Minutes of the VSS Board Meeting No. 27  
Tuesday, 15 March 2016, 9.30 am  
Belfast Central Mission, Grosvenor House, Belfast

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**Board Members Present:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Wilkinson (OW)</td>
<td>Board Member (Chair)</td>
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<td>Richard Solomon (RS)</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<td>Patricia Haren (PH)</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<td>Bertha McDougall (BMcD)</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<td>Beverley Clarke (BC)</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen McIlveen (SMcI)</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<td>Séamus Magee (SM)</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
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**VSS Officers in Attendance:**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Bateson (MB)</td>
<td>Accounting Officer and Interim CEO</td>
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<td>Brendan Smith (BS)</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Governance</td>
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<td>Geraldine Hamilton (GS)</td>
<td>Head of Health &amp; Wellbeing Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caroline Armstrong (CA)</td>
<td>Finance and Governance Manager (Secretary)</td>
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<td>Sara Templer (ST)</td>
<td>Communications Officer (Minutes)</td>
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**A  Apologies**

A1 None.

**B  Minutes of Previous Meetings**

B1 16 February 2016: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

**C  Action Points**

C1 The Board asked the Interim CEO to provide an update in relation to the outstanding action points. This was provided, and it was noted that all outstanding actions are being tracked and actioned in line with the agreed timeframes.

**D  Conflict of Interest**

D1 The Board reviewed the Supplier List.
No conflicts of interest were declared.

E Chairperson’s Report

The Chair presented his update report, noting the activities undertaken.

In addition to this update, it was noted that several Board members had attended the CVS Conference 9-10 March 2016. The meeting noted that this event was largely characterised by constructive engagement, and a positive sense that stakeholders are coming together around key issues of common interest as part of the ongoing Co-Design Programme.

AP1: VSS to consider options for relationship building with key media outlets as part of Communications Plan for 2016/17.

F Interim CEO and Accounting Officer Update

The Interim CEO and Accounting Officer highlighted key issues and concerns as follows:

F1 Progress against Budget Update
- It was noted that there is currently a medium risk of under spend of £265k and that all teams are currently working together to maximise spend by the end of the financial year.
- VSS has received confirmation of the 2016/17 budget: £13.2m, which is equal to the starting budget for 2015/16. The VSS is currently working on detailed allocation for the year.
- Engagement is underway with VSP groups to make extensions to their current Letters of Offer, where relevant. It was noted that VSS remains closed for new VSP applications until the new Programme opens for April 2017 onwards; this is expected towards end of this calendar year.

F2 Progress against Corporate and Business Plan
- It was noted that the VSS Corporate and Business Plan for 2016/19 was submitted to the Department by the relevant deadline, and that VSS is awaiting the Department’s comments.

F3 VSP Progress Report
- The Interim CEO reported that the 10% spot check of applications via Self Declaration to Financial Assistance has shown an error rate of 8%, which can be extrapolated to £130k of potentially ineligible expenditure. It should be noted that none of the cases identified involve deliberate fraud. However, this potentially ineligible expenditure may result in the qualification of the 2015-2016 Annual Accounts.
- This was discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee on 1 March 2016 where it was agreed that the CVS, OFMDFM, VSS and NIAO should engage to agree a way forward that can satisfy both audit requirements and the need to maintain a client-centred approach to service delivery.

**AP2: VSS to establish a revised Financial Assistance application process for 2016-2017, in consultation with OFMDFM, CVS, and NIAO.**

**F4 INP Progress Report**

- The Board noted recent media coverage in relation to the possible closure of FASA, an organisation that VSS funds to deliver services to victims and survivors. The Head of Health and Wellbeing Services reported that she and the VSS Programmes Manager attended a meeting on 10 March 2016 between FASA and its various funding bodies. While FASA was hoping to secure a rescue package, the funders’ focus was to ensure that the organisation’s service users have access to the support that they need.

- The Board noted positively that alternative care pathways for service users who are most at need have been established, including access to services in the statutory sector or within another community and voluntary organisation as appropriate.

- The Board asked what level of risk was associated with the VSP funding allocated to FASA. It was reported the level of risk is minor: currently, 25% of the annual contract remains unvouched (c £25K). All other spend within the year has been 100% vouched and verified.

**G Future Service Delivery Update**

**G1 Co-Design Update**

- The Interim CEO presented the Co-Design Update Report. It was noted that the following areas have progressed to such an extent that they are now day to day business within the VSS, reported on as part of the month end SMT reporting procedures: Monitoring and Evaluation; Management Information Systems; Evidence Based Practise; Managing Client Expectations; Partnership and Collaboration; Long Term Sustainability.

- The following areas remain outstanding: Eligibility, Strategic Allocation and Service Delivery Models. These are listed on the work plan to be agreed for the next 6-12 months at the upcoming Co-Design Team Meeting on 16 March 2016. It was noted that VSS needs clarity in all areas within 6 months, in order to use an agreed policy framework to inform VSP and INP for 2017 onwards.

- **Eligibility** remains a challenging area of work: the Interim CEO reported that the Department is preparing a paper for approval by ministers based on information provided by VSS to the Co-Design Team

- **Strategic Allocation:** A mapping exercise underway, to be continued as part of the workplan to be agreed on 16 March 2016.
- It was noted that the Disability Aids Pilot Scheme is progressing well, and is likely to continue into 2016/17. The work has been undertaken ensuring no duplication of statutory services.

