



mental welfare
commission for scotland

**MENTAL WELFARE COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND
MEETING OF THE BOARD
HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2026
11.00AM Via Teams**

Present:

Sandy Riddell (Chair)
David Hall
Kathy Henwood
Nichola Brown
Beth-Anne McDowall
Cindy Mackie

In attendance:

Julie Paterson, Chief Executive
Suzanne McGuinness, Executive Director (Social Work)
Claire Lamza, Executive Director (Nursing)
Ashley Dee, Head of Culture and Corporate Services
Julie O'Neill, Business Change and Improvement Manager

Secretary: Katrina Thomson

1. Welcome & apologies

Apologies were received from Alison White, Alan Wright and John Crichton.

2. Board Declarations & Register of Interests

None

3. Chair Update & Announcements

The Chair firstly thanked the Board, JP and AD for taking part in the ongoing review and updating of actions following last year's Board self-assessment and the recent Annual Chairs' Meeting, the minute of which is on today's agenda. Several actions have been agreed including dates for Q&A meetings, agreement on what meetings should be either online or in-person, some Board succession planning, a date for a Board development day and both clarifying and strengthening assurance between Audit, Performance and Risk Committee and the Board. It was confirmed that the Chair will send out updated Board self-assessment forms early in March with a deadline to enable responses to be collated for the April meeting of the Board.

In relation to succession planning, the Chair confirmed that he is still attempting to progress the appointment process for new Board members. He has recently provided the Public Appointments Team and our Sponsor Department with details to enable them to put forward a case to extend current appointments to ensure that we do not have a gap in Board numbers and experience meantime and in

particular, cause issues in relation to being quorate for important meetings. The Chair will continue to update the Board on progress in this respect.

It was confirmed that the Chair and CEO met with our new Minister, Tom Arthur, as planned in December. It was a very positive meeting where Mr. Arthur appeared well briefed, came over as genuinely supportive of both what the Commission stands for and undertakes, and was keen to hear our views on a range of matters.

The Chair updated colleagues on meetings he has had with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, following some of the challenges that the Commission has experienced in undertaking the joint inspection of services with them. He met with the Interim Chair at Thistle House in December when he shared his concerns about the problems experienced. He suggested that to try to move matters forward positively, SR and JP, along with the Interim Chair and CEO of Healthcare Improvement Scotland, should meet to discuss next steps. This went ahead at Thistle House on the 5th of this month and although SR felt that the meeting was generally constructive and cordial, he was left with concerns about whether there was any real likelihood of Healthcare Improvement Scotland being prepared to adapt their methodology, processes and comms to work in a more collaborative way. SR has followed up by sharing his views with our Sponsor Department.

Finally, in relation to succession planning, SR confirmed that AW will be taking on the role of Chair of Audit performance and Risk Committee from June. DH will continue to participate in the committee while he remains with the Commission, but this change will enable transition in the governance arrangements to take place in a planned way. SR acknowledged the excellent role DH has played for the Board as Chair of the Committee during a period of transition in terms of the focus and remit of the Committee. He also added that CM has also agreed to continue on the committee while she remains with the Commission and thanked them both for their continuing commitment and valued contribution to the committee.

4. CEO Update

JP advised that the joint AWI project with NES will be presented to the AWI World Congress in Amsterdam. Jo Savege will represent the Commission as the lead for this highly regarded project.

JP carried on to update that the fourth CYP visit report will be published on Thursday (Dudhope) with the final summary report scheduled for 3 March publication. JP thanked JON and CL for their significant input to this work.

It was noted that there is further delay in relation to the implementation of the new information management project and that SM will provide further detail later in the meeting.

4(i) CEO Update: Proposed extension of Commission business

JP referred to the paper stating that the Commission is ambitious for the people we serve.

It was explained that there are many SMHLR discussions ongoing and the first matter highlighted in the paper refers to recorded matters.

The Commission has always supported the change in law to avoid discriminating against those on orders relating to criminal procedures. Additional recorded matter monitoring may be required by the Commission as a result and Dr John Crichton is in touch with Scottish Government on this and any resource implications. JP sought approval from the Board on this direction of travel, and this was given. JP noted that the Commission will respond to the consultation by 23 March.

