

NIGALA

NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency

a voice for children



ANNUAL REPORT

2014-15



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Any enquires regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Centre House
79 Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 4JE
Or by E-mail: admin@nigala.hscni.net

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NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
a voice for children

THE NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

Annual Report and Accounts For the year ended 31 March 2015

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly
under section 11(3) (c) of the Government Resources
and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001
by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

On

31 July 2015



The Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) was established as a Special Agency by virtue of powers contained in the Health and Personal Social Services (Special Agencies) (NI) Order 1990. The Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem (Establishment and Constitution) Order (NI) 1995 was introduced on 1st December 1995 making provision for the constitution of the Agency and appointment of the Agency Board.

Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency - Board Members

Mr Bernard Mitchell (Chair)
Ms Patricia Nicholl (Chief Executive)
Mrs Gillian McGaughey (Non-Executive Director)
Mr Fred Smyth (Non-Executive Director)
Mr David Watters (Non-Executive Director)
Dr Karen Winter (Non-Executive Director)

Head Office - Centre House, Belfast

Centre House
79 Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 4JE
Tel: 028 90 316550
Fax: 028 90 319811
Text: 028 90 329674

Spencer House
14-22 Spencer Road
LONDONDERRY
BT47 6QA
Tel: 028 71 329909
Fax: 028 71 329908
Text: 028 71 343461

Dobbin Centre
Dobbin Street Lane
ARMAGH
BT61 7QL
Tel: 028 37 528840
Fax: 028 37 518357
Text: 028 37 518640

Copies of this Report may be made available in a range of different formats by contacting the Head Office, Centre House, Belfast.

The Report can also be accessed either on the Agency website: www.nigala.hscni.net or requested via email at: admin@nigala.hscni.net



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Section I

Overview by the Chairman



It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report and Accounts for the period April 2014 to March 2015.



2014/15 has been a challenging year for the Agency marked by reductions in public expenditure affecting Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole. Consequently, like all other public services, one of the greatest challenges faced by us has been to maintain service delivery in an era of significant austerity.

I am therefore delighted to report that the Agency met all of its Key Performance Indicators and successfully delivered the objectives of the Business Plan.

It is important to acknowledge the work of the Chief Executive and the Executive Team in achieving these successes in the context of the unanticipated reduction to the Agency budget allocation in year. I would also wish to pay tribute to the Executive Team for leading the sensitive negotiations in respect of the budget planning scenarios for the 2015/16 budget. These negotiations culminated in a financial settlement which recognises the front line work of the Agency while ensuring the continued allocation of essential non-recurrent funding for 2015/16 and I am grateful for the support of the Department in this regard.

During the year a new Non Executive Director was appointed to the NIGALA Board and I would like to formally welcome Dr Karen Winter who brings a wide range of social work experience and expertise to our work.

In 2014/15 the Board prioritised the implementation of a number of key policies and procedures to improve services and corporate governance.

These have required a substantial focus on change management in relation to allocation and case management processes, a revised strategy for stakeholder engagement and the on-going review of information governance processes within the Agency. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Board and Senior Management Team in progressing these important strategic priorities.

I also welcome the tremendous strides made by the Agency in developing a participation strategy for children and young people and in evaluating Guardian Social Work practice and cultural competence in working with children from black, ethnic minority backgrounds. I am particularly pleased that the Agency has been able to support the DHSSPS in the introduction of the joint DOJ/DHSSPS Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings Pilot and we look forward to working on a cross-sectoral basis to deliver more timely decision making of permanence, and families for life for children in Northern Ireland.

In closing, I wish to commend the hard work and continued commitment of the Guardians ad Litem and other staff in the Agency who continue to meet challenges and expectations with professionalism and fortitude.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bernard Mitchell", written over a horizontal line.

Mr Bernard Mitchell, Chair

Section 2

Overview by the Chief Executive



It is once again my privilege to introduce the NIGALA Annual Report for 2014/15. The Report highlights the broad range of work which has been undertaken by the Agency and the excellent achievements in achieving our business objectives.



While the Agency has seen an increase of 52% in cases over the last 9 years there was a small reduction of 1% in 2014/15 allowing us to respond appropriately to demand.

This 1% reduction in demand is primarily due to a significant reduction in Adoption proceedings in Northern Ireland which witnessed a reduction of 13% on last year with Public Law proceedings increasing once again by 3% on last year.

There is no doubt that the austere economic climate and uncertainty about budget resources in the 2014/15 business year posed particular challenges for the Agency.

The economic circumstances required the Agency to consider changes in how we deliver our services and the unanticipated reduction of 2.5% in budget in September 2014 forced the Agency to prioritise spend in hitherto unthinkable ways.

Under such conditions, the core values of NIGALA have become increasingly important. In prioritising our services, we continue to focus on safeguarding the interests of children in Specified Public Law and Adoption proceedings in Northern Ireland.

Many of these children represent some of the most vulnerable in society. Maintaining the centrality of children in decision making within NIGALA along with a continued commitment to quality, accountability and transparency will be the hallmarks of how NIGALA responds to austerity in the years ahead.

Going forward, the Agency will ensure that our children and young people remain a priority alongside the continued focus on the development and support of a highly professional qualified Guardian ad Litem workforce.

Following intense negotiations I am gratified that the DHSSPS have continued to recognise the front line nature of the services delivered by NIGALA and as such the reduction in the budget allocation for 2015/16 reflects that position and takes account of the continued demand for services.

This year the Agency has focused on improving efficiency and effectiveness through technology. It is through these technological enhancements that the Agency will now be embedding its revised approach to allocation and case management processes along with implementing the Agency's quality assurance mechanisms and revised approach to case oversight and accountability.

In 2014/15 the Agency implemented its Professional Development Framework and remains committed to the strengthening of coaching approaches to learning and performance management across the organisation.

The Agency has put in place a revised Equality and Disability action plan which has included the completion of an evaluation of Guardian practice and cultural competence in working with children from black, ethnic minority groups.

The Agency has delivered to a range of Personal and Public Involvement standards, not least through the Agency's revised Participation Strategy and tool kit for engaging children and young people in the work of NIGALA.

It is important that the contribution of VOYPIC is acknowledged in progressing this important aspect of our work, which will be finalised in 2015/16.

There is much to be done and 2015/16 will bring further challenges as the Agency takes its place in the arrangements for progressing the joint departmental Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings Pilot; the regional response to the Donaldson Report, *The Right Place, The Right Time* published in January 2015 which strongly reinforces the need for strategic change. Alongside these developments the Agency will be required to comply with improvements in regional safeguarding arrangements emanating from the recommendations of the Independent Investigation into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the Thematic Review of CSE in Northern Ireland.

It is only by having an open and honest debate about the challenges and their solutions, by making the difficult choices, fundamentally shifting culture and redesigning service delivery models that we can ensure that NIGALA continues to deliver services which are fit for the future.

I should like to close by acknowledging the support of the NIGALA Board, the relentless dedication and leadership of the Executive Management Team, all of our Corporate and Administrative staff and last but not least the hard work and commitment of our Guardians ad Litem who continue to deliver high quality professional standards of service to our most vulnerable children and families against a backdrop of change and uncertainty.

I look forward to meeting the challenges in 2015/16 and to meeting our HSC Change Day Pledge in respect of improving communication across the Agency to support the delivery of front line services.



