



SCIE minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees

Held on Thursday 4 March 2004, 13.45 - 16.30

1) Attendance

(Board): Jane Campbell (chair), Shokat Babul, Jon Glasby, Janet Lewis, Paul Martin, Diana McNeish, Terry Philpot, Roy Taylor, Gail Tucker.

Staff: Bill Kilgallon (Chief Executive), Lisa Bostock (Staff Representative elect), Amanda Edwards (Head of Knowledge Services), Enid Levin (Staff Representative), Victoria McNeill (Head of Corporate Services & Company Secretary), Emma Brooks (minutes).

Also in attendance: Pearl Sebastian (Budget and Financial Report).

Apologies: Peter Beresford, Ratna Dutt, Geraldine Macdonald.

Welcome and announcements:

SCIE staff were welcomed to the meeting. The outgoing staff representative, Enid Levin, was thanked for her great contribution to the Board.

Enid thanked the Board for making her feel so welcome and noted she had found being staff representative a very positive experience. The new staff representative would be Lisa Bostock and SCIE staff were actively looking for a new staff representative elect.

2) Declaration of any other business

The updated "Forthcoming dates for the Board" and two new SCIE publications - position paper 3 'Has service user participation made a difference to social care services?' and Guide 2 'Involving service users and carers in social work education', were distributed. Both publications were under embargo until 10 March, to coincide with the launch of the Partners' Council.

3) Minutes and matters arising

Minutes of the AGM meeting and board meeting held on 15 January 2004 were approved by the trustees for signature.

There were two amendments to the board meeting minutes:

Minute 5.1: Chief Executive's Report:

Bullet point 2, last sentence: 'The current timetable to draw up the term of reference of the group would be extended to Easter 2004. '

Bullet point 4, first sentence: 'Amanda Edwards was congratulated on her appointment to the Board of the NHSU '.

Matters Arising:

Minute 7 - Establishment of Partners' Council:

There were 5 BME members of the Partners' Council and 15 members with physical, mental or learning disabilities.

Minute 3 - Minutes and matters arising: SCIE's response to the Green Paper - "Every Child Matters":

The Children Bill was launched today. SCIE would respond to aspects of the Bill in its workplan.

Minute 5 - Chief Executive's report:

The final version of the Blue Skies/Looking to the Future project brief would be circulated to trustees when completed. The draft commissioning brief for the literature surveys had been produced and sent.

ACTION: Final project brief to be sent to Board members

4) Reports of Chief Executive and Chair

4.1 Chair's Report

The Chair highlighted the following points from the paper:

The meeting with Maria Eagle MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions, had been an extremely interesting and useful meeting. She felt that there were lots of opportunities within the current benefits system for paying service users for their involvement but agreed to chair a seminar to look at benefits systems and barriers to involvement. Stephen Ladyman MP and other government departments would be contacted with regard to hosting this seminar.

SCIE was now forming useful links with other government departments, such as the DWP and Prime Minister's Strategy Unit.

The Positive Parenting seminar had received good feedback. Board members would be sent a copy of the notes.

ACTION: Emma Brooks would distribute the seminar notes to Board members.

Jane Campbell had delivered one of the keynote speeches at the DRC public debate on independent living, along with Denise Platt. This had been a powerful combination and the DRC, CSCI and SCIE were all working towards similar aims with regard to independent living. This had been noted by policy makers.

Amanda Edwards and Jane Campbell had now carried out a thorough review of the 2004/5 workplan.

The Partners Council's first meeting would be held on 10 March. The launch of the Council was an incredibly important development for SCIE.

SCIE had received a letter from Lord Warner regarding the review of Arms Length Bodies (ALBs). SCIE had responded to Lord Warner that SCIE was not an ALB.

There was one amendment to the Chair's paper: The 'Nursing Mirror' should be replaced by the 'Nursing Standard'.

4.2 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive's report focused on the proposed joint initiative between SCIE and the Department of Health (DH) to develop a Care Services Development Initiative.