G2 PEACE IV Update
- The Head of Health and Wellbeing Services delivered the update on PEACE IV. It was noted that the policy framework for the VSS application to SEUPB is becoming clear.
- The Resilience and Advocacy aspects of the application will be drafted on the basis of insights collated from the following:
  - the CVS research reports on resilience and advocacy, which are due to report in final draft on 16 March 2016;
  - a resilience sub group convened as part of the Victims and Survivors Practitioners Working Group;
  - the Belfast Strategic Partnership TAKE 5 initiative, focusing in particular on the benefits of physical activity, numeracy and literacy, and volunteering opportunities.
- The Health and Wellbeing Caseworker aspect of the application will be discussed in detail at the Co-Design Meeting on 16 March 2016.
- It was noted that the official deadline for the VSS application to SEUPB is 31 March 2016 with a potential one week extension dependent on receipt of CVS advice.

H Board Sub-Committees

H1 Audit and Risk Committee: Chairman’s Report
The Board noted the ARC Chairman’s Report, which reiterated the issues highlighted at F3 above. It was also noted that following a procurement exercise, the VSS internal audit contract had been awarded to Capita for 3 years with an option to extend it following the initial period.

H2 Assessment Sub Committee
The Head of Corporate Governance reported that all VSP groups have submitted monitoring returns to secure an extension to their existing Letters of Offer into 2016/17. The Assessment Sub Committee has reviewed this paperwork, and confirmed that it is all in order.

The Board noted the recommendations made by the VSP Project Officers to extend the majority of the existing contracts. The Board also noted the cases pending further information and the actions being taken to address these queries.

The Board also noted the critical health and wellbeing commitment made available to groups in December 2015, and that this may need to be committed up front in 16/17 to manage and ensure no further long waiting lists.
H3 Policy and Resources Sub Committee
The Finance and Governance Manager reported that the Policy and Resources Sub Committee met on 1 March 2016. It was recommended that a third member should join the Committee: BC agreed to fulfil this role.

Having further considered its Terms of Reference, the Committee has agreed to maintain a strategic focus on the following themes:
- HR including Health and Safety
- Finance
- Communications
- I.T.
- Premises
- Programmes and Compliance

Going forward, VSS staff will bring high level strategic issues under these headings to the Policy and Resources Sub Committee for consideration who, in turn, will report on same to the Board.

The Board reviewed the Terms of Reference and requested some narrative changes to point 5.1 regarding co-opting.

**AP3: Paragraph 5.1 of Policy and Resources Sub-Committee ToR be amended to include the ability to co-opt a member of VSS staff as required**

The Board approved the Terms of Reference with these changes.

I VSS Board Governance Documents

I1 Schedule of Matters
The Finance and Governance Manager provided an update in relation to the Schedule of Matters. The Board approved the amended document.

J Standing Agenda Items
The Board asked the Finance and Governance Manager to provide an update on the standing agenda items. Referring to the relevant reports, the Finance and Governance Manager updated the Board in relation to each standing agenda item, highlighting the following points:

J1 Compliance Update
The Board noted the Compliance summary overview and the updates with regard to all open cases.
- VSS/FR/22: The Board considered the Update Report tabled regarding this case. The Board agreed to suspend the 2015/16 award and seek a recoup from the client.
J2 VSS Policies and Procedures Update
The VSS Policies and Procedures Update was noted.

J3 Complaints and Appeals
There were no complaints or appeals for the Board to consider.

J4 Challenging and Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Register
It was noted that no new cases were listed on the Challenging and Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Register in February 2015. There are currently no open entries on the register.

J5 Board Training Update and Questionnaire
The Finance and Governance Manager provided an update, noting that one training opportunity is still to be scheduled by the supplier, however, that the audit recommendations in this regard has now largely been completed.

J6 Board Self Assessment
It was noted that the Board 2015/16 Self Assessment was completed in February 2016, and that the full update will be tabled at the next Board meeting.

The Board were content that the 2 outstanding actions from the 2014/15 Self Assessment would be taken forward alongside the actions arising from the 2015/16 Self Assessment.

J7 Board Attendance
The Interim CEO reported that OFMDFM had advised that Ministerial approval will be required in relation to the additional days requested, and that this may only be forthcoming following the Assembly election in May.

K Any Other Business

K1 Lifetime Opportunities
It was noted that following review of the MSFM it had been identified that the VSS should be operating within the Lifetime Opportunity framework. The Board reviewed the paper presented and noted that all key priority areas in the framework are already being addressed by the VSS in its normal business.

As part of this discussion, the Board noted that the VSS should develop its relationships with representatives of other groups in society, and suggested that engagement should be sought with the Commissioner for Young People and the Commissioner for Older People.

**AP4: VSS to issue invitation to Commissioners for Young People and Older People respectively, to attend a Board Meeting at their convenience in 2016/17.**
VSP Salary Review

The Interim CEO tabled a paper outlining a salary review undertaken with regard to VSP groups in March 2015. The VSS is mindful that, due to a range of different factors, disparities exist across its funded organisations in terms of remuneration of similar roles. It was acknowledged that this is a cause of concern to some organisations and their staff.

As a funder, the VSS is keen to review job scales and ensure consistency in allocation of funding for specific job roles. It was reported that a robust process will be in place for the new Programme anticipated for 2017 and beyond. However, given that the VSP is being extended for a further year into 2016/17, it was acknowledged that this issue requires attention in the short to medium term. The Interim CEO reported that it will take a further 6-8 weeks for the full details of this issue and options for a way forward to be established.

The Board noted this issue, the financial impact and the importance of making progress towards a resolution, and recognised that service outcomes identified via the agreed monitoring and evaluation frameworks should inform these discussions.

Date of Next Meetings

The dates of upcoming meetings were agreed as follows:
- Tuesday, 26 April 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 17 May 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 14 June 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 16 August 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 13 September 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 25 October 2016 at 9.30am
- Tuesday, 15 November 2016 at 2.00pm
- Tuesday, 13 December 2016 at 9.30am