

**Minutes of the RCoA Northern Irish Board meeting**  
**Wednesday 12 April 2023**  
**In Person Meeting**

**Present:**

Dr Will Donaldson	NIB Chair, Northern Trust Representative
Dr Russell Perkins	RCoA Vice President
Mr Jono Brunn	RCoA CEO
Susan Rees	RCoA Committee Secretariat
Dr Brendan Haughey	Trainee representative
Lianne Smith	RCoA Policy & Public Affairs Officer
Dr Neal Beckett	Co-opt Member, Association of Anaesthetists
Dr Connor Farrell	Regional Advisor Pain

**1. Apologies and declaration of interest**

Dr Killian McCourt	Elected Consultant Member, Belfast Trust Representative
Dr Raymond McKee	Regional Advisor for ICM
Dr David Lee	Training Programme Director
Dr Mary Molloy	Head of School of Anaesthesia
Professor George Shorten	Co-opt Member, President, College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland
Dr David Selwyn	Director CPOC
Dr Gregory Warren	CPOC Fellow
Dr Richard Laird	Regional Adviser Anaesthesia
Dr Esther Davies	Regional Advisor ICM
Dr Cheryl Turkington	Elected Consultant member, Western Trust representative
Mark McCaughy	Trainee Representative

**2. Introduction and Welcome**

Dr Will Donaldson welcomed those in attendance including the RCoA Vice President Russell Perkins and Jono Brunn, the CEO of the RCoA, alongside Lianne Smith, Policy and Public Affairs Officer and Susan Rees, President's Office Coordinator at the RCoA who will support the Board meeting administration.

Dr Will Donaldson updated the group that Dr Cheryl Turkington has now resigned from the Board and he has emailed her to thank her for her commitment to the Board.

Apologies were received and WD thanked everyone from the London office who have attended.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting on Tuesday 11 October 2022**

The Board noted that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 October were approved as a true and accurate record. Dr Will Donaldson confirmed the following:

- Dr Donaldson asked if it would be possible for a trainee from Northern Ireland to apply to sit on Council, however he noted that it would be difficult as there were smaller regions in the country therefore, they would receive a smaller number of votes. This was noted it has been difficult to implement due to several factors.

Action closed.

- Professor George Shorten raised the value of the UK wide questionnaires, in particular the running of cultural diagnostics across large organisations such as the NHS. He asked if this had been considered in terms of the design of the questionnaires as there were several elements in high functioning organisations such as the NHS which could be difficult to measure, such as the recent pandemic, stress, wellness and burnout in the workplace. Professor Shorten said that it would be helpful to try and capture this within the surveys that had been designed. LS confirmed that they had tried to capture the areas outlined in the College survey which looked at the broader membership. She also said that it would be useful to look at the way that culture diagnostics had changed more broadly following the COVID-19 pandemic through the College questionnaire and said that members could contact her if they had any

further suggestions / comments for surveys in the future. Professor George Shorten said that he would send her some examples.

- Previous action: The Board to link in with Lianne Smith if they had any suggestions for survey content in the future. Professor George Shorten to send some examples to Lianne Smith but the College was unable to use these. **Action closed.**
- Dr Will Donaldson raised the representation of Anaesthetic Associates in Northern Ireland and confirmed that he had received an e-mail from Jenny Redmore asking him to ask the Board for a representative for the Faculty of Anaesthesia Associates Founding Board. Dr Will Donaldson said that he would circulate the information to the Board to request nominations for a representative for the faculty of Anaesthesia Associates founding Board as the first meeting would be taking place on 15th December.
- Previous Action: Dr Will Donaldson to circulate the information to the Board to requesting nominations for a representative for the faculty of Anaesthesia Associates Founding Board as the first meeting would be taking place on 15th December. Action closed as WD represents the Board.
- Previous Action: Dr Russell Perkins to link in with the College and ask if there was an opportunity to hold a flagship meeting in Northern Ireland to influence key stakeholders.

Dr Perkins updated the Board that the College will be holding their next Strategic Retreat, in April 2024 in Belfast and there is an opportunity to link this with the NI Board in April 2024.

