



**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Friday, 21 February 2025 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,  
Dublin.**

**Present:** Dr Tracy Cunningham (Chairperson)

Dr Sarah Barry  
Dr Leonora Bishop  
Dr Martina Ní Chúlain  
Prof Peter Doran  
Prof Tom Fahey  
Prof Mark Lawler  
Dr Julie Ling  
Dr Terry McWade  
Dr Cliona Saidleir

**Apologies:** No apologies

**In attendance:** Dr Mairead O'Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Lorna Purcell, Board Secretary and Head of Governance.

Mr Martin Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations, attended for items 7 & 10.

Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding (RSF), attended for items 7, 12 & 13.

Dr Sarah Craig, Head of National Health Information Systems, attended for item 8.

Mr Dara Murphy, Head of Finance, attended for item 10.

Dr Anne Cody, Head of Investigator-Led Grants, Research Careers and Enablers, RSF, attended for item 12.

Dr Caitriona Creely, International Cooperation, Evaluation and Targeted Programmes, RSF, attended for item 13.2.

Dr Camille Boostrom, Programme Manager, Mental Health, RSF, attended for item 13.1.

Dr Catherine Gill, Programme Manager, Targeted Programmes, RSF, attended for item 13.2.

Dr Brian Galvin, Programme Manager for Drug and Alcohol Research, HRB Evidence Centre, attended for items 15 and 16.

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## **1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

## **2. Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **3. Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on December 6th 2024 were approved.

## **4. Matters Arising and action points from previous meetings**

Action points from the previous meeting were either addressed or appeared as an agenda item.

## **5. Introduction of Ms Eileen Cole, Board Excellence**

The Secretary to the Board introduced Ms Eileen Cole, attending in an observer capacity, as part of an external Board assessment (as required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.)

## **6. CEO's Report**

The CEO reported to the Board on the following matters:

- Budget 2025
- Baggot St Funds
- Programme for Government
- Cancer (Country Cancer Profiles)
- Research Security
- North South Research Programme
- Potential link between death by suicide and gambling addiction
- NASS secures ISSCoP certification
- Action Plan to fulfil HRB commitments under membership of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)
- Closure of Recommendation 93 in Sharing the Vision Implementation Plan
- Update from the HRB's Evidence Centre
- HR Updates: Organisational Pulse Surveys, EDI Accreditation & Recruitment of Director of Health Information & Evidence

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- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority
- Offer accepted on property bequeathed to the HRB

## **7. Strategy development**

The CEO provided a verbal update on Strategy development in the HRB, as part of the work currently being undertaken to develop a new Strategy for the organisation (2026 – 2030). Information was provided on timelines, the consultation process with key stakeholders including the PPI consultation, and values workshops with staff. The Board emphasised the importance of a cross-organisational approach in the team and Directorate workshops, and the potential value of data from the Pulse surveys in informing the Strategy. The importance of the time period between May – June was also highlighted, as all information gathered by this point will need to be distilled.

## **8. HRB National Health Information Systems**

The Board noted the paper on the work of the National Health Information Systems (NHIS) Unit carried out in 2024. Dr Sarah Craig provided a presentation on the topic, outlining the four information systems, the key enhancements in 2024, the achievements of and opportunities for the team during the year, and the strategic relevance of NHIS data.

## **9. Programme of Work for the Board**

The Board reviewed the Programme of Work for the Board for the year.

## **10. Corporate Reporting**

### **(i) Final Report on Service Plan 2024**

The Board noted the report on status of HRB's Service Plan for 2024 as at 31 December 2024, and approved its submission to the Department of Health's Research Policy and Innovation Unit as the progress report on the annual Performance Delivery Agreement.

### **(ii) Contracts Valued at in excess of €75,000**

The Board approved the award of a three-year contract to the Canadian Centre for Drug Abuse and Addiction, with an option to extend once by twelve months, for the provision of Commissioned research services. The maximum value of this contract is €285,000 excluding VAT.

## **11. Other Governance Matters**

### **(i) Decisions reserved for the Board and matters delegated to the Executive**

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The Board reviewed the 'Decisions reserved for the Board and matters delegated to the Executive' and asked that the Policy is reviewed to ensure that any significant changes to policies are brought to the Board. The 'Decisions reserved for the Board and matters delegated to the Executive' document will be updated to reflect this and brought back to the Board.

**(ii) Risk Management Policy and Risk Appetite Statement**

The Board reviewed the Risk Management Policy. Further clarity on one paragraph was requested. The updates to the Policy were approved in principle, subject to one minor amendment.

**(iii) Development Committee – verbal update**

The Chair of the Development Committee, Dr Cunningham, updated the Board on the meeting of the Development Committee that had taken place just before the Board meeting, where Mr D'Arcy Donnelly, HR & OD Manager provided an update on the CEO recruitment process and the Pulse survey results. Dr Cunningham updated the Board on the progress made to date in these areas.

**12. Approval of Call Principles**

**(i) PPI Ignite Network**

The Board approved high-level principles for a new phase of funding for the PPI Ignite Network, which ends in March 2026. HRB staff will develop a detailed paper, logic model and call Guidance notes for consideration by the Board in April 2025.

**13. Approval to Issue Calls**

**Collaborative Research Network in Mental Health**

The Board approved an open, competitive call for applications for a Collaborative Research Network for Mental Health, at a cost of €1M over 5 years.

**(ii) Evidence Synthesis Ireland**

The Board approved a call for a further 5-year HRB investment in an award for evidence synthesis capacity building/networking (overall cost €6M over 5 years, with €4.75M from the HRB and €1.25M from the HSC RDO) but they confirmed their preference for the call for applications to be an open, competitive call.

**14. Other Research Funding Matters**

**(i) Addiction Research Network Ireland**

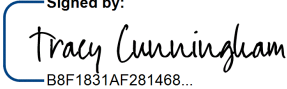
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The Board reviewed the request for the establishment of an Addiction Research Network in the HRB with funding of €150,000 pa for the network is being provided by the Department of Health. The Board proposed some changes in emphasis and a paper reflecting these changes will be brought back to the Board.

## 15. Other HRB Publications

### (i) Prevalence of problematic opioid use in Ireland, 2020–2022

The Board reviewed the process by which this report was undertaken and approved it for publication.

Signed:  (Chairperson)  
Signed by: Tracy Cunningham  
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