



**mental welfare**  
commission for scotland

**MENTAL WELFARE COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND  
MEETING OF THE BOARD  
HELD ON 28 APRIL 2026  
11.00AM In person Thistle House**

**Present:**

Sandy Riddell (Chair)  
David Hall  
Kathy Henwood  
Nichola Brown  
Beth-Anne McDowall  
Cindy Mackie  
Alison White (AWh)  
Alan Wright (AWr)

**In attendance:**

Julie Paterson, Chief Executive  
Suzanne McGuinness, Executive Director (Social Work)  
Claire Lamza, Executive Director (Nursing)  
John Crichton, Executive Director (Medical)  
Ashley Dee, Head of Culture and Corporate Services  
Julie O'Neill, Business Change and Improvement Manager  
Joslyn Ngu (Presentation before discussion of Item 7.8)

**Secretary:** Katrina Thomson

**Rebecca Maxwell, Perception-Insight, met with the Board prior to the meeting to provide feedback on work undertaken with Commission staff to date.**

**1. Welcome & apologies**

No apologies were received.

**2. Board Declarations & Register of Interests**

No declarations were made.

**3. Chair Update & Announcements**

The Chair started by confirming changes at our sponsor department with the news that Stephen Gallagher is to leave his post as Director of Mental Health and is moving post within the Scottish Government to the Chief Operating Officer function as Director of Assurance and Improvement. We have been advised of wider changes across the Health and Social Care Directorates with Mental Health policy now joining with Social Care under the leadership of Donna Bell and Angie Wood. Donna is known to us as having previously led the Mental Health and Social Care Directorate and Angie brings experience in mental health nursing and as a

former IJB Chief Officer. We are anticipating that Jo Farrow will continue as Deputy Director but will be advised in due course.

The Chair carried on to say that he is awaiting contact from Jo Farrow who is due to lead the recruitment process for new Board members. He understands that a planning meeting should take place next month. SR confirmed that CM and DH have had their appointments extended to November the 30th which will allow more time for there to be a carefully planned and phased recruitment and appointment process. He will keep the Board updated in this respect.

The Chair advised the Board that he had received a really positive letter from our Minister, Tom Arthur regarding the advanced copy of our new Strategic Plan that we had sent him. He noted that we have continued to build on our previous priorities and that our monitoring, visiting, investigations, advice and engagement activity continues to support improvement in practice. He added his recognition of the important contribution the Commission makes, as an independent statutory body, in helping to safeguard the rights of some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland. The Chair added that he has received some positive feedback regarding the new Strategic Plan from colleagues in the field including the Interim Chief Social Work Officer in Moray who liked the presentation and overall layout of the document. He felt that our purpose was clear, concise and effectively communicated and has asked for he and his management team to have a presentation from us on our work – this is being organised.

Finally, the Chair advised the Board that as part of the planned succession planning process, KH will, in due course, become our Whistleblowing Champion when CM leaves us towards the end of the year. We will ensure that there is a planned transition, and the Chair asked that I ask CM, KH and AD get together to meet in to consider the transition required.

#### **4. CEO Update**

JP reflected on the staff event held on 1 April 2026 which was well received with good feedback from staff. This event had been organised by staff rather than ELT on this occasion. It was titled 'Positive connections through change' and it worked well. NB noted that she attended the event and asked how many staff had attended. JP said she was not in a position to confirm numbers but could do so at a later stage.

JP confirmed that she had visited Perth and Kinross Independent Advocacy Service with JON, meeting the whole advocacy team. This meeting was part of the intention to work more closely with advocacy. Appointments are also in the diary with VOX.

JP finished by confirming that she has been invited to attend the Women of Scotland 67<sup>th</sup> Lunch on 24 April in Glasgow.

#### **5(a) Minutes of Board meeting held on 24 February 2026**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2026 were approved.

#### **5(b) Action Register**

Action Register had been updated with comments added to register.

### **6. Advisory Committee**

#### **6.1 Advisory Committee Minutes from 27 March 2026**

NB reported that this was a good meeting with a good turnout of attendees and that everyone was engaged in the meeting. She said that the findings of the enhanced visits to children's services presented by CL were very well received.

Referring to the findings, CM asked about areas for improvement and whether there is a skills gap in relation to protection matters. CL said that while training records confirmed that all training had been completed, the Commission found that not all staff were able to give assurance of recognition of all possible harms e.g. self-neglect, self-harm and use of child protection vs adult protection procedures for those over aged 16 year. A separate meeting has taken place with services to ensure this is addressed.

#### **6.2 Strengthening lived experience voices within the Advisory Committee**

The Chair thanked JP and JON for the paper and appendices, adding that the ELT scoring was very helpful having followed a robust process.

JP noted that AWr had suggested an Option Appraisal at the previous board meeting and thanked AWr for his guidance.

JON referred to the SBAR noting that it contained details regarding the proportionate process followed, the outcome of which is that option 2 is the recommendation made by ELT.