It was acknowledged that the RCoA flagship Annual conference, Anaesthesia 2025 will be held in Belfast. This venue is pending but it will cater for up to 1,000 people. RCoA hope to hold the meeting in the Belfast Titanic hotel and there will be a dinner and opportunity to meet after the conference.

**Action: WD to note that this conference needs to have a perioperative medicine link and the organising committee needs a sub thread here to sit within the meeting.**

- Previous Action: New Health Secretary and new secretary to be invited to next meeting. The Board noted that Dr Will Donaldson had written to both the new Health Secretary and new secretary in April 2022 but had not received a response. It was noted that it would be an opportunity to invite them to the meeting in 2024. **Action ongoing.**
- Previous Action: Dr Will Donaldson to arrange a meeting with Dr Dave Selwyn to discuss the perioperative medicine agenda in Northern Ireland further and to feedback the outcomes of the meeting and the way forward. **Action ongoing.**  
**Update:** WD has now linked with George Shorten and linked to the Irish Perioperative Medicine Society and they are having a dialogue about cross border pieces of work with Claire Barker and Claire Courtfield who which will strengthen initiatives.
- Action: Dr Will Donaldson to publish a College newsletter in 2022, Dr Will Donaldson to highlight perioperative medicine and link in with colleagues and trainees to ask for contributions to the content. Dr Will Donaldson updated that he has linked in with Dr Helgi Johannsson, Dr Mary Molloy and Dr Claire Barker so there will be a newsletter produced moving forward. **Action ongoing for 2023.**
- Action: The Board to look at the COPES process for the College and send any comments to Dr Will Donaldson to feedback to College. **Action closed.**
- Action: Dr Will Donaldson to link in with Dr Mary Molloy in relation to the pool of LAY Representatives that she referred to at the meeting. This committee is presently known as the Patient Voices committee and the Chair is Pauline Elliott. **Action ongoing for 2023**  
**Further Action: WD could check with the Chair of ACSA on this committee business.**

#### **4. President's Business**

The Board noted that the full report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the following was highlighted by Vice President, Dr Russell Perkins:

##### **Patient Safety**

- The Unrecognised Oesophageal Intubation short life working party has formally closed; it was reported to the coroner and the family all actions that have been taken. Any outstanding actions from the working party are being monitored by the Safe Anaesthesia Liaison Group (SALG). The RCoA and the Association of Anaesthetists have agreed a renewal of the MoU, which covers the funding and governance arrangements for SALG.
- The NAP7 case review process is now complete and report writing is ongoing. Survey data from the NAP7 Activity Survey was published in Anaesthesia on 2 March 2023.
- NAP7, data collection and analysis has been undertaken and the details cannot be disclosed at this point due to confidentiality.

#### **National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA)**

- Having received sign off from NHS England, the NELA team published the Year 8 report on the 9 February 2023, which is now available. Key findings from the audit include:
  - An increasing number of CT scans for laparotomy patients are reported using outsourced radiology expertise.
  - One in five high-risk patients did not receive postoperative care in a critical care unit.
  - There continues to be delays with the linkage process with NHS Digital and this data will be published later in the year once linkage has taken place.
  - NELA year 9 data collection finishes on 31 March, with the updated year 10 dataset starting on 1 April 2023.
- The Patient information group at the RCoA have produced interesting materials and produced a Beano magazine for patients. Which is a risk infographic for paediatric anaesthesia about the necessity to discuss the risk of death with all parents following the GMC request. There was a meeting with the ethics committee due to go ahead on the 13 April 2023 which has been postponed due to the Junior Doctors strike.