Background to the Initiative:

As part of the 2004 Spending Review the government had commissioned a number of reviews, detailed in the paper, to consider decentralising power and decision making. DH's internal restructuring was modelled on these principles. It appeared that the results of the reviews would be mergers, closures and job losses. With this in mind Antony Sheehan, director of Care Services at DH, had approached SCIE to discuss a joint initiative to develop care services.

The Care Services Development Initiative proposal is to develop a partnership between the Care Services Department (CSD) and SCIE to harness and direct developmental resources into social care. The initiative would have four key aims:

to assist the Care Services Directorate in DH to establish a framework for how it conducts business inside and outside DH

to look at social care governance and create a cross-governmental care services alliance

to look at partnerships with health and social care regulators, inspectors, authorities etc

to look at how to use service improvement activities more effectively

The Care Services Development Initiative would be created via a separate partnership agreement with DH, funded through the Section 64 grant as separate but additional funding. The final amount of funding had not yet been determined but the bulk of the money would be used to commission work. The Unit would be accountable to Antony Sheehan and Bill Kilgallon.

The initiative is an attempt by DH to have a real partnership with an external body and is an opportunity for SCIE to help set a vision for social care. It would be created in a form that recognised and respected SCIE's independence.

Discussion:

Jane Campbell indicated that she was in favour of taking the work forward and asked for comments from the Board. The following comments were made:

the opportunity to strengthen SCIE as a knowledge and practice base for social care and for SCIE to influence social care policy development was broadly welcomed. However many trustees emphasised SCIE would have to ensure that it maintained its independence

trustees stressed that the initiative should strengthen rather than detract from SCIE's core business

trustees agreed that strengthening the social care base of SCIE's work might assist in avoiding merger with a health-based organisation

it was felt that SCIE should avoid entanglement in DH restructuring or reorganisation

the proposal was seen as a good opportunity to broaden SCIE's focus on adult services

trustees stressed the importance of being able to bring the partnership to an end if it did not fit in with SCIE's core business or charitable objects

trustees recognised that there would be in-built tensions in the partnership, but noted that these tensions existed in any event and SCIE had in the past not always agreed to carrying out work proposed by DH

trustees agreed that the initiative might offer an opportunity to strengthen and shape social care services and that this was an opportunity SCIE might otherwise not have

Amanda Edwards explained how the initiative would fit into the context of the workplan.

Jane Campbell felt that SCIE was in a strong position to make clear agreements about the resourcing, managing and boundaries of the partnership. Amanda Edwards noted that SCIE had experience of creating partnership agreements, to set the partnership framework and govern the partnership.

Decisions:

There was unanimous agreement from Board members that SCIE should agree to the initiative with DH but that we should be very clear through the agreement about SCIE's independent status.

It was agreed that a sub-group of the Board would be created to consider developments. It was agreed that the sub-group members would be Jon Glasby, Janet Lewis, Terry Philpot and Gail Tucker.

5) Financial Report

Jane Campbell invited Gail Tucker, Chair of the Audit Committee, to introduce the paper.

The committee had met on 10 February and had received a helpful report from Nishal Rooplal, SCIE's IT advisor from Cooperative Systems, about security for SCIE's IT base and the backup of computer systems. As SCIE worked from a single platform this was very helpful in terms of protecting the system. The system for storage of offsite backups was currently being improved.

Gail Tucker said that the Audit Committee has also been provided with a very full risk assessment, prepared by SCIE's auditors working with Victoria McNeill and Pearl Sebastian. In general SCIE was exposed to very little risk because of measures that had been put in place to reduce exposure. One of the areas identified in the risk assessment was the need for Board members to be given thorough inductions and sufficient information for them to understand their role. A guide for trustees would be prepared in the near future to underline the trustees' duties, particularly as charity trustees. The Audit Committee considered SCIE's commissioning process with regard to conflicts of interest and bias. Existing conflicts of interest would be declared in reports. Jane Campbell welcomed the risk assessment

Reports on insurance claims and commissions would be a standing item on future Audit Committee agendas.

