

**Governance and Accountability Framework
and
Financial Memorandum
for
The Office of the Mental Health Champion for
Northern Ireland**

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Introduction

1. The Governance and Accountability Framework

- 1.1 This document sets out the way in which the Office of the Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland (MHC, the Champion) and the Department of Health (the Department) will work together to ensure effective governance arrangements are in place and that independence is fulfilled.
- 1.2 The document sets out the framework within which the MHC will operate, in particular:
 - The MHC's overall purpose in relation to mental health;
 - The role and objectives of the MHC;
 - The conditions under which public funds are paid to the MHC; and
 - How the MHC is to be held to account for the use of these public funds.
- 1.3 The associated Financial Memorandum sets out certain aspects of the financial provisions which the MHC shall observe. The Framework and Financial Memorandum do not convey any legal powers or responsibilities.
- 1.4 The effectiveness of the Governance and Accountability Framework and Financial Memorandum will be reviewed each year by the MHC and the Department in order to assess whether it is operating as intended and to identify any emerging issues/opportunities for enhancement. The document itself will be reviewed formally at least once every three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose and up-to-date in terms of current governance frameworks. The formal review will be proportionate to the MHC's overall responsibilities.

Establishment and Purpose

2. Purpose and Objectives

2.1 In April 2020, the Minister of Health secured cross-departmental support to establish the role of a MHC. On 8 September 2021, a permanent MHC for Northern Ireland was appointed.

2.2 The overall purpose of the MHC is to:

- Further the mental health agenda across Northern Ireland;
- Promote emotional health and wellbeing;
- Access evidence-based support and services; and
- Promote recovery.

2.3 To deliver against this purpose, the MHC will:

- (a) Take part in the public debate around psychological wellbeing, mental health and suicide and will champion these issues to improve the experience of people experiencing mental ill health or who have experience of mental ill health;
- (b) Have a person-centred focus, understand the experience of people with lived experience and be a voice for those otherwise voiceless;
- (c) Take part in policy development across the whole of Government in areas around psychological wellbeing, mental health and suicide. The Champion will also challenge decisions where it is appropriate to do so; and
- (d) Engage with people with lived experience and others, acting as a focal point for the discussion around wellbeing, mental health and suicide.

2.4 The role of the MHC is to:

- (a) Help to integrate a mental health friendly ethos across all policies and services developed and delivered by the NI Executive. This includes enhancing the level of collaborative working across Government in relation to psychological wellbeing, mental health, suicide and recovery. The role is also to be a voice for people with lived experience; those who are often not heard in the public debate.
- (b) Champion and enhance mental health in all aspects of public life. This includes proactively seeking to increase the visibility of the role across Government departments in this work.

2.5 Key objectives of the MHC are:

- (a) To participate in the public debate around mental resilience, suicide, mental health and recovery.
- (b) To participate in policy development across Government, helping Departments and officials, when developing policies, to be cognisant of mental health related factors that can help to promote psychological wellbeing, resilience and good mental health.
- (c) To promote mental health across all society.
- (d) To encourage Government to think about mental wellbeing, resilience, mental health and recovery and to help integrate the ideas of mental resilience and mental health in all public policy making.
- (e) To create a focal point for mental wellbeing and mental health discussions and to speak out for those who have lived experience.

- (f) To challenge decisions where mental wellbeing, suicide prevention, good mental health and recovery are not considered, and where such consideration would be beneficial for society as a whole.
- (g) To build an evidence base to aid decision making and influence policy, by conducting or procuring bespoke regional research on issues relevant to mental health policy.

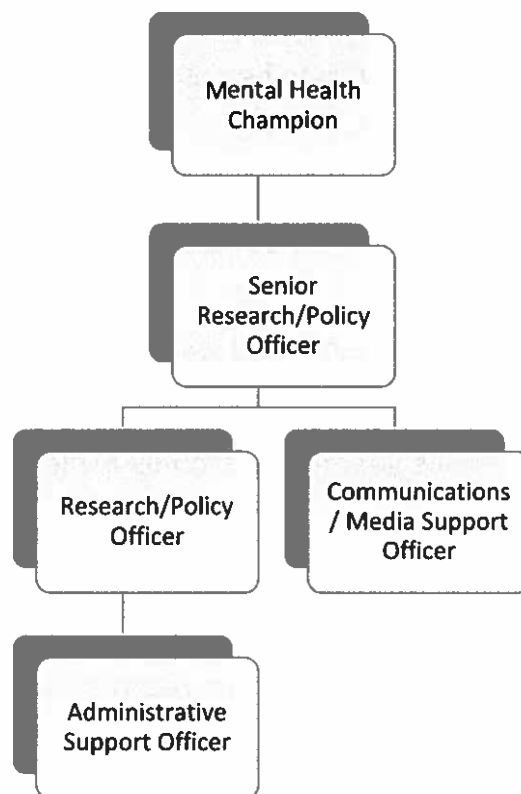
Governance Arrangements

3. Organisational Status and Staff Management

3.1 The MHC is provided with administrative support by the Department and has an established structure which incorporates risk management and internal control arrangements. An account of these arrangements is included in the MHC's Annual Report.