#### **Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthetic Services (GPAS)**

- The GPAS chapters have been revised and the CQ&R Board are revising the guidelines which include the Safe staffing guidelines, poorly performing anaesthetists and returning to work for anaesthetists. If anyone is interested in this working group, there is a request to contact the CQ&R team directly.
- The State of the Nation report will be published at the end of April which highlights staffing issues across the Devolved Nations.
- **Covid 19 Inquiry-** The RCoA is a core participant in Module 3 with an initial meeting taking place In March 2023 involving the Association of Anaesthetists and the Faculty of Intensive Care (FICM), the College have appointed Barristers to work on this. The inquiry is for the entire UK so it will involve all parties across the Devolved Nations Board of which the College will reach out in the future.
- **Council Elections.** The College has newly elected Dr Chris Taylor and Dr Catherine Bernard as trainee members, with Dr Chris Carey being re-elected. It was noted that Dr Helgi Johannsson has been elected as the President Advisor on environmental issues at the College.
- The RCoA has elected five trustees who are Council members to include: Dr Mike Grocott, Dr Jonathan Thompson, Dr Ros Bacon and Dr Claire Mallinson and Dr Toni Brunning.
- **Education, Training and Examinations (ETE)** - The examinations team have completed their internal and external reviews and held a series of Let's Talk events with examiners to look at all recommendations. The part one oral exam is heavily oversubscribed to include three sittings per day instead of two and there is an allocation exam for this.

## **5. CEO's Business**

Mr Jono Bruun highlighted three areas from the report.

- **Governance** – The College's membership approved at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 1 December 2022 a series of proposals aimed at modernising and correcting its governing documents, the Charter and Ordinances. Members were asked to vote to enhance member powers, improve compliance, increase efficiencies, fix a range of miscellaneous errors that had crept into the drafting of our documents over the years, and to change the composition of the Board of Trustees. All motions were passed, and a decision was made to reduce the size of the Board of Trustees to 12 members: the President, Vice Presidents, Treasurer, three lay trustees and five trustees elected from among elected Council members.
- As part of the ongoing effort to modernise governance at the College, Council and the Board of Trustees have now agreed to empower many co-opted members of Council by giving them a formal vote on matters presented during meetings. This affects those who are elected and represent large cohorts of College members, including the Board Chairs of the devolved nations.
- The Board of Trustees has agreed to include the Chairs of the Devolved nations who can become voting members of council to demonstrate inclusivity.

- The RCoA LLP, Lifelong Learning Platform has been given an additional £400K expenditure for this current financial year for security and functionality upgrades. This will take a while to deliver and there are currently 1.2 million requests that the system must process per year.
- The RCoA identified financial challenges and a structural deficit of £600K every year which needed to be addressed emerging from the Covid 19 pandemic. It was noted that the College is ahead of all targets and aims to halve the deficit by the end of this financial year with finances looking better for the forthcoming year.

## **6. Policy & Public Affairs Update**

The Board noted that a Policy and Public Affairs paper had been circulated and Ms Lianne Smith raised the following:

**State of the Nation Update 2023** - The Policy and Public Affairs team are currently working on the new State of the Nation report which will feature new workforce data collected in 2022 and is planned to be published in May 2023. The data featured in the report will be broken down by UK nations, so Northern Ireland figures will be available on numbers of consultants, SAS doctors and Anaesthesia Associates. The data will also show the scale of workforce gaps.

**Covid 19 Inquiry** - The College submitted a joint application with the Association of Anaesthetists and FICM to be core participants for module 3 of the inquiry and were accepted. Module 3 of the Inquiry investigates the governmental and societal response to Covid-19, as well as dissecting the impact that the pandemic had on healthcare systems, patients and health care workers. This module will also examine healthcare governance, primary care and the impact of NHS backlogs. Core participant status gives us privileged access to documents that will be examined and suggest lines of inquiry. Our organisations are well positioned to contribute to this inquiry as the members played a direct and significant role in matters covered by Module 3, and we represent the doctors and healthcare staff who were at the core of the UK healthcare system's response to the pandemic.

- We have already attended one preliminary hearing of the inquiry on the 28 February 2023, which examined the planned scope of module 3.
- There will be a second preliminary hearing this year – date TBC.
- The main module 3 hearings will start in 2024.

**Upcoming Research: Anaesthesia Associates (AAs)** - The team is also working on research into AAs, given forthcoming GMC regulation, the College's aim is to set up a faculty for AAs, and with Health Education England (HEE) plan to dramatically increase AA training places (120 in 2022/23 cohort). Recent surveys have included: AAs themselves and with Clinical Leads of which data is currently being analysed, with findings and a report being published in 2024.