JP referred to the second matter relating to the Public Office Accountability Bill and the creation of a legal duty of candour and assistance on public authorities and officials at inquiries/investigations. The Bill does not reflect Commission investigations (section 11 and 12) at this stage, and we have been approached by the Scottish Law Society to consider this being added. The Board agreed with the inclusion of the Commission and amendment as suggested. CM asked about timescales. JP said she would follow up and feedback on this question.

5(a) Minutes of Board meeting held on 9 December 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 were approved.

The Chair asked the Board to note that the next Board meeting is in person and that Rebecca Maxwell, Perceptions Insight will attend to provide feedback on the work she did with staff at the start of the meeting, and that Joslyn Ngu, Communications Manager will attend at the end of the business meeting to give a presentation on social media.

In relation to Whistleblowing, the Chair said he is progressing an eventual successor to CM and will keep the Board informed.

5(b) Action Register

The Action Register will be updated for the next meeting.

6. Advisory Committee

6(a) Advisory Committee Update

The Chair said that we discussed at the December Board meeting that there will be a further paper coming to the April board meeting on Lived Experience to inform the Advisory Committee.

NB advised that this is in progress and carried on to say that she and JON have met to discuss the agenda for the March meeting that will be via Teams. NB explained that there are some substantial items with the main item being the

Children's enhanced visit reports, and there will also be discussion on the Commission's equalities plan as NB feels there will be good contributions given the diversity of the Advisory Committee. The Chair confirmed that NB has been in touch with BM about the Advisory Committee which he said is good news.

NB also referred to the work being done by JON on capturing information from the Advisory Committee members about their organisation, scoping around the breadth of organisations we have, who is coming from where and at what level, and will they be able to tap into their own networks etc. JON said the returns are very slow but so far 18 out of the 31 organisations have all agreed they are keen to work with us and will go back to their organisations to look at their make up to see if they have people with lived experience, carers, professionals etc. to support our work. This information will be part of the Strengthening Lived Experience paper coming to the Board in April.

6(b) Strengthening lived experience voices within the Advisory Committee

JON said that at the December Board meeting it was agreed that there would be an options appraisal exercise completed to consider options 2 and 3. This involves a set of principles being used to help make the decision. JON noted the importance of a proportionate options appraisal process linked to the scale and nature of the work. Based on this JON said ELT are currently looking at options 2 and 3 against the 6 principles, looking at pros and cons, timescales, risks, cost and resources associated with these options. The draft report will be discussed with NB before bringing to the Board for their input and decisions in April.

The Chair suggested that both NB and BM look at the draft report before coming to the Board to get background information and thinking in advance of the Board meeting.

JON said that one other item on the agenda for the Advisory Committee relates to SM organising for the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Standards work group to come along to talk to the Advisory committee, so they have an opportunity to input to that consultation also.

Action: NB and BM to see the Strengthening Lived Experience paper before it is presented to the April Board meeting.

7.1 SBAR Draft Strategic Plan 2026-2029

7.1(i) Appendix 1: Consultation document

7.1(ii) Appendix 2: Draft strategic plan 2026-29 dated 10/02/2026 (full version)

7.1(iii) Appendix 3: Draft strategic plan 2026-29 dated 10/02/2026 (version for publication)

The Chair said there are a few papers for the Strategic Plan for 2026-2029 and the Board should note that it is subject to ministerial approval before publication, adding that members will note the processes used on how the draft

plan was provided and in addition the full draft and a draft shorter version for wider publication.

JON referred to the consultation document which shows the journey and methodology used and said we have drafted the strategic plan based on the feedback received. She said the first draft went out for consultation in November/December and some of the changes suggested are contained in the strategic plan and that both drafts are here for comments so they can be submitted for ministerial approval. The Chair said this has come a long way from previous strategic plans and feels a lot different in that it is more focussed on how the Commission has developed and evolved, and he wanted to thank JON and all involved.