3.2 Staff within the MHC's office may be seconded from the NICS and, if so, are subject to the same terms, conditions and requirements that apply to other NICS staff.

3.3 The organisational structure of the MHC's office is as follows:



- 3.4 The MHC will account for their operational performance by way of providing an Annual Report to the Minister of Health and the NI Executive, outlining the outcomes achieved in the previous year against the Annual Business Plan.
- 3.5 As the MHC is operating on a secondment basis, the Senior Policy and Research Officer comes under the HR hierarchy of the Director of Mental Health in the Department. This arrangement is to facilitate the annual performance review process and is not related to business area or work programme assessment and evaluation. The MHC will provide input in respect of performance against agreed objectives. All other staff within the MHC's office will fall under the hierarchy of the Senior Policy and Research Officer.

4. Planning and Reporting

- 4.1 The MHC will prepare an Annual Business Plan, which will reflect their role and which will set out key objectives to be delivered for the financial year ahead.
- 4.2 The Annual Business Plan will be submitted to the Department no later than the start of the financial year to which it relates.
- 4.3 The MHC will also produce an Annual Report for the Minister of Health and the Executive within three months of the end of the reporting year, which will outline their work in the previous year and outcomes achieved against the Annual Business Plan.
- 4.4 Outcomes on which the MHC is expected to report include:
- Presence in the public arena with public awareness of the MHC and the role;
 - Enhanced visibility across Government: presence across the public sector arena with awareness of the MHC and the role;
 - Influence in decision making and interaction with policy makers;
 - A voice for those normally voiceless across the public sector;
 - Advocate for awareness of psychological wellbeing, mental health and suicide in the public and independent sector.

- The promotion of increased mental resilience across the population of Northern Ireland; and
- Contribution to an improvement in mental health services.

4.5 These outcomes are considered to be key performance indicators for the role. This list is not exhaustive, but is an indication of key work areas.

Responsibilities and Accountability

5. The Minister of Health

- 5.1 It is the role of the Minister of Health to set the financial framework, including appointments and arrangements for the funding of the MHC.

6. Principal Accounting Officer of the Department

- 6.1 The Permanent Secretary, as Principal Accounting Officer of the Department, is accountable for issuing funding to the MHC and has designated the Senior Policy and Research Officer within the Office of the MHC as Senior Accountable Officer for the expenditure incurred by the MHC's office. Chapter 3 of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI) [\[link\]](#) sets out the responsibilities of Accounting Officers.
- 6.2 The Principal Accounting Officer may withdraw the Senior Accountable Officer designation if they conclude that the postholder is no longer fit to carry out the responsibilities of the role or that it is otherwise in the public interest that the appointment be withdrawn.
- 6.3 The Principal Accounting Officer must be informed in the event that the MHC is contemplating a course of action that would infringe upon the requirement for financial propriety, regularity, prudent and economical administration, efficiency or effectiveness.
- ### 7. The Departmental Liaison Unit
- 7.1 Within the Department, support services for the MHC's office are provided through the Departmental Liaison Unit within the Mental Capacity Act branch.
- 7.2 The Departmental Liaison Unit is the primary point of contact for the MHC's office in dealing with the Department and shall carry out its duties under the management of a lead senior official (Head of Branch), who shall be responsible for overseeing the activities of the MHC whilst supporting the interface between the office, Department, NI Executive and Assembly.

7.3 The Departmental Liaison Unit shall:

- Have oversight of the MHC's financial and administrative activities on a continuing basis through information sharing;
- Address, in a timely manner, any significant problems arising with the MHC's office, whether financial or otherwise, making such interventions as necessary;
- Advise and update Ministers on the undertakings of the MHC, as requested; and
- Carry out a review of identified risks from the MHC's office activities on an annual basis.