**Health and care Stakeholder engagement** – The Northern Ireland Health and Care Group was reformed and met on 7 March 2023. These meetings are attended primarily by policy representatives from Royal Medical Colleges, Allied Health Professional bodies and a BMA representative in Northern Ireland. The meetings will now take place every two months, with appointed thematic areas of discussion and they aim to provide an opportunity for policy representatives to discuss current and future policy issues in Northern Ireland's health care sector and potential ways of working together to influence or respond to Government. The next meeting is due on the 7 June 2023 and will centre on the theme of 'Workforce'. If there is an issue you would like raised at a future meeting, please contact: [lsmith@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:lsmith@rcoa.ac.uk)

## **Political Engagement**

RCoA have been accepted as a core participant of the Covid-19 Inquiry following our submission alongside FICM and the Association of Anaesthetists. The preliminary hearing took place on 28<sup>th</sup> February, with a second one taking place later this year.

Ahead of the Budget, the RCoA wrote to Jeremy Hunt to call for additional funding for higher training places and support reforms for NHS pension taxation to help retention in our workforce.

- There have also been meetings with Steve Brine, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, alongside other Medical Royal Colleges, and separately with Will Quince, Minister for Health, and Secondary Care.
- Dr Fiona Donald has also met with Wes Streeting, Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

## **Spring Budget 2023 and RCoA's response:**

Pension reforms announced by the Chancellor on the 15th of March 2023:

- The Annual Allowance will be increased from £40K to £60K.
- Lifetime Allowance will be abolished.
- The adjusted income threshold for the Tapered Annual Allowance will be increased from £240K to £260K
- The minimum amount the Annual Allowance can be tapered to will be increased from £4K to £10K.

The RCoA have welcomed the Government's announcement as the College has advocated for these changes for some time in previous meetings with Government Ministers for Health and the Treasury.

## **7. Chair's Business**

### **COPES Update – The endorsement process for the College**

Devolved Nation Board addendum to "COPES" – the RCoA policy on [Co-Authorship, Partnership, Endorsement and Support](#).

Dr Daphne Varveris has modified this for use for the Devolved Boards which has now been agreed. The Chair of the Board will be the point of contact for all requests. The Board requires at least four weeks to assess guidance and provide a response. We will therefore be unable to meet deadlines of less than four weeks from the time of request.

**Action:** WD needs to put the contact details into the article and re-submit this to the RCoA.

### **Health and Social Care NI (HSC) discussions and press**

It was noted that Professor Mark Taylor has snowballed a movement for all the Boards and there is a steering group.

Dr William Donaldson wrote to MP Chris Heaton-Harris in January 2023 about the problems in Northern Ireland relating to waiting lists and health inequality due to economic issues, a reply was not received for 7 weeks.

**Further action:** WD and the group will send a letter now to Mr Peter May, the permanent Health Secretary and details will be sent to Ms Lianne Smith in the coming weeks.

WD requested for support in the letters to gain publicity on Twitter and in the media with the interests of the RCoA members. It was agreed to discuss workforce and pensions along with other complex concerns.

### **Dennis has an anaesthetic magazine**

Dr Donaldson praised the patient information group, for their material. He has used the Beano and shared with a number of parents of patients being anaesthetised.

### **Newsletter call for themes and articles**

Dr Donaldson called for any items on training and perioperative medicine for the future edition to make contact with him directly.

### **Terms of service and elections to Board**

A timetable for elections has been devised and there are two consultant vacancies for the NI Board. WD is keen to have representation from all the Trusts. The problem of recruiting SAS representation is still an issue, and this needs attention.

**Action:** JB to discuss the SAS recruitment further with relevant teams.

## **8. Regional Advisor for Anaesthetics**

Dr Laird provided the following update to note that anaesthetic departments throughout the province continue to experience heavy workloads and challenging working conditions. Thanks were given to all the anaesthetic trainees and trainers for their hard work and dedication during the last six months.

### **Appointments**

He welcomed Dr Claire Barker's appointment to the post of Training Program Director and wished her good luck in the future. The following were welcomed to the College Tutor's in Northern Ireland.