Patricia Nicholl, Chief Executive

Section 3

Directors Report



Mission Statement



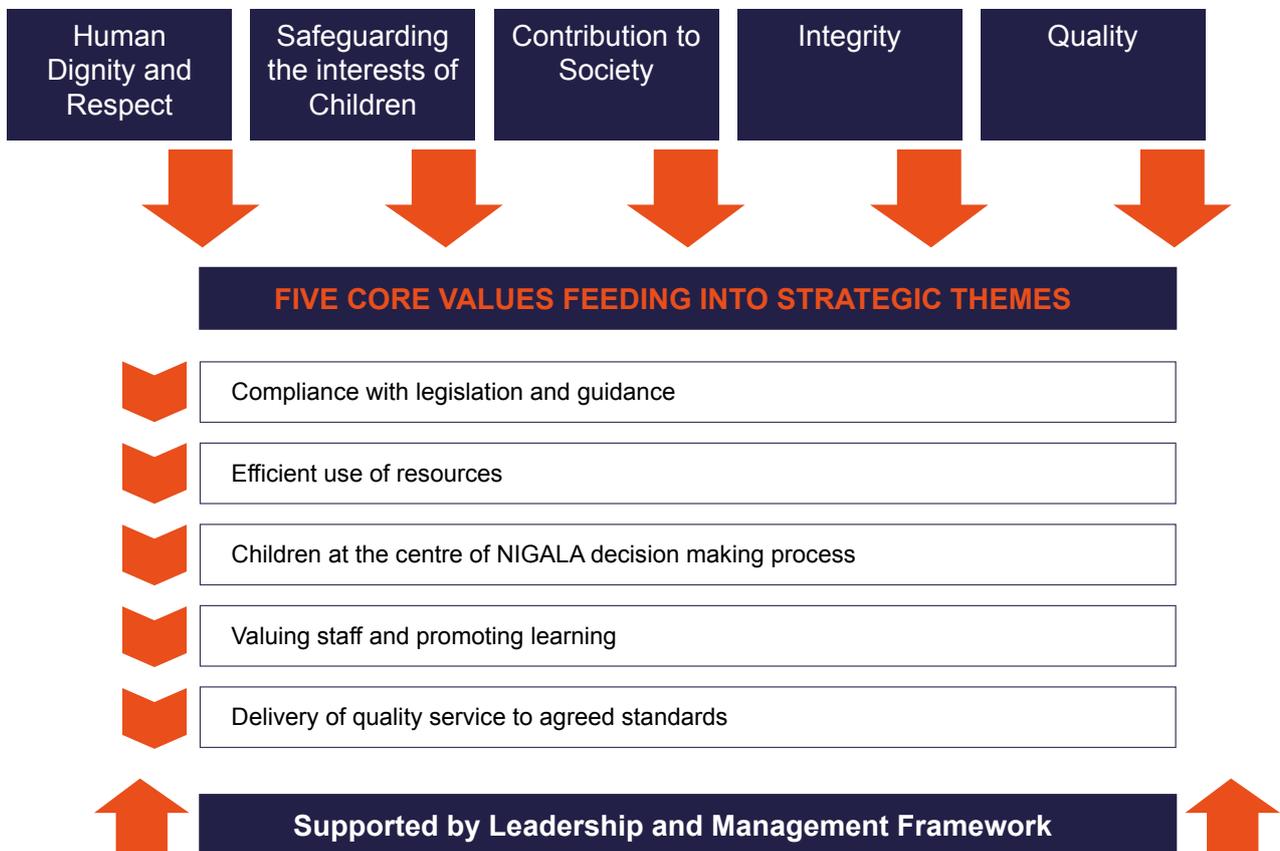
“To advise the Courts of children’s wishes and feelings and to independently represent and safeguard the interests of children in Specified Public Law and Adoption proceedings in Northern Ireland.”

The Mission Statement expresses the core principles enshrined in Articles 3 and 60 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Values, Principles and Strategic Objectives

NIGALA has constantly striven to deliver a service of the highest quality and have sought to utilise the resources at their disposal in the most efficient and effective manner. Figure 1 below identifies the five core values which are enshrined in NIGALA’s culture and these underpin the delivery of the five core strategic themes of the organisation.

FIGURE 1



Services Delivered

NIGALA was established by DHSSPS in accordance with Article 60(7) of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and Guardian ad Litem (Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996.

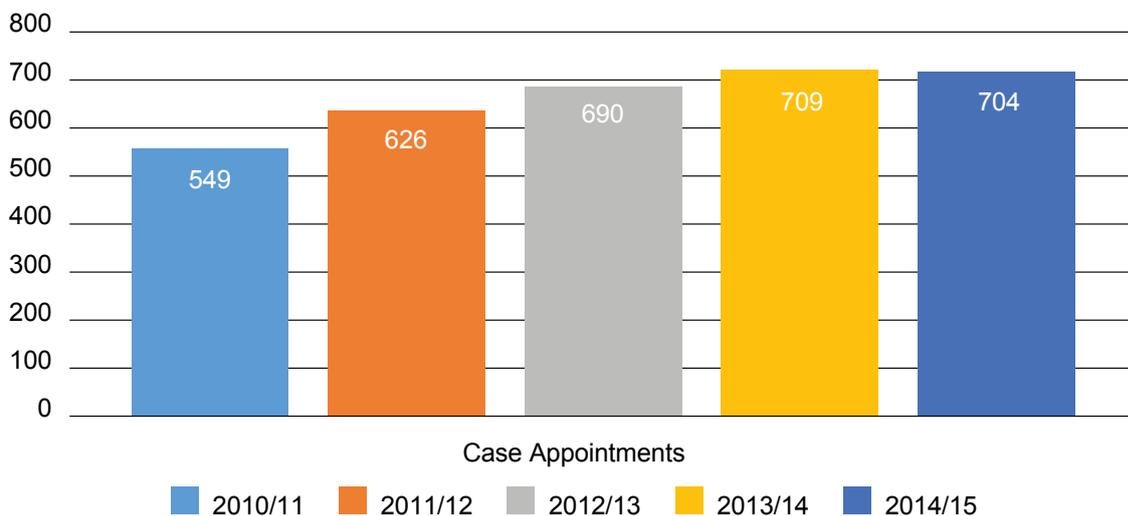
The function of the Agency is to safeguard and promote the interests of children by providing independent social work investigation and advice in Specified proceedings under the Children

(Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, and to provide effective representation of children's views and interests.

NIGALA has witnessed an unprecedented level of demand for Guardian ad Litem case appointments as detailed in Chart 1 below. This demand has amounted to an increase of 28% over the last 5 years. It has also been particularly difficult to project as we are a demand lead service.

CHART 1

Number of Guardian ad Litem Case Appointments since April 2010



Total Number of Case Appointments Requested By the Court

The total number of appointments of Guardians ad Litem requested by the Court between April 2014 and March 2015 was 704 cases, involving 1052 children. The number of cases and the number of children subject to proceedings decreased by 1% and 4% respectively from the previous year. In Specified Public Law cases NIGALA witnessed an increase of 3% in applications overall (564 in 2014/15 in comparison to 550 in 2013/14).

In Adoption cases NIGALA witnessed a decrease of 13% in appointments during 2014/15 (140 in 2014/15 in comparison to 159 in 2013/14). The number of Article 50 Care Order application appointments, was 357 as compared to 346 in 2013/14, an increase of 5%. However the number of children involved in these Care Order applications decreased by 3% from 590 children in 2013/14 to 571 children in 2014/15.

Total Number of Cases Allocated¹ by NIGALA in 2014/15

There were a total number of 733 cases allocated in 2014/15, a 4% increase in cases from 2013/14. The number of children in allocated cases increased from 1084 in 2013/14 to 1106 in 2014/15 (2% increase).

Total Number of Cases Completed in 2014/15

The total number of cases completed in this period was 739, an increase of 4% from the previous year. It included 1132 children. There were 372 Care applications completed involving 597 children, 51 Discharge/Variation of Care Orders, 39 Contact applications and 45 Secure Accommodation Orders completed. Adoption Placements comprised the largest group of Adoption proceedings, with 57 cases completed involving 68 children. There were 17 Adoptive Step-Parent cases involving 22 children and 8 Inter-Country Adoptions. The lowest number were for adoptions by relatives (4 cases).

HSC Trusts and Number of Cases

The largest number of Adoption applications (31 cases) were made by the Belfast HSC Trust, followed closely by the Southern HSC Trust, with 30 cases involving 36 children. There were 27 Adoption application cases in the Northern Trust (38 children), 26 cases in the South-Eastern HSC Trust and 23 cases in the Western HSC Trust.

Staffing

Management

NIGALA's management structure consists of a Chief Executive supported by an Executive Team consisting of 3 Assistant Directors, a Quality Assurance and Training Manager and a Corporate Services Manager (See Figure 2 page 15).

The Assistant Directors are social work qualified and undertake a number of key functions such as allocation of work, supervision and appraisal. Each Assistant Director also holds lead responsibility for key strategic and corporate functions. The Quality Assurance and Training Manager has responsibility for training, development and quality assurance for each department within NIGALA.

The Corporate Services Manager has responsibility for all corporate functions such as finance, human resources, estates, information and procurement. All Executive Team members have functional responsibilities which involve links with relevant external organisations. During 2014/15 one Assistant Director retired from the service and the post has been covered by an acting up arrangement.

Guardians ad Litem

At 31 March 2015 NIGALA has a Guardian ad Litem complement of 43 employed staff (full time and part time). Two Guardians ad Litem retired from the service during 2014/15. NIGALA also has a contract for services with a Panel of 10 self employed Social Work qualified individuals during times of increased demand.

¹ Case Allocated figures include a small number of cases requested by the Court in 2013/14 but allocated to a Guardian ad Litem in 2014/15.

One Self Employed Member resigned from the Panel during 2014/15. NIGALA is a 'managed service' and has in place an Accountability Framework and a set of supervision and performance management/appraisal arrangements. Guardians safeguard and promote the interests of children by the provision of an independent social work investigation, by ensuring representation of the children's views and presenting recommendations to the Court.

Corporate Services

Our Business Support staff play a key role in the delivery of our service. Under the current organisational structure we have developed two levels of business support which offer a clear career progression for staff and an enhanced service in the support of the Guardians ad Litem.