CM thanked JON for the significant work involved and for the feedback received which has been very helpful. Referring to 'Under Commitments' re workforce CM said, as wellbeing Champion she would like to see something in relation to wellbeing in our workforce. In relation to E&P, CM referred to the comment on being fully represented and asked if this can be clarified to show what we mean and our reach. CM also referred to the sentence on page 22 'There appears to be a theme around needing to improve internal communications' and suggested amending it to 'We noted feedback with regard to improving internal communications' to make it stronger. Referring to a comment in the feedback that it could be a document from any Health and Social Care organisation CM suggested looking at the graphics of the plan to make it more dynamic and eye catching.

NB said it is good to have the summary version and she agreed with CM on enhancing the presentation. Referring to the E&P section NB said on the visiting of individuals, it is good to see the commitment to increase the number of unannounced visits and the number of community visits noting that this shows we have listened to feedback from the consultation. On E&P, NB said there are some welcome parts such as collaboration with partners and learning from their experience such as Vox and other advocacy services. She said the point of reviewing the membership of the Advisory Committee is something we are in the middle of so it may be good to say we have concluded this in the document, given that it is near completion. Referring to the work of the Advisory Committee and how the work could be better disseminated NB asked about the E&P team and its future as they are pivotal in front facing with our engagement with other public sector organisations.

JP explained that the E&P team role is not directly related to the Advisory Committee currently and is subject to review given the changes in staffing. JP agreed the importance of the front facing engagement referred to.

In relation to the other point on graphics, JP said that JON is currently looking at this and explained that historically publications have been in the Commission corporate colours/format, and it is agreed that we want people to be 'attracted'

to the reports more so. She said that AD has been looking at how we make our corporate reports a bit more engaging.

NB said JP's update was very helpful and understands E&P is not the Advisory Committee resource but said she would like to offer her assistance in any way she can to provide support in how we can look at the involvement of E&P. BM echoed NB's offer noting she has extensive experience in engagement and participation. Referring to the comments especially the one where the MHO inferred he did not receive the help he was looking for from the Advice Line, BM said it was brave to include these points, and she also agreed with the graphics discussion.

CM concluded by saying that in her time with the Commission this is the best ranging feedback she has seen.

Action: JP/JON will contact NB and BM to look at the Strategic Plan from the E&P point of view.

7.2 SBAR Standing Orders Policy

7.2(i) Standing Orders

The Chair informed the Board that the AP&R Committee considered the move to 2 Board members being on the AP&R Committee hence the proposed change to standing orders. Changes to the Advisory Committee were also noted (to move to a single Chair) and the Chair referred to the changes being necessary for relevant governance of both Committees.

The Board approved the Standing Orders subject to the minor changes above being made.

7.3 SBAR Standing Financial Instructions Policy

7.3(i) FIN-POL-04 Standing Financial Instructions Policy 2026

JP confirmed that the paper was reviewed at AP&R Committee on 16 February 2026 and the attached paper includes tracked changes for information and approval.

The Board approved the Standing Financial Instructions.

8.1 Annual Chair's Meeting Minutes of 16 January 2026

The Chair introduced the minutes from the Annual Chair's meeting held last month for information. Following a discussion at the pre-meeting, the Chair said he would provide AD with an update on online and in person board meetings, Q&A meeting dates etc. Apart from the Q&A meeting at the end of March there are an additional 3 Q&A meeting dates for the year ahead. He confirmed with JP that one of these meetings will be an all-staff meeting extended to an hour and half and suggested it should not be stage managed but a free question session for staff to ask the board questions as there are new Board members and see what they want to find out. If there are no

questions from staff, then board members may wish to ask staff some questions.

Referring to the Annual Chair's meeting, the Chair said it was a very helpful meeting as practical issues were identified and followed up which showed a healthy process in detailed governance. Referring to the Board Self-Assessment, the Chair said it will be issued next week and said it is important that it is completed and assured the Board that issues picked up from the assessments are dealt with.

NB said she had found the meeting very helpful. Referring to an action not noted as NB said she put it into the chat, she asked AD about the training for Board members and asked if the links to appropriate courses, especially the mandatory ones on TURAS could be re-issued.

The Chair said he would send AD his learning record for TURAS. Referring to an update from the sponsor department on the Governance hub, the Chair said he did not find this helpful. He said it is important we have learning logs and that this information is contained in appraisal forms, as there is an expectation that appraisals are evidenced, particularly if board members are considering a second term.