Pearl Sebastian introduced the latest forecast on SCIE's financial situation as at the end of the financial year 2003/2004. SCIE will carry forward over £1 million to the next year. Some of the money allocated to Knowledge Services projects and the Rapid Response fund had not been spent this year.

6) Progress report on work plan 2003/4 and draft work plan 2004/5

Jane Campbell invited Amanda Edwards to present the paper.

Amanda Edwards introduced the draft workplan and explained that a progress report on the workplan would be submitted to the Board at regular intervals throughout the year.

Whilst funds has been attributed to special projects we have tried to retain some flexibility to allow for writing for external publications, holding seminars and responding to consultations. If SCIE were asked to undertake any further projects the plan would need to be altered and additional funds found or some projects curtailed.

The criteria SCIE was using for rejecting and accepting projects for the workplan were listed in the paper. SCIE had held meetings with the DH, DfES and Wales with regard to the plan, but were yet to discuss it with Northern Ireland.

Jane Campbell noted that there would be several routes for shaping the workplan - through staff comments, Board comments, the Partners Council and the Practice Partners' Network.

Decisions:

It was agreed that a Board work programming sub-committee would be established. The group would finalise the current workplan and begin to look at the long-term workplan. Jane Campbell would chair the sub-committee.

ACTION: Board members were asked to let Jane Campbell know if they were interested in joining the sub-committee.

It was agreed that Amanda Edwards would hold a meeting with the new board sub-committee before the next Board meeting to discuss how the work would be done, including how much would be commissioned to external parties. She would also show where BME issues were included in the workplan.

ACTION: Amanda Edwards to arrange a meeting with the new board sub-committee on the workplan

7) Budget 2004/5

Jane Campbell invited Pearl Sebastian to present the budget paper.

Although SCIE had not yet had confirmation of the amount of funding it would receive for the financial year ending 31 March 2004, it was largely certain that it would be about £5 million in unrestricted funds, with additional restricted funding for e-learning, the leadership programme and the care services development initiative.

The figures given in Appendix A were more precise for Corporate Services than Knowledge Services, as the latter was dependent on finalising the work programme at the DH review on 28 April. Once the work programme had been clarified the budget would be presented to the Audit Committee.

It was agreed that a breakdown of the Knowledge Services and Corporate Services expenditure would be sent to Board members.

ACTION: Pearl Sebastian to produce the summary to be distributed to the Board.

Victoria McNeill noted that SCIE would only have spent between £25,000-30,000 of the rapid response fund this financial year, but that some of next year's £200,000 would need to be put towards projects already agreed by the board and some of the new projects that the board were requesting in the work programme.

The Board unanimously approved the budget.

9) Dissemination Strategy

It was agreed to discuss this item at the next meeting.

10) SCIE Conferences

It was agreed to discuss this item at the next meeting.

11) Practice Partners' Programme

Amanda Edwards provided a verbal update on the Practice Partners' Network.

SCIE had been conducting outreach with the Practice Partners network and was now building up good relationships with the network. The programme was launched in November, which nearly all SCIE's potential partners attended. Since then Sara Lewis, practice development manager, had been visiting individual practice partners to discuss their input in SCIE's work. SCIE had got a good sense of what the partner organisations wished to gain from the network. This included sharing practice with each other as well as participating in SCIE's work.

SCIE was committed to running an annual event for the network as well as producing newsletters and other forms of dissemination. Each Practice Partner had nominated a key link person and would consider SCIE's workplan and decide in what areas they would like to work with SCIE. These areas would be chosen on the basis of what that they wanted to do better and where they felt they could help SCIE improve. Briefings would be provided for senior level staff within the Partner organisations to ensure that the whole organisation supported the network.

The Board had previously expressed concern about the lack of a private sector Practice Partner. As a result SCIE had approached the private sector organisation that Shokat Babul had recommended and they had joined the network.

Amanda Edwards had held a long discussion with Ratna Dutt with regard to BME matters. Some of the Practice Partners, such as Leicester and Southwark Social Services, were dealing with BME issues on a daily basis and would assist SCIE in its work in this area.

12) Next meeting

The next Board meeting would be held on 3 June 2004 at SCIE.