At 31 March 2015 there is a complement of 5 Corporate Service Officers (3 permanent one of which is vacant and 2 acting positions). A further complement of 13 staff (full time and part time) provides secretarial and administrative support to the Management Team, Corporate Services Team and Guardians ad Litem. A review of Administration and Corporate Services functions and tasks was conducted during 2014/15 with recommendations for streamlining processes being implemented during 2015/16.

FIGURE 2



Labour Turnover

The turnover rate in the workforce remains low within NIGALA and this is reflected by the fact that a single staff member (Corporate Services) left during 2014/15 to take up a new position. Three further staff members retired in year.

NIGALA also has maintained an absence figure below the statutory HSC absence target level of 5% achieving 4.75% across long and short term absence during 2014/15. This has increased from 2013/14 by 1.21% and has been due to an overall increase in long term absence levels.

Communicating and Consulting with Staff

The management structure within NIGALA serves to maximise the accessibility of Managers and facilitates the exchange of communication with Guardians which, in turn, promotes the Agency's capacity to be responsive.

During 2014/15 the NIGALA Communication Strategy was introduced with all actions delivered. Communication/consultation is also facilitated on a formal basis by:

- a) a quarterly staff meeting led by Managers ensuring that all staff are consulted on relevant policies, corporate plans, professional practice and the latest initiatives.
- b) a Joint Consultative Committee with the Trade Union NIPSA which is convened on a quarterly basis and as necessary to consult on new and revised policies.

An additional method of communication within the Agency is the publication of a six monthly internal news bulletin which highlights developments within NIGALA, training and development opportunities, staff social activities as well as external initiatives in social care and family justice. It is available electronically and in hard copy.

All staff engage in the development and feedback on policies and procedures through the use of a compliance software called Metacompliance. This enables all staff to confirm that they have read and understood policies and encourages them to shape organisational plans via internal Metacompliance electronic surveys.

As part of the HSC Change Day initiative NIGALA pledged to ***“raise awareness about the importance of good communication between Management***

and Staff to support delivery of front line services” and this will continue to be taken forward during 2015/16.

Equality

The Agency's Equality Scheme and Disability action plan align and streamline the Equality, Social Care Governance and Personal and Public Involvement agendas thereby creating greater corporate ownership. Undertaking robust equality screening is central to ensuring that the equality implications of all our policies and decisions are considered while we are developing them. Completing the Equality Screening Template informs our decision making.

NIGALA has revised its Disability action plan in line with feedback received from the Equality Commission.

The revised NIGALA Disability action plan places emphasis on NIGALA specific initiatives and reflects the feedback received from the Equality Commission which identified the need to achieve a balance between agreed consortium initiatives and Agency specific actions.

NIGALA continues to benefit from participating in the HSC Partnership Equality Forum hosted by the BSO Equality Unit. The sharing of expertise and learning alongside the co-ordination of activities continues to assist in the development of an informed, pro-active approach to mainstreaming equality.

The consortium meets quarterly to discuss and consider the implications of legislative/policy updates and practice developments. Briefing papers and case law updates are circulated to assist Agency representatives to disseminate up to date information within their respective organisations.

Board Members

Role of the Board

Board members have corporate responsibility for ensuring that NIGALA complies with statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds and fulfils the aims and objectives set by the Department and approved by the Minister and for promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. Board members are also required to:

- ensure that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times, including using NIGALA's Audit Committee to help the Board address the key financial and other risks facing NIGALA;
- ensure that the Department is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of NIGALA or on the attainability of its targets and determine the steps needed to deal with such changes;
- ensure that NIGALA receives and reviews regular financial information concerning its management and is informed in a timely manner about any concerns about its activities which includes providing positive assurance to the Department that appropriate action has been taken on such concerns;
- establish the overall strategic direction of the organisation within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Department;
- ensure that NIGALA's performance fully meets its aims and objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible;
- ensure that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with the Department, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds;
- ensure that, in reaching decisions, the Board has taken into account any Guidance issued by the Department and any other relevant organisations, such as the Equality Commission or the Human Rights Commission;
- ensure that it consults on the development of significant new policies with the Department and other relevant organisations as is considered appropriate;
- appoint, with the Child Care Policy Directorate, a Chief Executive and, in consultation with the Department, set remuneration terms for that post; and
- conduct an annual review of its effectiveness which includes a review of the quality of information the Board receives; and report its findings to the DHSSPS.

The Board of NIGALA comprises a Non-Executive Chair, four Non-Executive Members and the Chief Executive. Non-Executive Members are appointed through open competition by the Minister. The Terms of Office for members are found in the NIGALA (Establishment and Constitution) Order (NI) 1995. The Order provides that the Members shall be appointed for a period of four years. The Order also provides for the reappointment of the Members for such further period, not exceeding four years, as the Department may determine.

MR BERNARD MITCHELL, CHAIR, lives in Belfast, Co Antrim. On leaving Queens University Belfast Mr Mitchell joined the NI Health and Social Services General Management Training Scheme in September 1978 and remained in continuous employment within the service until his retirement in March 2011. He has worked in all parts of Northern Ireland and has senior management experience in hospital, community and social care services including ten years as a HSC Trust Chief Executive.

MR DAVID WATTERS, NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, lives in Belfast, Co Antrim. He is a founding partner of RSM McClure Watters which was formed in 1989 and under his leadership the firm has grown into one of the largest accounting and advisory firms in Northern Ireland. Mr Watters is also a Registered Auditor involved in providing audit, financial advisory and various business services, and has led many large assignments for public and private sector clients. Mr Watters is an Economics honours graduate from Queens University Belfast and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland.

MR FRED SMYTH, NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, lives in Belfast, Co Antrim. Having qualified with PWC Belfast Mr Smyth is a Fellow of the Chartered Accountants in Ireland. He has held senior management roles within Bank of Ireland for over 20 years and has extensive business and retail banking experience, including heading up Corporate, Business and Retail Units across Northern Ireland. Mr Smyth has assisted the full range of private and public sector businesses from start-ups to large corporates in managing and growing their business in both domestic and overseas markets.

MRS GILLIAN MCGAUGHEY BL LLB, NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, lives in Belfast, Co Antrim. Mrs McGaughey is a Barrister specialising in Family and Child Law and lectures at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Queens University Belfast. She is also the Chair of the Statutory Committee for the Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland and a Legal Services Commissioner. Mrs McGaughey was a Stakeholder member of the NI Social Care Council from 2001 to 2013. She is a member of the Board of Saint Anne's Cathedral, Belfast and a Director of Belfast Cathedral Enterprises Limited. She holds no other public appointments and has not engaged in any political activity in the last five years.

DR KAREN WINTER NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (with effect from 12 May 2014), lives in Belfast, Co Antrim and is currently a Lecturer in Social Work and Programme Director for the Professional Doctorate in Childhood Studies at Queens University Belfast. Dr Winter is also involved on a voluntary basis with Fostering Network Northern Ireland. She has significant knowledge of social work practice both as a Team Manager within a HSC Trust and as a Guardian ad Litem.

MS PATRICIA NICHOLL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, lives in Belfast, Co Antrim. Ms Nicholl qualified as a Social Worker from Queens University Belfast in 1983. Throughout her career she has worked primarily in the field of Family and Childcare Services. Ms Nicholl was Programme Manager for Family and Children's Services in the legacy Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust from 2001 until 2006. In 2006 Ms Nicholl took up post as a Senior Planning and Performance Manager in UCHT.

In 2008 she took up a permanent position in the DHSSPS Office of Social Services which she occupied following a period of secondment. Since 2008 Patricia has had lead responsibility for the regulation of the social care workforce in Northern Ireland and has been the Government Liaison Officer for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) responsible for oversight of assurance and accountability arrangements of the Council. Patricia joined NIGALA in April 2013.