8. The Mental Health Champion

- 8.1 The MHC is appointed by the Minister of Health and will work within the strategic scope of their role as detailed in the Terms of Reference and any subsequent amendments approved by the Northern Ireland Executive.
- 8.2 The MHC operates at "arm's length" from the Department and exercises their role in an independent manner, free from direction by the Department. It is for the MHC to determine their own priorities and what activities to undertake to meet their objectives. They are also free to work directly with any government department or organisation in pursuit of delivering their objectives.
- 8.3 The MHC is accountable to the Minister of Health and the NI Executive for the expenditure incurred by their office and will follow and utilise NICS governance processes and systems for the purposes of IT, finance, HR, risk management, procurement and estates.

9. The Mental Health Champion Senior Accountable Officer

- 9.1 The Senior Policy and Research Officer in the MHC's office has been designated by the Principal Accounting Officer as Senior Accountable Officer for the resources allocated to the office. The Senior Accountable Officer will follow the requirements of Accounting Officers as set out in Chapter 3 of Managing Public Money NI and their appointment letter. As Senior Accountable Officer, the Senior Policy and Research Officer is accountable for

safeguarding the public funds for which they have charge; for ensuring propriety, regularity, value for money in the handling of those public funds, required to deliver the objectives of the MHC.

- 9.2 In line with DoF requirements, the Senior Accountable Officer will provide a periodic declaration of fitness to act in this role to the Principal Accounting Officer.

Role of the Department

10. Working with the Mental Health Champion

10.1 Arrangements between the Department and the MHC will be open, honest, constructive, and based on trust. There is a mutual understanding of the MHC's remit and a shared understanding of risks.

10.2 The Department will ensure that the MHC has the autonomy to deliver their objectives effectively, fully recognising their operational independence.

10.3 There will be two formal meetings between the Departmental Liaison Unit and the MHC per annum. These meetings will primarily focus on the governance of public resources, including but not limited to: finance, HR, risk management, information management, IT, procurement and estates, and will follow the engagement plan template at Annex 4. Other ad hoc meetings may be convened by either party.

11. Attendance at Public Accounts Committee

11.1 The Senior Accountable Officer may be required to accompany the Principal Accounting Officer of the Department at the Public Accounts Committee (as laid out in their appointment letter) to give evidence on the discharge of the Principal Accounting Officer's responsibilities.

Financial Memorandum

12. Introduction

12.1 This Financial Memorandum sets out the financial relationship between the Department, through the Departmental Liaison Unit, and the MHC.

12.2 The MHC is funded by the NI Executive to cover staffing costs, office overheads and other programme expenditure. Expenditure within the MHC's office falls within the Department's Accounting Boundary and its financial performance is consolidated in the resource accounts.

13. Budgets and Approvals

13.1 Once the MHC's budget has been approved by the NI Executive, the Department shall provide the MHC's office with a formal statement of the budget which has been allocated for implementation of its Annual Business Plan. The MHC shall have authority to incur expenditure approved within the budget in line with the Department's delegated authorities and expenditure limits.

13.2 Inclusion of any planned and approved expenditure shall not however remove the need to seek formal approval where proposed expenditure is outside the standard delegated limits; or, is for areas not previously agreed. Nor does it negate the need to follow general accounting rules, public procurement principles and due processes laid out in guidance contained in [Managing Public Money NI](#) and guidance on [Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation](#).

13.3 The MHC's expenditure forms part of the Department's Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit. The MHC's office will therefore bid for additional resources or offer reduced requirements through the Monitoring Rounds process.

13.4 The Senior Accountable Officer has a responsibility to provide information to inform the preparation of inputs to the estimates, monitoring and in-year bidding processes. They shall monitor expenditure against the budget profile and will provide monthly returns to the Departmental Liaison Unit and also ensure that

timely forecasts are provided on financial overspends or underspends and that corrective action is taken.

- 13.5 The Senior Accountable Officer must ensure that all expenditure is reasonable and proper, and is ultimately accountable to the Principal Accounting Officer for expenditure incurred by the office.

Signatories

The Mental Health Champion and the Department of Health agree to work in line with the arrangements set out in this Agreement.



Signed: **Siobhan O'Neill**

The Mental Health Champion

Date 13 June 2022



Signed: **Peter Cash**

Senior Accountable Officer

Date 13 June 2022



Signed: **Debbie Sharpe**

Lead Senior Official, Department of Health

Date 7 June 2022

Annex 1 – Delegations

Delegated authorities

The Mental Health Champion exercises their role in an independent manner, free from direction by the Department. However, in respect of certain circumstances, this delegated authority is underpinned by departmental approval.