Dr Julie O'Neill who will take up the role in Craigavon Hospital (Southern Trust), Dr James Andrew Reid in the Royal Victoria Hospital (Belfast Trust) and Dr Rebecca Barr in Altnagelvin Hospital (Western Trust).

Dr Laird gave special thanks to Dr Cheryl Turkington and Dr Tim Bennett, who have come to the end of their posts as College Tutors in Altnagelvin Hospital and Craigavon Hospital respectively.

### **Workforce**

There are currently 15 trainees on maternity leave. Many of these trainees are due to return to work between February to July 2023 after taking their accrued leave. There are currently three trainees on long term sick leave. There is only one planned OOPE/T ongoing. This will end on 25th August 2023 when the trainee returns from a research post. It was noted that 8 trainees will complete their CCT in August 2023.

### **Consultant Job Approvals**

Here is a list of consultant posts approved in the last six months.

1. AAC 2433.ni Consultant in Anaesthesia and ICM in the Southern Trust (Craigavon Hospital) (November 2022)
2. AAC 2464.ni Consultant in Anaesthesia and ICM in the Belfast Trust (Belfast City Hospital) (January 2023)
3. AAC 2466.ni Consultant Anaesthetist in the Western Trust (South West Acute Hospital) (January 2023)
4. AAC 2484.ni a-b Consultant Anaesthetist (2 posts) in the Southern Trust (Craigavon and Daisy Hill Hospital) (January 2023)
5. AAC 2511.ni Consultant Anaesthetist South Eastern Trust (Ulster Hospital) (February 2023)
6. AAC 2517.ni a-b Consultant Anaesthetists (2 posts) in the Belfast Trust (Royal Victoria and Belfast city Hospitals) (March 2023)
7. AAC 2564.ni a Consultant Obstetric Anaesthetist in the Northern Trust (Antrim Hospital) (March 2023)
8. AAC 2567.ni Consultant Anaesthetist in the Northern Trust (Causeway Hospital) (March 2023)

### **Recruitment**

ST4 recruitment was undertaken in February 2023, the virtual process ran smoothly with only minor technical issues. CT1 interviews were held in March 2023, these interviews were carried out virtually with the interviewers based in NIMDTA. This process also ran smoothly with no major technical issues. There was generally good feedback, however there was discontent with the Multi-Specialty Recruitment Assessment (MSRA).

### **Exam results**

Examination results continue to be encouraging. There is a request to recruit more College examiners from Northern Ireland.

### **Courses and Meetings**

The Faculty Training Day was held on Thursday 13 October 2022. This was an opportunity to meet education and clinical supervisors from around the province. The day included an update on the anaesthetic and Intensive Care Medicine (ICM) curriculums, the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLP), LTFT, mentoring and trainee support. A further Anaesthesia 2021 Curriculum Update was held on Thursday 23 February 2023 for trainees.

The Primary and Final FRCA courses have continued to run successfully. Thanks, has been conveyed to the Clinical Tutors in organising these. The CT1 introductory course ran successfully at the beginning of September.

Supporting Professional Activities (SPA) time is currently available for senior trainees to support professional development.

Amongst the other local meetings, the NIStar transfer course continues to run, led by Dr Andrew Topping and the NIOAN (Northern Ireland Obstetric Anaesthetic Network). A study day will be held on 21 April 2023. This meeting will be providing face to face and virtual obstetric anaesthetic training.

There are plans to run a course for trainees approaching CCT, covering consultant interviews, CV building and wellbeing as a consultant.

## **ARCP panels**

The ARCP panels are planned for late June 2023.

## **New Curriculum**

Only a few ST6 and ST7s remain on the old curriculum. All other trainees have been moved to the new curriculum.

## **9. Regional Advisor for Intensive Care Medicine**

Dr Esther Davis sent apologies but provided an update to the Board, which was circulated ahead of the meeting, to note:

### **Training**

There are currently 25 training in ICM in NI: 15 dual anaesthesia/ICM (including one OOP), 6 dual EM/ICM (one of whom is anticipated to CCT in May 2023), 2 dual AIM/ICM, 1 dual respiratory/ICM, 1 single ICM.