Board Members' Interests

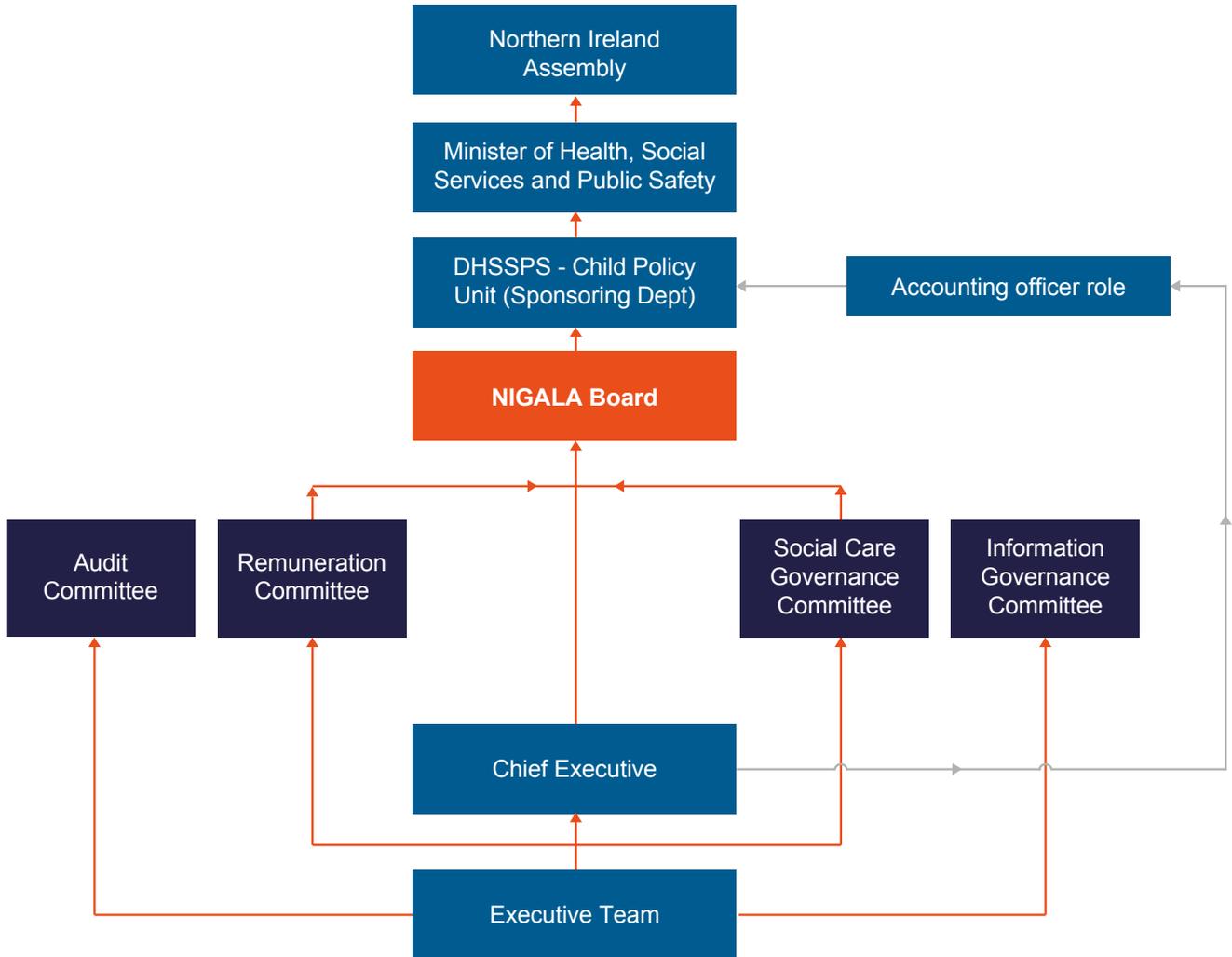
The following interests are held by NIGALA Board members:

NAME	INTEREST
Mr Bernard Mitchell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member NI Advisory Board, Marie Curie Cancer Care (<i>unremunerated</i>) • Non-Executive Director, NI Transport Holding Company • Member, Audit and Risk Committee, NI Assembly Secretariat • Member, Audit and Risk Committee, PONI • Chair Strand Arts Centre (<i>unremunerated</i>)
Mr David Watters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman, Belfast Charitable Society • Managing Partner – Owner, RSM McClure Watters Consulting Ltd • Chairman – Owner, RSM McClure Watters Consulting Ltd
Mr Fred Smyth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chair, Simon Community NI
Mrs Gillian McGaughey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director and Company Secretary, Board of Belfast Cathedral • Director and Company Secretary, Belfast Cathedral Enterprises Limited • Chair of Statutory Committee, Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland
Dr Karen Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee, Fostering Network NI
Ms Patricia Nicholl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Officer, Bredagh GAC

Board Committee Structure and Composition

The Board Committees and accountability structure is shown in the diagram below

FIGURE 3



Patricia Nicholl

Ms Patricia Nicholl
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

9 July 2015

Date

Section 4

Strategic Report



Strategic Report 2014/15 and Management Commentary: How Did We Perform?

The NIGALA three year Corporate Strategy for 2012-15 included our Strategic Objectives, Mission and Values. Throughout the three-year period, it has been supported by an annual Business Plan setting out the key priorities and targets to be delivered during that year. Table 1 indicates the performance of the Agency against its Key Performance Indicators.

TABLE 1

Performance Indices 2014/15

RAG Status Codes			
Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	
Performance Area	Definitions	Outcome 2014/15	RAG Rating
KPI 1: Public Law and Adoption	An average of 11 'live' cases at any point in time per whole time equivalent (wte) Guardian ad Litem to be achieved as a workload figure in 2013-2014	11.26 Target Achieved	
KPI 2a: Public Law Allocation – Secure Accommodation	95% of Secure Accommodation cases allocated within 8 working days following court request	100% Target Achieved	
KPI 2b: Public Law Allocation – Emergency Protection	95% of Emergency Protection Order cases allocated within 3 working days following court request	100% Target Achieved	
KPI 2c: Public Law Allocation – Care Proceedings	60% of all Care ² Type cases allocated within 8 working days of court request	89% Target Achieved	
KPI 3: Adoption Allocation	90% of case appointments by work day 8 following court request	98% Target Achieved	
KPI 4: Corporate Satisfaction Rating	75% of responses to our survey from children (8 yrs +) by means of Viewpoint and paper questionnaires to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' to 'excellent'	77% Target Achieved	

² Care type cases include Article 56 investigations, Contact, Supervision and Care applications.

Performance Area	Definitions	Outcome 2014/15	RAG Rating
KPI 5: Corporate Satisfaction Rating	75% of responses to our survey from the Judiciary to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	100% Target Achieved	
KPI 6: Corporate Satisfaction Rating	75% of responses to our survey of accredited Solicitors to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	100% Target Achieved	
KPI 7: Corporate Appraisals	90% of appraisals as required under Agenda for Change completed for all eligible staff	90% Target Achieved	
KPI 8: Financial Breakeven	NIGALA achieves a financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20,000 (whichever is the greater) of revenue allocation for 2014/15	Target Achieved	
KPI 9: Absence	NIGALA absence target set at 5%	4.75% Target Achieved	

Performance Management

Under the Agenda for Change Knowledge and Skills Framework, Managers formally provide supervision for Guardians ad Litem on a 3 monthly basis and annual appraisals take place for all staff. This Framework enables Line Managers to assess on-going practice and requires records of supervision and appraisal to be collated and agreed between appraiser and appraisee.

This has allowed the Agency to ensure that Standards of Practice and performance are regularly reviewed and linked to the NIGALA corporate and operational objectives.

During 2014/15 the new Appraisal Policy has been used for all appraisals which has incorporated the use of the HRPTS Appraisal system for the recording and monitoring of the achievement of objectives and preparation of a Personal Development Plan for each staff member.

NIGALA also implemented its Leadership and Management Framework in association with the Quality 2020 Leadership Attributes Framework. A key set of attributes were identified which identify key leadership and management behaviours expected from all NIGALA Managers. The Framework is now used as a key review document at the appraisal of a Senior Manager and to support recruitment into management positions in NIGALA.

Focus on Specified Public Law Proceedings

Articles 60 (1) and (2) of the Children (NI) Order 1995 requires the Court in any case involving Specified proceedings (defined in Article 60(6) of the Order) to appoint a Guardian ad Litem for the child concerned unless satisfied that it is not necessary to do so. Guardians Ad Litem appointed by the Courts in Specified Public Law proceedings under the Children (NI) Order 1995, have a general duty to safeguard the interests of the child having regard to

the child's welfare as paramount. Chart 2 below details the gradual increase in Specified Public Law proceedings over the last 5 years where a 28% increase in Guardian ad Litem appointments has been witnessed.

Through supporting and safeguarding children and families, all children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It is recognised that some families require the support of the State and in circumstances where parenting capacity is negatively impacted due to parental mental health, alcohol, substance misuse and domestic abuse, intervention is required to protect children where there is a direct and evident risk to the child's general wellbeing.