NB acknowledged the work done to reach the recommendation of option 2 and said that sometimes third sector organisations are commissioned to provide such a model. JP confirmed that there are indeed examples that ELT are aware of where that is the case. BM thanked ELT for the quick turnaround of the paper presented.

It was also noted that there are gaps on the advisory committee e.g. forensic, dementia and action needs to be taken to engage widely. The Chair said this will evolve.

The Chair thanked ELT for the recommendation which will support direction of travel.

The Board approved the process followed to reach Option 2, as recommended by ELT to strengthen lived experience voices within the Advisory Committee.

#### **7.1 Board Self-Assessment 2025-26**

The Chair explained that this item is removed from the agenda following a pre-meeting discussion. He welcomed the comments from the Executive

Leadership Team and said the Board Self-Assessment will be discussed at the Board Development Day on 3 June 2026 with Rebecca Maxwell, Perception-Insights, where they will cover all issues raised and develop an action plan.

## **7.2 Register of Interests**

### **7.2(i) Board Register of Interests**

#### **7.2(ii) Executive Leadership Team Register of Interests**

DH, AWr, BM and KH indicated that they had small amendments to their entries which they will forward to KT. KT will send the revised Board Register of Interests to the Chair to sign off.

**Action:** Amendments to Register of Interests to be sent to **KT** who will send final version to the Chair for signing off.

## **7.3 SBAR Business Plan 2025-26 – final report for the year**

### **7.3(i) Business Plan 2025 to 2026 workplan as at 31.03.2026**

#### **7.3(ii) Business Plan 2025 to 2026 performance measures as at 31.03.2026**

JON introduced the final business plan of the strategic plan 2023-26. JON advised that 92% of planned work has been completed or is on track. Additional unplanned work relating to CYP visits was also undertaken in the last year as well as producing additional Advice Notes linked to practice issues arising. It was noted that the Engagement and Participation work is delayed and will carry over into the new Business Plan.

The Chair said that our need to respond to things such as the Children and Young Peoples visits took up a lot of time as did the IMS project with both having a huge impact on time and resources. It was noted that it can be extremely difficult to be agile when funding approval is received late in the year, adding that we responded well to the additional workload and are highly regarded by Scottish Government.

NB noted the breadth of work undertaken by the Commission. There was discussion about feedback from the strategic plan engagement that more needs to be done to profile the Commission. The Chair referred to a previous successful event held in 2023 and suggested another in November 2026 might be timely. BM said we must remain accountable and visible to people.

The Board approved the final Business Plan for 2025-2026

## **7.4 SBAR Business Plan 2026-27 – new plan for coming year**

### **7.4(i) Copy of Business Plan 2026-2027 Workplan**

JP introduced this by saying the Strategic Plan for 2026-2029 was well received by the Board in February 2026. She said the attached Business Plan shows our commitments for the first year which includes carry over work from the previous year, and that we will be agile in committing to workloads.

AWh referred to the delayed measures and suggested that dates be added rather than starting off with 'delayed'. AWr asked if there are any new emerging risks, to which JP replied that the engagement and participation work is the

emerging challenge but a progress report will be brought to the Board in August 2026.

The Chair said that sudden changes do occur and these are unknowns. JC agreed giving the example of the delay in reviewing the good practice guide in relation to nurses holding powers which now needs additional legal advice which had not been anticipated.

CM referred to Workforce and asked for clarity. AD replied saying work is ongoing to refresh 1:1s which is a delayed action in the Organisational Development plan. He added that this work will take account of expectations in relation to the new agreed commission values and reviewing the appraisal format. CM welcomed the clarity provided.

The Board approved the Business Plan for 2026-2027 subject to the comments made.

## **7.5 SBAR Annual Communications Plan 2026**

### **7.5(i) Annual Communications Plan 2026**

AD explained that this paper is presented every year to highlight the priorities for the coming year and incorporates information from the Commission's proposed strategic plan 2026-29. The annual communications plan is presented now to enable timely implementation of priority projects, particularly those requiring lead-in time such as website development and branding updates. The Chair noted the alignment with the Business Plan, and AWh said we must also be reactive. AD confirmed the need to be agile and reactive but explained that this paper related to what is planned.

The Board approved the Annual Communications Plan 2026.

## **7.6 SBAR CEO Objectives**

### **7.6(i) JP Objectives**

The Chair said that the CEO Objectives are presented to the Board every year and shows a framework of work for the coming year. He added that these objectives are the basis of regular discussions with the Chair and CEO throughout the year.

JP said that as the Commission goes from strength to strength, we must remain fit for purpose, evidence our performance and impact and continue to call for additional powers as noted in the SMHLR.

The Chair said that at the last large event held by the Commission, there was a lot of frustration at the time it takes to implement the recommendations, and it is important for the Commission to lay out its values of what we have achieved and capitalise on our success.

JP confirmed that verbal confirmation has now been received that death in detention/mental health homicide work will start again, thanks to commitment

to permanent funding. The Chair asked JP that when she receives confirmation of the budget can she advise the Board.

The Board approved the CEO Objectives 2026-27.

