International Protection (Procurement Competition)

- 19.1 The Board approved the awarding of contracts in relation to RFT 227048 -Residential Services for Separated Children Seeking International Protection. Proposed by P. Doherty, Seconded by A. O’Gara and approved by the Board.

20. Community & Voluntary Agency Grants in excess of €1million

- 20.1 The Board approved the continuation of funding to Tusla funded services including services in receipt of funding in excess of €1 million as recommended by the ARC. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by P. White and approved by the Board.

21. Performance Activity Reports (Q4 2022)

- 21.1 The Board took as read the Performance Activity Report for Q4 2022. The Director of Quality and Regulation highlighted the continued demand and capacity challenges for the Agency in relation to emergency accommodation placements. The Director also brought to the attention of the Board the reduction in the number of VHA incidents in the reporting period and the successful closing out of a significant number of legacy complaint issues.

22. National Corporate Risk Register (Q4 2022)

- 22.1 The Board noted the contents of the National Corporate Risk Register for Q4 2022. A new risk was added in Q4. The new risk was escalated by the CEO and pertains to the increasing use of Special Emergency Arrangements (SEA). The CEO advised that the risks associated with the SEA’s had been brought to the attention of the Department.

23. Risk Framework Maturity Pathway

23.1 Risk Category Alignment

The Board approved the proposed process as recommended by the Chief Risk Officer to align the risk categorisation between the Organisational Risk Management Policy and the Enterprise Risk Appetite Statement to assist Board/ sub-committee enterprise risk management activities. Proposed by C Watchorn, Seconded by P. White and approved by the Board.

23.2 SOP for Escalation and De-escalation of Risks on the NCRR

The Board approved the Standard Operating Procedure for the escalation and de-escalation of risk on the NCRR for immediate implementation. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by P. White and approved by the Board.

24. Review of Internal Controls (Assertions Report 2022)

Aidan Horan, IPA and the General Manager, AFS, Governance & Compliance joined the meeting.

- 24.1 The Board reviewed the effectiveness of its system of internal control, including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management. The Assertions Report 2022 supported the Board in its reflection of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls and risk management arrangements for 2022 and provided an evidential basis for the affirmations and disclosures within the Statement of Internal Control.

25. Annual Financial Statement (AFS); Governance Statement and Statement of Internal Control (SIC)

- 25.1 The Board approved the Draft Annual Financial Statements for year ending 31 December 2022

including the Governance Statement and the Statement of Internal Control for submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General for the purpose of audit in accordance with Section 51 (6) of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013. Proposed by C. Watchorn, Seconded by L. Irwin and approved by the Board.

Aidan Horan, IPA and the General Manager, AFS, Governance & Compliance left the meeting.

26. Financial Performance Quarterly Report (Feb 2023)

- 26.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented the Financial Performance Report as at the end of February 2023. The Board noted the contents of the report.
- 26.2 A discussion took place in relation to GAL's and the impact of court direction on Operations. The Chair agreed to seek an update in relation to the reform of the guardian ad litem system at the next Ministerial meeting.

27. Procurement Plan 2023

- 27.1 The procurement plan 2023 was comprehended as part of the Assertions Report for 2022.

28. Estates

The National Head of Estates joined the meeting.

28.1 Proposed Lease of Premises Dublin 9

The Board approved the recommendation to enter the proposed lease with the HSE in Dublin 9 as outlined in the paper submitted to the Board for consideration by the National Head of Estates and recommended by the PRG (E/LT/0323/2811T). Proposed by P. White, Seconded by A. O'Gara and approved by the Board.

28.2 Proposed purchase of property in Co. Clare

The Board approved the recommendation to purchase the property in Co. Clare for the purposes of residential care as outlined in the paper submitted to the Board for consideration by the National Head of Estates and recommended by the PRG. Proposed by P. White, Seconded by L. Irwin and approved by the Board.

28.3 Proposed purchase of property in Co. Meath

The Board approved the recommendation to purchase the property in Co. Meath for the purposes of residential care as outlined in the paper submitted to the Board for consideration by the National Head of Estates and recommended by the PRG. Proposed by A. O'Gara, Seconded by T. McDonnell and approved by the Board.

28.4 Proposed purchase of property in Co. Kilkenny

The Board approved the recommendation to purchase the property in Co. Kilkenny for the purposes of residential care as outlined in the paper submitted to the Board for consideration by the National Head of Estates and recommended by the PRG. Proposed by A. O'Gara, Seconded by T. McDonnell and approved by the Board.

The National Head of Estates left the meeting.

29. AOB

- 29.1 None.

End.