### **Recruitment**

ST3 Recruitment for August 2023 is underway. Shortlisting (using portfolio verification) was carried out in January and online interviews were held at the end of March. The interview format is now more closely replicating the interview centre format with applicants rotating through three stations and meeting six different interviewers. Out of almost 400 applicants, 312 were offered interviews for 147-168 posts across the UK. We have initially offered three posts in NI, however that is likely to be increased to five (replacing five anticipated CCTs by Feb 2024). NI faculty have been involved with both shortlisting and interviewing. We do not have information on the number of applicants for NI deanery.

### **Exam**

The most recent FFICM OSCE-SOE was held at the end of March. There were eight local candidates and results are expected in the next few weeks. The next written exam will be held in June. The independent review of RCoA examinations has been published in February. The report covers four separate exams and not all recommendations apply to the current FFICM, but the faculty will consider these and work with the newly established Examinations Development and Assurance Group (EDAG) to implement change and continue to improve. In relation to October 2021 FFICM OSCE, the report agreed that no errors had been identified to account for this and the decision to allow the results to stand was the best decision at the time.

### **Education Programme**

Regional seminars have been held mostly in person or hybrid format this year and feedback from trainees continues to be very positive. The other part of the educational programme is the exam prep course with practice OSCE-SOE. This is held prior to every exam sitting for local candidates as needed. The organisers, Dr Black and Dr Headley, are to be commended for providing this for the large cohort for the March sitting.

### **ARCPs**

ARCPs for 2023 will be held in a virtual or hybrid format. This year they will take part in the FICM QA process with an observer from another deanery joining the panel.

### **New curriculum and portfolio**

There are no new issues to report on the new curriculum or portfolio. A multiple consultant report assessment has been successfully piloted in paper format. It has been adapted following feedback and is expected to be added to the ICM LLP shortly.

### **Consultant positions and workforce**

Consultant posts have been approved for three Trusts since the last meeting. Unfortunately there remains a shortfall between the numbers of those completing training and vacant posts. There is a significant number of unfilled consultant posts and this is expected to continue, as is the case in other regions across the UK in a recent FICM survey. Data currently shows an anticipated 34

consultant vacancies in the next 5 years in NI, with only 23 ICM trainees due to CCT within the same timeframe. There continues a plan to maximise the training positions and expand funded training posts further. England, Scotland, and Wales have all increased funding for ICM training posts for this round of recruitment and NI alone have not. The workforce review of NI is overdue and NIMDTA leads will be proposing this be expedited when meeting with DH and PHA this month.

#### **10. College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland**

Dr Will Donaldson noted that Professor George Shorten, the President of the College of Anaesthesiologists was not present at the meeting and did not provide an update.

**Action: WD will attend College council in Dublin in person and update them with the proceedings of the NI Board meeting.**

#### **11. Association of Anaesthetists' business**

Update from Dr Neal Beckett.

- The Association continues its long term priority of developing advocacy and campaigns using seminars and social media to engage more rapidly and effectively with members and stakeholders. Engagement with government consultations on policy remains an important aspect of Association business.
- A guideline on 'Implementing Human Factors in Anaesthesia' (a consensus document between the Association & the Difficult Airway Society) was released in Jan 2023, complementing a very well received paper by Kelly at al in *Anaesthesia* journal.
- The *Fighting Fatigue* campaign is ongoing, with increased numbers of groups and colleges supporting its position.
- The response to the Duty of Care Bill in Wales will have implications to doctors in the rest of the UK. The Association is encouraging the Government to provide more guidance on the planned implementation of the Bill and the manner of training that may be required.

#### **12. Lay Committee and the Patient Voices business**

It was noted that the Lay committee is now the Patient Voices committee but there were no updates on this.

#### **13. Trainee Representative Business**

Dr Brendan Haughey updated that staffing and rota pressures and workforce issues are still ongoing.

#### **14. SAS Representative Business**

The Board noted that currently there was no SAS Representative in place and that Dr Donaldson would be linking in with the College in relation to this again.

#### **15. Any Other Business**

The Board noted that there was no further business to be discussed.

#### **16. Date of the next meeting**

It was proposed that the next meeting would be held virtually on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023** from 2-5pm on teams.