

Raising a Concern

Designated Officers' Forum

Minutes

Thursday 06th April 2023 ~ Clare House

In attendance: David Hughes (DoF ~ Chair), Jayne Brady (HoCS, by video link), Ronan Murtagh, Andy McCaw, George Platt (TEO), Declan McCarney (DAERA), Janine Fullerton (DoH), Alan Russell (DfE), Donal Moran (DfI), Andrea Orr (DfC), Julie Sewell (DoF), David Lennox (DoJ), Carolyn Shaw (DE), Tracey McCavigan (DoF)

Apologies: Stewart Barnes (DoF); Stuart Stevenson (DoF)

Secretariat: Gail Wilson Downey

1. The Chair opened the meeting and introductions were made. No conflicts of interest were declared. Welcoming remarks were made by Jayne, highlighting the importance of the work of the Forum within the renewal and transformation journey.
2. Terms of Reference were discussed. Suggested additions were agreed:-
 - To sponsor the establishment of a group for Departmental Operational Teams
 - To inform the development of the Policy Framework to reflect the cross-over and relationship with related policies such as the NICS Code of Ethics
 - To commit to review the Terms of Reference annually.

There was agreement that the Forum would operate at a strategic level to ensure a consistent approach to compliance with the Policy Framework, and to provide assurance to the NICS Board in respect of the general landscape. The implementation of the Framework by departments would be reviewed in Q3 by Internal Audit and reported to the NICS Board in Q4.

3. Training needs were discussed, and it was agreed that a comprehensive and robust approach was necessary. The Chair undertook to develop a plan for DOs which would include input from Protect, DSO, HR, NIAO and Fraud colleagues in the first instance, and thereafter operational teams should avail of relevant training. It was also agreed that DOs should commit to an annual CPD process to keep skills and knowledge current.
4. The need for NICS wide training on Raising a Concern and on the importance of the Code of Ethics was agreed as imperative to enabling the work of the Forum.
5. Date of the next meeting to be determined, agreed for mid-May.