Minutes
Meeting: 109th Council Meeting of the Patient and Client Council
Date and Time: Tuesday 3 March 2026

Venue/Online: via Microsoft Teams

10am-1pm

Council Members:
Mr Stephen Matthews
Mr Alan Hanna (Chair)
Ms Briege Arthurs
Mr Paddy Farry
Mr Tom Irvine
Ms Emma O'Neill
Mr Gary McMichael
Dr Julie Aiken
Ms Paula Bradley
Ms Rhoda Walker
Mr Tom Sullivan
Mr Philip Anderson
Ms Charlene Brooks
Ms Sarah Duffy
Ms Gael Gildernew

In attendance:
Ms Meadhbha Monaghan, Chief Executive
Ms Una McKernan, Head of Operations
Mr Peter Hutchinson, Senior Policy, Impact and Influence Manager
Ms Katherine McElroy, Principal Practitioner
Ms Briege McAlister, Business Support Administrator
Ms Ursula Murray, Service Manager (Agenda Item 6)

Apologies:
Ms Ruth Sutherland (Chair)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the absence of R Sutherland, A Hanna chaired the meeting and welcomed all to the meeting and thanked members for attending. A Hanna welcomed observer, Martin McCrory from PHA to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Members noted that the new Information Management System is in testing and expected to go live by 1 April 2026.

Concerns were raised regarding Encompass rollout challenges, particularly for GP practices. It was discussed that if Council are seeking assurance for the public and the rest of the system in terms of digital it might be helpful to invite Paul Rice, the Chief Digital Information Officer to Council for one of our next meetings and perhaps give an overview in general of his vision and plans, not just in terms of digital progression, but also some of the challenges arising which would give Council space and time to have a conversation with him. Council agreed it would be helpful to hear directly from the Chief Digital Information Officer.

Action – Invite Paul Rice to a Council Meeting

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

4. CHAIR'S UPDATE

A Hanna welcomed the new members on behalf of R Sutherland. Members had the opportunity to meet the new members at the workshop in January and the induction session which was held last week which was very useful and he thanked members that participated.

5. CEO UPDATE

Council received and noted a comprehensive update on strategic engagement, policy influence, legislative scrutiny, People as Partners activity, and preparation for publication of the Muckamore Inquiry Report.

Council congratulated the Chief Executive on her appointment to Sciana's Health Leaders Network.

P Farry asked if the PCC would get a preview or a chance to comment on the Muckamore Inquiry Report or what is the protocol prior to publication and is mindful that there is only one PCC Council meeting between now and June.

M Monaghan noted that she anticipates a short council meeting before the release of the report if required. The Chair of the Inquiry released a statement that gave some explanation for him intending to delay the publication of the report until June. M Monaghan will circulate the statement to Council Members after today's meeting. From the PCC's perspective, PCC are planning ahead for when the report is published and working with Priyesh Patel (Solicitor) and others to prepare for that.

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Action – Circulate statement to Council members

G Gildernew thanked members for the welcome to the PCC, this is her first meeting. G Gildernew informed the meeting that she sits on the Southern AIPB and they have been told to carry on as normal and there's been no real talk as yet about the neighbourhood model and how it will relate to the AIPBs.

6. CONNECTION TO PURPOSE – Support in the Community Evaluation

Council received a presentation on the Support in the Community pilot evaluation. The programme exceeded all targets, recorded 100% satisfaction, won Team of the Year at the PENNA Awards 2025, and will transition into a PCC mainstream service.

M Monaghan commended the work of the team as it has been quite an intentional shift over the last five years and a culmination of five years of work around PCC's advocacy complaint service and where we wanted to be with our advocacy services in the future.

7. Impact and Influence

Council received and noted updates on People as Partners, The Big Discussion, the Adult Protection Bill, GP access, Neighbourhood Models, and Departmental Consultations.

P Hutchinson gave a presentation and updated on Policy and Public Affairs work over the last quarter including People to Partners which was launched at NICON in October. The PCC have been framing People to Partners as a cultural shift that is required across the HSC. It is encouraging that some of the actions of leaders across the HSC have really bought into that concept, with the framing of the new Planning Guidance and Neighbourhood under this concept being notable examples.