## **7.7 SBAR Best Value Framework**

### **7.7(i) Best Value Framework Final**

AD presented an updated best value framework for 2026-27, setting out what the Commission currently has in place to demonstrate consideration and application of the five characteristics/themes in its operations/business. AD asked the Board to consider if there are any gaps/areas for development. AWR noted that the resources section is intended to capture more than finances, and should include estate and IT architecture and suggested this should be reflected.

The Board approved the Best Value Framework for 2026-2027.

## **7.8 SBAR Media and Social Media Policy**

### **7.8(i) Media and Social Media Policy 2026**

**Before discussing the media and social media policy, Joslyn Ngu, Communications Manager gave a presentation on the use of media platforms within the Commission.**

AD explained that the media and social media policy is due for review and is presented to the Board for approval. CM said that bespoke training should be tightened up, and it was suggested that under Monitoring and Risk Management there should be a timeline for reporting suspected breaches of the policy.

The Board approved the media and social media policy subject to the suggestion above being considered.

## **7.9 SBAR Whistleblowing Quarterly Report**

### **7.9(i) Whistleblowing Q4 Report**

AD explained that the Commission was advised at the start of 2025 that it does in fact fall under the Independent National Whistleblowing Office's (INWO) remit. This places the Commission under a duty to provide quarterly KPI reports to INWO which must be approved by the Board prior to submission; this is the first full submission.

AD advised that the first meeting between himself and the CEO and the Board Whistleblowing Champion has been arranged for June.

In response to AWR asking if the system would be tested if there are no concerns raised, CM explained that there is training of new champions that will demonstrate the process. AWR suggested testing should take place one year down the line.

The Board approved the Whistleblowing Quarterly report for submission to the National Whistleblowing Office (NOW).

## **7.10 New Good Practice Guide: When things go wrong: responding to errors in the application of mental health legislation**

### **7.10(i) Responding to Error Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland**

JC explained this is a new GPG that covers what we do on a daily basis. The Q&A draws together customer common mistakes, adding that it is important to satisfy these errors as they could be potentially challengeable. The Chair said this was critical and DH said this is a valuable useful guide. CM said the foundation is really strong but queried if error is the correct wording against serious errors. JC provided the rationale for this being the case.

AWr suggested that an IIA (Integrated Impact Assessment) be completed given the significance. It was noted that this is an excellent piece of work that was well written and understandable.

The Board approved the Good Practice Guide subject to an IIA being completed.

**Action:** JC to produce and IIA (Integrated Impact Assessment).

## **7.11 June Bank Holiday (Verbal)**

JP explained that 15 June is a national holiday for Scotland that received royal approval from the King, to celebrate Scotland reaching the World Cup for the first time in 28 years. She added that Scottish Government have approved the holiday for their staff.

The Board approved the additional holiday as a 'floating day' i.e. the office will not close on 15 June. JP will issue an email to all MWC to inform them this will be a floating day.

**Action:** JP to issue an email to all MWC staff informing them of the additional floating holiday. [update: AD advised all staff].

## **8.1 SBAR Budget Report**

### **8.1(i) Board Budget Report April 2026**

JP reported that the Commission has an underspend of £1.680 million for the year 2025-26 that is mainly due to the IMS project and staffing. JP confirmed that we have received letters of comfort for the AWI project, the IMS project and for the work on restraint monitoring (restrictive practices).

The Chair said this looks good and asked JP when she does receive confirmation of the budget can she let the Board know.

The Board noted the contents of the paper.

## **8.2 IMS Project Update**

### **8.2(i) Appendix 1 IMS Project Board Report April 2026**

### **8.2(ii) Appendix 2 Go Live Process and Checks**

### **8.2(iii) LEO is Going Live**

#### **8.2iv) LEO Quick Start Guide**

The Chair acknowledged that the IMS project (now called LEO) had gone live in March.

SM confirmed this and explained that there are issues arising that we may not have known about, but the project team and Commission staff are working together to find solutions. The new system is successfully in place, however.

SM said the project team is working closely with the supplier and Scottish Government continue to monitor the project. The final assurance gate will be in the form of a health check and is expected in summer 2026.

SM confirmed for AWr that benefits of realisation will be looked at at 6, 9 and 12 months. SM confirmed for BM that if anything goes wrong our supplier will attend very quickly.

The Board noted the contents of the papers provided.

### **8.3 SBAR People and Workforce Agreed Actions:**

#### **8.3(i) Workforce Consolidated Actions**

AD said this report is the 6 monthly update providing high level progress tracking and shows that one area in relation to development of new appraisal/1:1 arrangement is delayed.

The Board noted the contents of the papers.

### **8.4 Scottish Government - Response to Recorded Matters consultation**

JC explained that the Commission supports the use of remedial action with clear and proportionate notification arrangements and that it will be interesting to see how this develops.

The Board noted the contents of the paper.

### **9. Board Agenda Planning – See Appendix 1 below**

Noted.

### **10. Any Other Business**

No matters were discussed.

### **11. Next meeting – Tuesday 30 June 2026 (In Person)**