The Mental Health Champion and/or the Senior Accountable Officer shall obtain the Department's prior written approval before:

- Entering into any undertaking to incur any expenditure that falls outside the delegations or which is not provided for in the annual budget;
- Incurring expenditure for any purpose that is or might be considered novel or contentious, or which has or could have significant future cost implications;
- Making any significant change in the scale of operation or funding of any initiative or particular scheme previously approved by the Department;
- Making any change of policy or practice which has wider financial implications that might prove repercussive or which might significantly affect the future level of resources required; or
- Carrying out policies that go against the principles, rules, guidance and advice in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Annex 2 – Concerns/Complaints in respect of the Mental Health Champion

In line with the arrangements in this document, the approach to concerns/complaints raised in respect of the Mental Health Champion should be transparent and collaborative. The principle of early and open engagement is important, with the Department to be made aware of any concerns/complaints as soon as practicable.

While the Mental Health Champion is an office holder rather than an employee, an employee may utilise Department of Health's grievance procedure to raise a complaint against the Mental Health Champion. The employee raising the grievance should expect this to be handled in line with Department of Health's HR procedures.

Concerns/complaints can also be raised through:

1. Raising concerns/whistleblowing arrangements;
2. Complaints processes; or
3. Directly with Mental Health Champion's office or the Department.

Where a concern/complaint is received in respect of the Mental Health Champion, the Department (Departmental Liaison Unit) should be notified at the earliest opportunity in order for the Department to determine the approach to handling the complaint/concern.

Contacts:

1. **Departmental Liaison Unit, DoH**
2. **Mental Health Champion Office** - mentalhealthchampion@nigov.net

Annex 3 – Applicable Guidance

The following guidance is applicable to Office of the Mental Health Champion

Guidance issued by the Department of Finance

- Managing Public Money NI
- Accounting Officer Handbook – HMT Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money
- Better Business Cases NI guidance (or the superseded NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation for projects already initiated under that guidance)
- Dear Accounting Officer Letters
- Guidance for preparation and publication of annual report and accounts
- Procurement Guidance

Other Guidance and Best Practice

- Specific guidance issued by the Department
- Recommendations made by the NI Audit Office/NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee
- NIAO Good Practice Guides
- Guidance issued by the Executive's Asset Management Unit

Annex 4 – Draft Engagement Plan

The template provided outlines the key areas of engagement between the Department of Health (the Department) and the Mental Health Champion (MHC). The template is not intended to be prescriptive and should be completed collaboratively, and agreed between the Department and the MHC.

Engagement Plan 2022/23		
Strategic Planning		
Activity	Date	Department/ MHC Official
Submission of the Annual Business Plan	1 st April 2022	Peter Cash
Submission of the Annual Report (21/22)	30 th June 2022	Peter Cash
Assurances		
<i>Add details of the timetable for submission of key assurance sources and any other assurance related activity</i>		
Activity	Date	Department/ MHC Official
Risk management/ assurance arrangements	1 st April 2022	Peter Cash /
Assurance Statement	1 st April 2022	Peter Cash
Engagement on NIAO reports	As and when required	Peter Cash
Internal Audit Plans and Opinions	As and when required	Peter Cash
Budget Management		
<i>Add details of the information and returns to be provided.</i>		
Activity	Date	Department/ MHC Official
Engagement on budget requirements and Forecast Expenditure for the Financial Year	End of April	Peter Cash
Monthly Financial Management Returns	As required	MCAU / MHC
Monthly Cash Forecast	As required	MHC

Monitoring Round Returns	As required	MCAU / MHC
Provisional Outturn	As required	MCAU / MHC
Final Outturn	As required	MCAU / MHC
Other		
Activity	Submission Date	Department/ MHC Official
Fitness to Act as Senior Accountable Officer	Annual request from the Principal Accounting Officer	Peter Cash / Peter May (Perm Sec)
Fraud Reporting	Immediate reporting of all frauds (proven or suspected including attempted fraud)	Department will report frauds immediately to DoF and C&AG.
Fraud Reporting	Annual fraud return commissioned by DoF on fraud and theft suffered	Department will seek input from MHC - annually
Whistleblowing cases/ Speaking Up/Raising Concerns	as and when required	Department will seek input from MHC - annually
Review of the Governance and Accountability Framework and Financial Memorandum		
Activity	Date	Department/ MHC Official
Light touch review of the Governance arrangements	Schedule following the end of the Financial Year – 1 st meeting 29 th July 2022.	Peter Cash /
Formal review of the Governance arrangements	To be conducted once every three years – indicative timescale of January 2025.	DoH / MHC Office