P Hutchinson also outlined other ongoing work involving the Neighbourhood Model, Sensible Care and This is Our Health and how these all can be shaped and framed within a Peoples to Partners approach.

P Hutchison provided an update on the work that has been done on The Big Discussion – What the Public Think – how the public experiences winter pressures and HSC in general. A lucid talk poll was carried out and the report has been shared with all Trust Chief Executives and was presented to the leadership group within the Department of Health.

P Hutchinson gave an update on the Public Accounts Committee report on the GP access. The PCC provided evidence to the Public Accounts Committee in February of 2025 and the committee reported in December. The committee

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made a number of recommendations. The PCC's evidence focused on the importance of engaging with the public in a strategic, systemic way, ensuring regionality in learning and that best practice can be shared across the GPs and GP federations. P Hutchinson and M Monaghan are meeting with the Chair of the Royal College of GPs on an exercise they are undertaking in terms of developing a report on the future of GP services.

Peter Hutchinson informed the meeting that the PCC responded to three consultations during the last period

- PHA Partnership and Engagement Strategy
- Learning Disability Service Model Consultation
- Draft Revised Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 Codes of Practice

8. Policy and Influence Committee Proposal and Terms of Reference Paper 3 and Paper 4

Council approved the formal establishment of a Policy and Influence Committee. Terms of Reference will be developed and brought back to Council for approval.

P Bradley chairs the policy and influence sub group and informed the meeting that going forward they would like to establish a forward work program and focus their attention on what they can do as a policy and influence group to help PCC on its journey and its objectives and would hope that it will not long before they will have a team of people that are able to go out
and sell the PCC message and there to advocate on behalf of PCC.

Action – dates of Committee to agreed and circulated to committee members

9. BUSINESS SUPPORT AND GOVERNANCE

U McKernan gave a verbal financial update, highlighting ongoing financial pressures and forward financial risk planning.

M Monaghan noted the impacts and risk associated with resourcing and the current financial landscape will be reflected on our Corporate Risk Register. The point is well made in terms of the ongoing impact because whilst PCC have been very circumspect in the funding for inquiry related issues, it has no doubt had an impact on our ability to influence other areas of policy development. The financial position is incredibly challenging with no money for any new posts. However PCC are confident that the organisation will get a degree of funding in relation to support for Inquiry-related representation, as a result of the Business Case submitted for the incoming financial year. PCC are currently waiting formal notification of outcome.

10. RISK

U McKernan informed the meeting that the risk register report is presented to each Council meeting, and this report was discussed in detail at the recent Council workshop on risk in February. As agreed then the risk register will be updated based on this workshop and brought to the ARAC in May.

11. ARAC COMMITTEE

P Farry updated all members in relation to ARAC Committee.

A Hanna – Council approved the ARAC papers.

Action - Minutes from October meeting and the four papers were approved.

12. BUSINESS COMMITTEE

A Hanna gave an update on the Business Committee. There were 13 papers at the last meeting which was held on the 27 January 2026 and presenting for approval the minutes of the 28 October, the Draft Operational Plan, Staff Privacy Notice and the Travel Subsistence Policy.

Action - Minutes from October meeting and the three papers were approved.

13. AOB

Concerns were raised regarding the impact of funding losses on third sector employability services as a result of changes to the UK Growth Fund. There was significant discussion amongst Council members about the impact this would have for the public and in particular, for vulnerable individuals who relied on these services. It was further recognised that these changes will have a detrimental impact on HSC services which are already under significant pressure. Council agreed this required further consideration on action that should be taken by Council to explore the impact with the DoH on behalf of the public. It was agreed the CEO would discuss with Chair and update Council on next steps.

Action – CEO to speak with Chair on proposed next steps and update Council

14. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council Worksop will take place on Wednesday 15 April 2026 in person.
Next Council meeting will take place on Wednesday 13 May 2026 on Teams.

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15. Close

A Hanna thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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