While it has been reported that significant progress has been made in making the lives of children safer through effective professional multi-disciplinary working³, there remains evidence that for some children and young people the system for safeguarding may not be working as

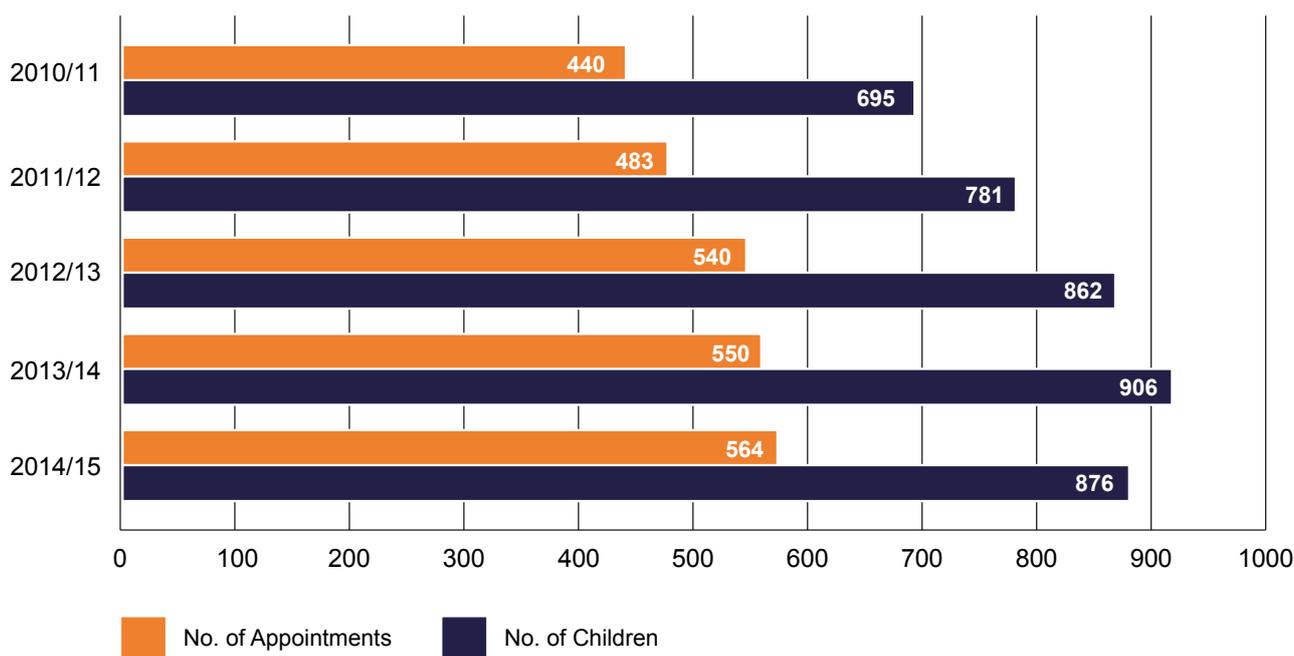
effectively as expected. There is a clear message about the importance of timely and thorough assessments with regard to children who require the intervention by Social Workers and where required, decisions by the Courts on the child's best interests.

Taking account of the 'child's time frame', the challenge remains for Courts to determine that all options for children have been properly considered based on sufficiently rigorous and trustworthy professional assessments.

It is well established that delay in Court proceedings which is not purposeful can be prejudicial to meeting the best interests of the child. Quite often there are difficulties in aligning decision making at the point of intervention by Social Workers, with Court timescales and that of the child's time frame. While statistics show a slight decrease in the average number of days to complete Care applications (345 days) compared to that of 373 in 2013/14, on average Care proceedings continue to

CHART 2

Trend in Guardian as Litem Appointments in Specified Public Law Proceedings 2010 to 2015



³ Sean Holland, Chief Social Services Officer, Early Authoritative Intervention (May 2013)

take a year to complete. This compared to England and Wales shows that Care proceedings have reduced in length from an average of 55 weeks towards 26 weeks, a time frame which became law in April 2014 through the [Children and Families Act](#). For England and Wales, there remains however difficulties in reducing the duration of cases due primarily to the variability in Local Authority performance. Inevitably balancing Article 6 Rights (right to a fair hearing) and Article 8 Rights (right to family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights are difficult to achieve and open to challenge as evidenced in judgements of *Re: B* and *Re: B-S*.

Care Proceedings

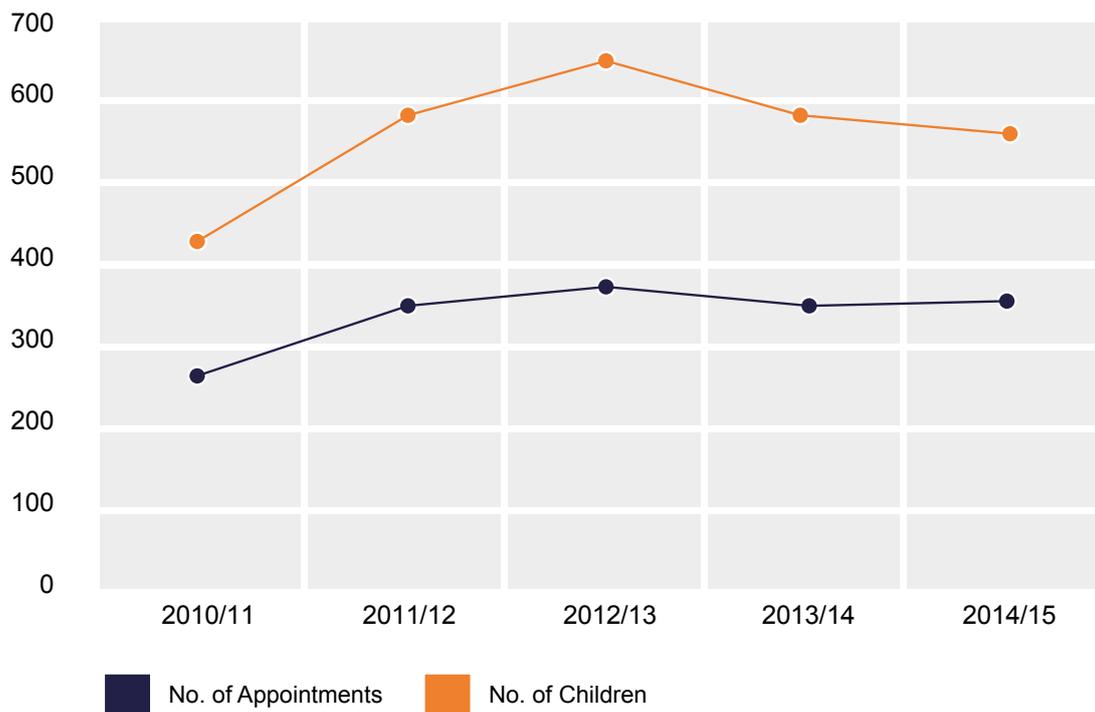
Care proceedings continue to represent the single most substantive Public Law application that comes before the Courts. Applications by Trusts to Courts, are often the result of family crisis and the

cumulative impact of multiple adversities involving often vulnerable children and young people. As a consequence of a complex set of factors, which results in the Courts being asked to consider whether children have been harmed or are at risk of harm, Courts have to consider the impact of childhood adversities, parental capacity for change, all balanced against the child's long term permanency needs.

Care Order applications continue to represent the largest number of Guardian appointments, which for this year witnessed a 3% increase (from 346 to 357 cases) in Article 50 Care applications from the previous year. This increase is consistent with an overall upward trend in Care applications in previous years, with an 8% decrease in 2013/14 the only notable exception. However the number of children subject to Care Order applications decreased by 3% from 590 in 2013/14 to 571 children in 2014/15.

CHART 3

Trend in Guardian ad Litem Appointments in Care Order Applications between 2010 and 2015



Breaking down statistics by way of age and gender, overall there were more male children subject to proceedings including Care. A notable exception to this more traditional trend was in 2012/13 which saw a reversal from the previous four years when there were more females than males subject to proceedings. This reversal to the more traditional position where slightly more males than females have been subject to proceedings continued in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

These figures continue a trend identified in the previous two years where children aged between one and four years represented the majority (318) followed by five to nine year olds (282). However the number of children in the one to four year old age category has decreased by 12% from the previous year and there has been a small increase in children aged between five and nine in 2014/15 from 280 to 282 children. What is notable is the 6% decrease in the numbers of ten to fifteen year olds from 267 to 251.

Overall the number of Emergency Protection Orders (EPO's) remains similar to last year with 35 applications made by HSC Trusts compared to 32 in 2013/14.

Other Proceedings

There were 38 Contact applications involving 64 children and 41 Article 58 applications to Discharge or Vary a Care or Supervision Order involving 63 children. Article 56 applications made up 34 cases and 49 children in 2014/15.

An **Article 56 investigation** may be requested by a Court in Article 8, Residence and Contact disputes and Education Supervision Order applications.

A Court directs an Article 56 investigation when the level of concern in respect of a child's welfare is such that it may warrant the granting of either a Supervision or

Care Order. In such cases the relevant Health and Social Care Trust is directed to undertake an investigation and a Guardian is appointed on direction of the Court.

In 2014/15 the number of appointments rose significantly from 13 to 34 (161%) from the previous year, involving 49 children. Of the investigations concluded within period (26) 16 resulted in no order, two in Supervision Orders, 4 Contact Orders, 2 Education Supervision Orders and 2 Residence Orders.

The use of **Secure Accommodation** involves the restriction of liberty of children and young people. Because many young people experience a range of multiple adversities in early childhood, of these many have often extreme and complex needs accompanied by risk taking and challenging behaviours.

Restricting the liberty of young people is a serious step and one taken only as a last resort. The importance of effective planning built around the needs of the child or young person ensuring a safe exit strategy and/or Care Plan cannot be over emphasised.