In terms of Appraisals, the Chair said a Business Case has been put to the sponsor department to extend DH and CM's terms on the Board and he has provided copies of their appraisal forms to the Sponsor Department to evidence and support this requirement.

Action: AD to issue links to the TURAS training for Board members.

8.2 SBAR Budget Update

The Chair asked JP if the Commission was likely to receive confirmation of the budget before she goes on annual leave. JP confirmed that we have already received letters of comfort for the AWI and the IMS projects and added that she has a telephone call arranged for Thursday of this week that will hopefully provide verbal confirmation of the annual budget. JP said we have a wish list for some additional funding for 2026/2027 so we may get a sense of what we might receive, and it is hoped to have confirmation of the budget in writing by 26 March 2026, adding that this would be early compared to previous years.

The Chair referred to previous years where confirmation was provided very late and said this is unhelpful when dealing with recruitment and implementing some of the developments we have been trying to work towards. It would be helpful if we could get the confirmation early so we can be proactive in planning the year ahead. The Chair acknowledged that JP would continue to press the Scottish Government for confirmation, and that she is very flexible in the way funds are targeted and spent and utilisation of any underspends, and said he appreciates the work that is done.

The Board noted the contents of the paper provided.

8.3 SBAR IMS Project Update

8.3(i) Appendix 1 IMS Project Report to IMS Board 27.01.26

8.3(ii) Appendix 2 IMS Board - Project Status Report 14 Jan 2026

The Chair referred to the final 15% of data migration that is causing the delay with the process. SM said that was the update that was provided to AP&R last week, however she is pleased to report that we now have the whole system and that it is being tested from end to end and will be signed off once it has been fully tested in its entirety. SM explained that the key issue was a very old system mapping into the new system, but it is now looking positive, although SM said she cannot provide new dates for Go Live yet, but it is imminent.

Chair said if he understands it right there has been full migration including the 15% and the system is now being fully tested to find the quirks and issues. SM confirmed that is the situation at present. The Chair said that Steven Gallagher was particularly interested and the Director General was very focused on this project, which shows the level of interest and scrutiny that comes from the Scottish Government, adding this was a very expensive project with high risks involved and Scottish Government required assurances on all the systems in place which SM has provided and kept the Board fully updated on. He said it has been very challenging, and commended SM on all her hard work and asked that the Board are kept informed of developments.

SM said that she would like to make note of the exceptional team involved in the project and indeed colleagues around the table and said as soon as we go live a significant occurrence will be issued to the Board.

The Board noted the contents of the paper.

8.4 SBAR Health & Safety Performance Update

8.4(i) MWC Health and Safety Performance Report Jan 2026

AD reported that Alex Murray, H&S Adviser at NES, provided an annual performance report for Audit, Performance & Risk Committee (AP&R) which was presented at AP&R on 16 February 2026. He said that it sets out our audit scores for this year and previous years, our priorities for the next year, and is self-explanatory in terms of the areas we are focussing on.

CM complimented AD on the hard work done as it has been quite a journey since it was raised two years ago. Referring to a question she asked at the AP&R meeting on training of key people she said she had received a reply to that and noted that was ongoing. As the wellbeing champion CM referred to the staff survey where staff had raised the issue of training in relation to conflict resolutions and said as it does sit under duty of care and health and safety she asked if there was any update on this. AD said Rebecca Maxwell, Insight Perceptions has been involved in training offered to all staff on having difficult conversations and speaking up and disagreeing respectfully, but he is not aware of training specifically for conflict resolution. JP suggested that the

training referred to was in relation to deescalation training and asked CL to speak to this. CL said that all practitioner staff have now gone through the Approved PMVA training at the State Hospital and all are up to date on the breakaway training. CM thanked CL and said that it now closes this question.

The Chair referred to the work undertaken by NES to formalise and embed H&S in the Commission which is reassuring for the Board.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

8.5 AP&R Minutes 24 November 2025

The Board noted the contents of the minutes.

9. Board Agenda Planning

The Chair said we have an indicative agenda for the meeting on 28th April which will be In person and referred to Rebecca Maxwell attending the April Board to provide an update on training provided to staff and Joslyn Ngu, Communications Manager to provide information on the topic of social media.

10. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Next meeting – Tuesday 28 April (In Person Thistle House)