Following a marginal increase by 8% (40) in the number of Court requests for Secure Accommodation Orders ending 31 March 2014 we have seen this figure increase by a further 1% to 44 applications by March 2015.

There has been a significant decrease in the number of appointments for a Discharge/Variation of Care or Supervision Orders from 53 involving 83 children from the previous year to 41 appointments and 63 children for 2014/15. There were 38 Contact applications involving 64 children remaining similar from the previous year. Supervision appointments decreased from 10 in 2013/14 to 8, involving 14 children, with the number of Appeal appointments also decreasing to 15 involving 32 children.

Originating Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT's)

The overall number of Care applications significantly increased between 2007/08 and 2012/13. In recent years while the number of applications continued to increase per year, the rate at which this increase occurred began to decelerate in 2012/13. The number of Care applications made by individual Trusts can fluctuate year on year reflecting regional variations.

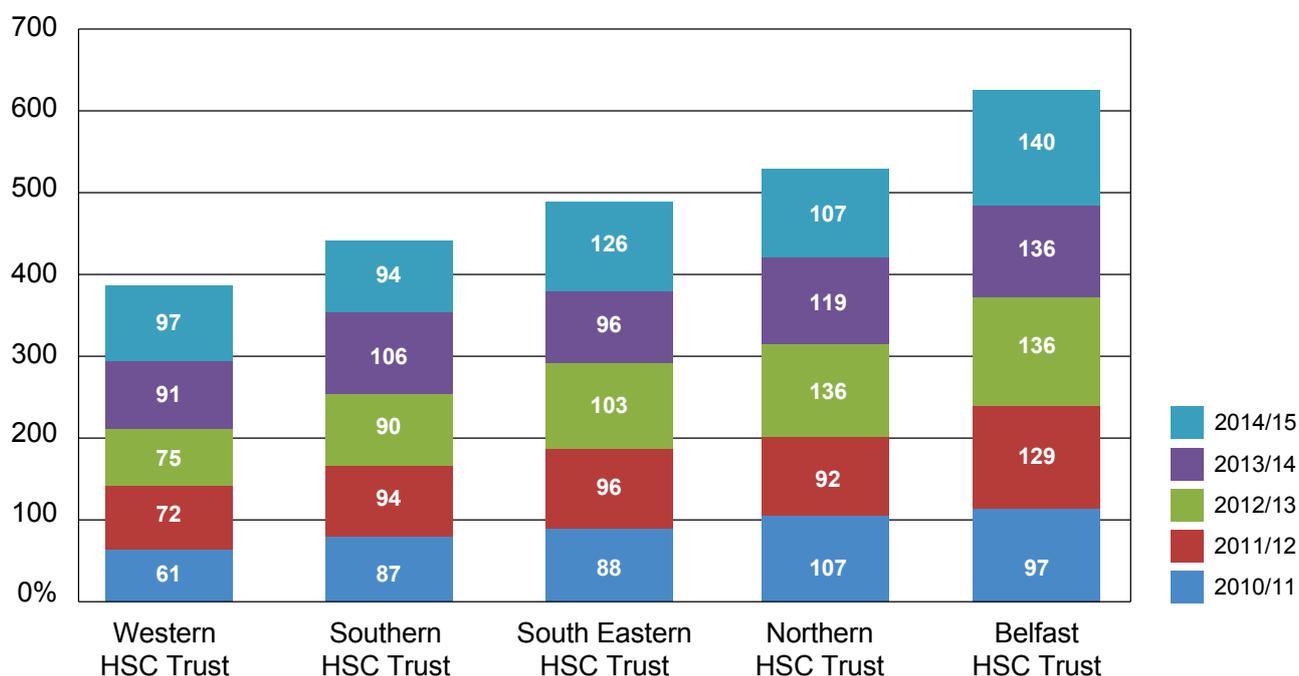
In Public Law proceedings where a Guardian was appointed, there were a total of 564 cases (2% increase) involving 876 children. The **Belfast Trust** accounted

for the highest number of Public Law applications in 2014/15, increasing from 136 to 140 (3% increase) involving 225 children.

The **South Eastern Trust** was the next highest with 126 cases and 184 children, reflecting a notable 31% increase over the previous year, while the **Western Trust** had a 6% increase (97) involving 148 children. The **Northern Trust** recorded 107 applications involving 174 children, a decrease by 11% from the previous year. The lowest number of appointments was from the **Southern Trust** from 106 to 94 applications, 145 children (13% decrease).

CHART 4

Trend in Guardian Ad Litem Appointments in Specified Public Law Applications from Originating HSC Trusts between 2010 and 2015



Court Levels

Correspondingly the largest number of Guardians appointed for Care applications was in the Belfast and Newtownabbey Family Proceedings Court, dealing with 106 cases in 2014/15. The Family Proceedings Court at Newtownards heard 63 Care applications, with Ballymena Family Proceedings Court hearing 53, East Tyrone Family Proceedings Court hearing 47 cases and Londonderry Family Proceedings hearing 40 cases. The High Court in the Royal Courts of Justice, Belfast, heard 29 cases. The largest number of Secure Accommodation applications were heard in Belfast and Newtownabbey Family Proceedings Court (15).

Duration of Proceedings

A central principle of the Children (NI) Order 1995 enshrined in article 3(2), is that delay is likely to prejudice the welfare of the child. In this context the Guardian has a number of duties, which include;

'A duty to advise the Court on the timetable appropriate to the issues and the timescale of the child concerned'.

For some considerable time, as a consequence of a year on year increase in the duration of Care proceedings under Article 50 of the Children (NI) Order 1995, there has been a growing concern in terms of planning for children's needs and concluding proceedings relative to the child's *'time frame'*. By the very nature of this work, high levels of uncertainty and anxiety impacts on decision making by both Courts and Social Work Practitioners when there are significant child protection concerns.

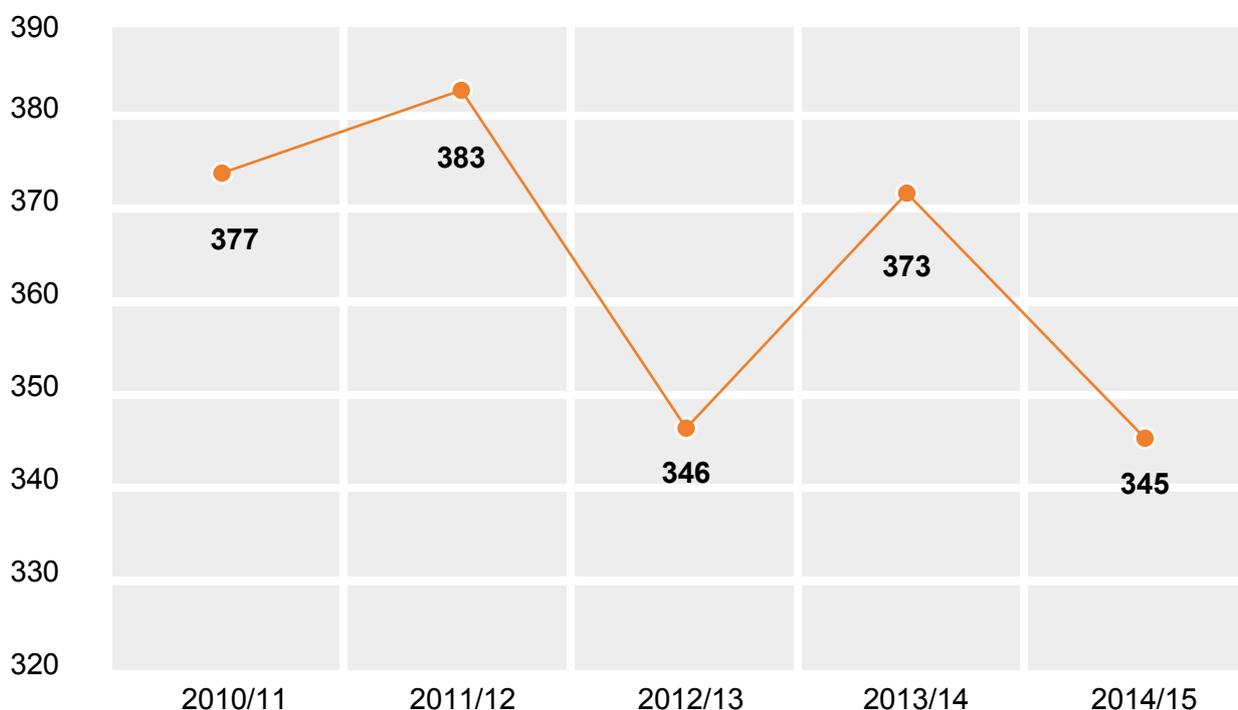
A number of case management initiatives introduced in this jurisdiction as well as in England and Wales, highlights the importance of minimising delay in Public Law proceedings. New initiatives introduced by the Children and Families Act (2014) have led to a renewed focus on social work assessments. The Act provides the legislative framework for implementing recommendations made by the Family Justice Review (2011) supported by a revised Public Law Outline (PLO). The new measures include the introduction of a 26 week limit for completing Care and Supervision proceedings.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland (DOJ), are taking forward a joint initiative on Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings Pilot.

While there has been a slight decrease in the average number of days (345) required to conclude Care proceedings (see Chart 5 Page 29), on average it still takes approximately one year for Courts to make judgements about parents' ability to meet their children's needs, based on assessments of parental capacity to change. Despite case management initiatives, it has been discouraging to note that following an 11% decrease in the duration of proceedings in 2012/13, the average number of days increase in 2013/14 by 8% (from 346 to 373). The current figure returns us to that achieved in 2012/13.

CHART 5

Trend in the Average Duration of Care Proceedings 2010/2011 - 2014/2015



Focus on Adoption Proceedings

The role of the Guardian in Adoption proceedings is governed by the Adoption (NI) Order 1987 which defines the welfare of the child as the first rather than the paramount consideration. Guardians are appointed in a diverse range of cases under the legislation including “Freeing” proceedings which typically involve looked after children in respect of whom the HSC Trust applies to Court to dispense with the birth parents consent to adoption; “Placement Adoption” applications from those who have been approved to adopt and have a child placed for adoption; “Step-Parent Adoption” where the birth parent and step-parent apply to adopt the child of one of them; “Inter-Country Adoption” which relates to all applications to adopt children

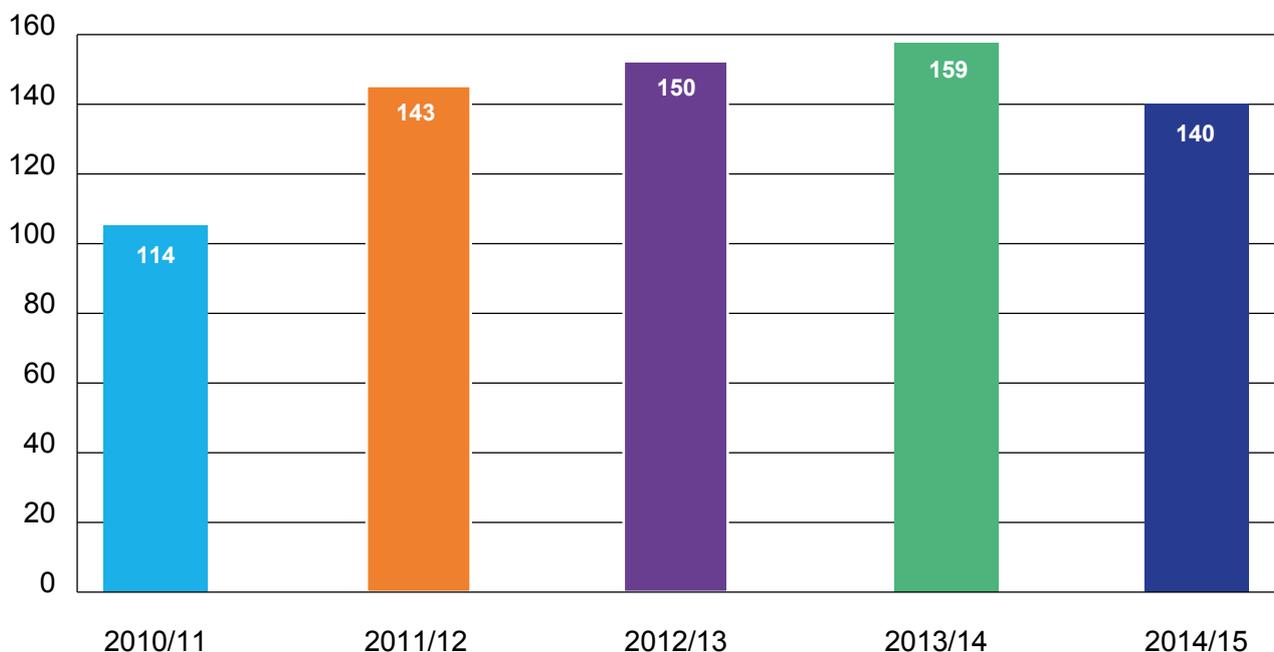
who originate from outside the jurisdiction. It is hoped that proposals to revise legislation which will incorporate provisions to reflect current developments in adoption practice will be issued for consultation in the near future.

In 2014/15 appointments of Guardians in Adoption cases accounted for 20% of the workload. It should be noted that 6 Parental Order applications under the Human Embryology and Fertilisation Act were categorised as Adoption Groups cases pending revisions to the NIGALA Case Information System which will categorise these cases separately.

There was a 13% reduction in Adoption appointments in 2014/15. The number of Adoption Group applications (140) is the lowest since 2010/11.

CHART 6

Number of Adoption Group Applications by Year



Adoption Trends

There were 57 Placement Adoption applications in respect of 65 children compared with 79 cases involving 90 children in the preceding year. The gender breakdown was 39 boys and 26 girls with the majority of children (43) in the 1-4 age range. There was a slight increase in the number of Step-Parent Adoption applications 19 compared to 16 in 2013/14.

While there was a slight decrease in the number of Freeing Order applications, 46 compared to 48 in the preceding year, the number of children involved (69) was higher than in 2013/14 (63). The majority of children in respect of whom Freeing Order applications were made (46) were in the 1-4 age range with a gender mix of 27 boys and 19 girls.

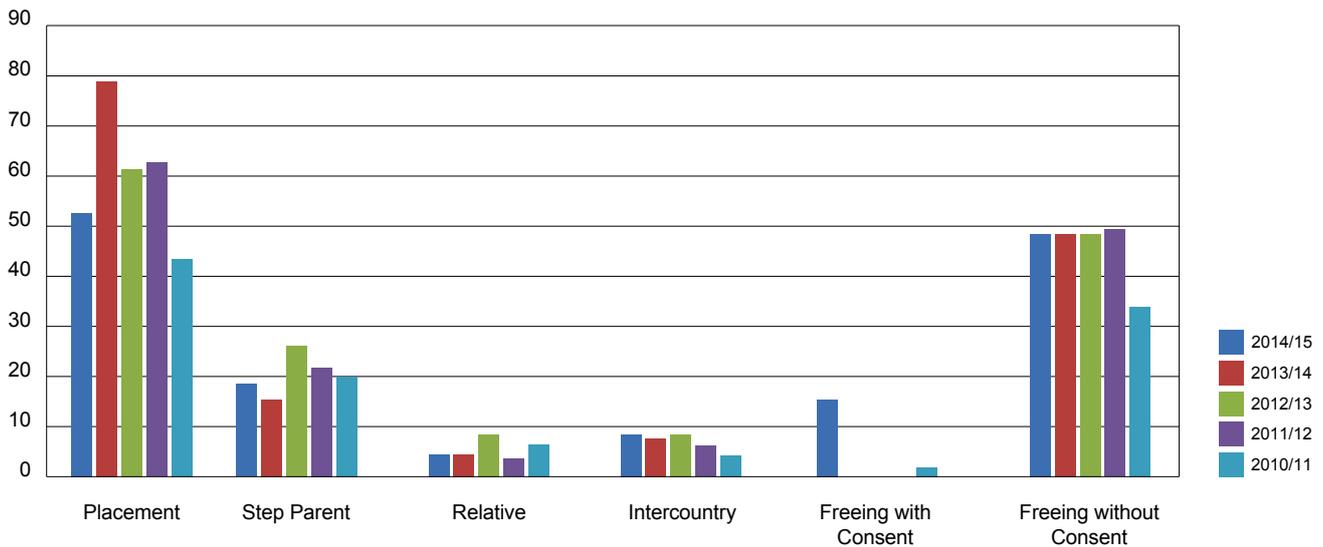
Freeing Consolidated proceedings, which combine Care and Freeing applications once the decision to seek permanence via adoption is reached, remain low in number. There were 4 cases in respect of 4 children (3 aged under 1) compared with 6 in 2013/14. The respective merits of securing Care Orders and issuing subsequent stand alone Freeing proceedings relative to Freeing Consolidated proceedings warrants interdisciplinary debate.

Balancing Human Rights imperatives enshrined in Articles 6 and 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the need to secure child centred outcomes, in a timely manner, are undoubtedly not easy to reconcile. The Home on Time-Placing Children through Concurrent Care-Project being progressed regionally will hopefully achieve the aim of speeding up the process for young looked after children either returning home to their parents or being adopted by their carers.

There was a slight increase in Step-Parent Adoptions (19) compared with 16 in the preceding year. Inter-country Adoptions increased from 7 in 2013/14 to 9.

CHART 7

Breakdown in the Number of Applications in Adoption Proceedings between 2010/2011 - 2014/2015 by Type

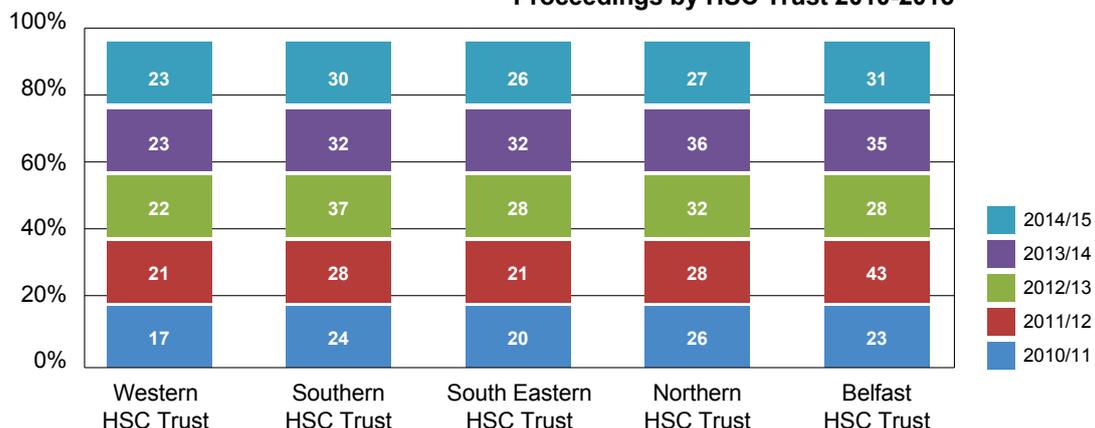


Adoptions by HSC Trust Area

Comparison of adoption activity across the five HSC Trusts relative to 2013/14 shows an overall decrease. The Western Trust showed a slight increase (23) compared to 20 in 2013/14. The Northern Trust had 27 adoptions compared with 36 in the preceding year, followed by the South Eastern Trust where appointments decreased from 32 to 26. Both the Southern and Belfast Trusts had slight reductions in adoption activity for the reporting period (35 to 31 and 32 to 30 respectively) when compared with 2013/14.

CHART 8

Trend in Guardian Ad Litem appointments in Adoption Group Proceedings by HSC Trust 2010-2015



The majority of Adoption proceedings were dealt with at County Court/Care Centre level 95 cases relative to 49 cases in the High Court. Belfast Care Centre dealt with 64 cases, Craigavon 15 cases with single figures in the remaining Care Centres.

Duration of Proceedings

Timescales for completion of Placement Adoptions (159 days) remained on a par with 2013/14.

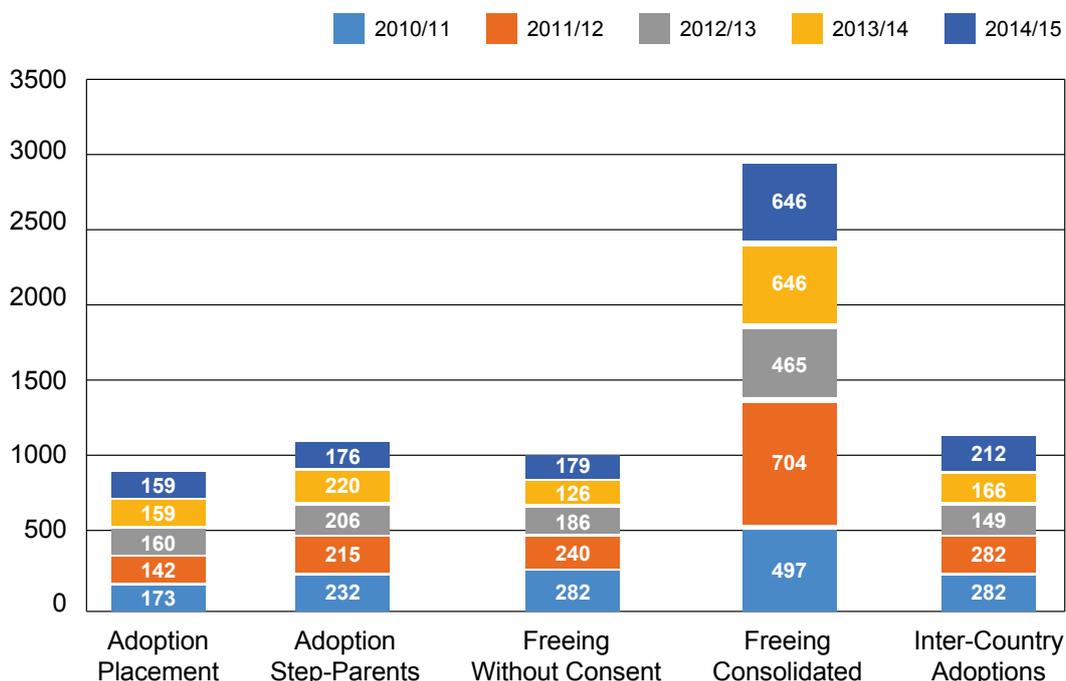
There has been a significant increase in the duration of both Freeing and Freeing Consolidated cases. The duration of Freeing proceedings rose from 126 days in 2013/14 to 179 days. The increase in

duration of Freeing Consolidated rose from 477 in 2013/14 to 646. This is a source of concern as significant delay and uncertainty in making determinations about a child's family for life is contrary to timely decision making dictated by the child's timescales.

There was also an increase in the duration of Inter-Country Adoption with an average duration of 212 days compared with 166 days in the preceding year. Given the small numbers of children involved and the complex nature of Inter-Country Adoption it is difficult to account for the increase. While the duration of Freeing Consolidated proceedings looks stark the merits of concluding Care proceedings and issuing subsequent Freeing proceedings can be the source of substantial delay.

CHART 9

Trend in Average Duration of Adoption Type Proceedings between 2010 to 2015



Inter-Country Adoptions

There was a slight increase in the number of Inter-Country Adoptions from 7 to 9. It should be noted that adopted children who come from a designated country e.g. China and Thailand do not have to obtain an Adoption Order in Northern Ireland. The figures for Inter-Country Adoption are therefore not reflective of the total number of children adopted from abroad in any year.

Staff Learning and Development

Introduction

The staff who work for NIGALA are the Agency's number one resource. As such they need good quality training, both to keep up to date with developments and to acquire new knowledge and skills. NIGALA strives to assure its Board, the Department and the public that it is doing what it is supposed to and that it is doing this to a high standard. Through a range of quality improvement mechanisms we strive to know what we are doing well and to improve the areas where we could do better.

Staff Development

Each year a series of internal training events are run for Guardians. These are set out in the annual Agency Training and Development plan. In 2014/15 training was provided on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in November 2014 by the Sector Manager for safeguarding in the South Eastern HSC Trust seconded to manage the Senior Practitioners attached to Operation Owl.

A Barrister specialising in Family and Child Law and a full time Lecturer at the Law Institute, did a day long training event on court skills for Guardians in December 2014.

One of the highlights of the year was the one day course provided by *Talking Mats*. Talking Mats is a social enterprise based in Scotland whose vision is to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them.

This communication tool was highlighted to the Agency by way of the *Children's Participation Working Group*. NIGALA is keen to support direct work with children and young people in accordance with the Guardian role. Talking Mats is one method of engaging with children and young people. Talking Mats is not computer based and does not require technical expertise — it is, as it suggests, carried out on simple household mat with visual pictures/symbols.

Twenty Guardians took up the opportunity of this training along with some colleagues from the *Child Care Centre* in Belfast (a centre that specialises in working with children who have been sexually abused). All who completed the training found it very useful and helpful in their work and indeed there have been some instances since the training in April 2014 whereby a Guardian who has become proficient in the use of the tool has mentored another colleague who was unable to attend the training.

As part of NIGALA *Learning and Development Strategy*, we are keen not only to evaluate training post-event but also to ensure that the impact of the training is evaluated some months afterwards to gauge the true value of the learning and to certify that valuable resources invested in training are having an impact on practice. Such time delayed evaluation was carried out on Talking Mats nine months after the training. The comments that came back from staff were positive with the following being typical –

I think it's a really useful and successful tool to use for direct work with children, including with quite young children of 4 - 6 years which is very unusual. Everyone I've used them with - about 8 in total - has responded positively and I think talked in more detail than they might otherwise have done to express their views or explain how they feel.

- Guardian commenting on Talking Mats



*Margo Mackay, Talking Mats trainer
with Jean Tubman, Guardian*

Another successful training event during the year was *An Introduction to Coaching* delivered by *Advance Coaching*. The rationale behind this training was to develop a coaching culture within NIGALA in line with recommendations from the *Investors in People* (IiP) review in July 2012. The Agency has integrated coaching into the *NIGALA Professional Development Framework* and is committed to integrating coaching behaviours into all areas of its business, but particularly through areas of peer support such as Professional Development Groups.

NIGALA is fortunate to have a very experienced and knowledgeable workforce but whilst we have a tradition of providing training from external sources, we believe we could much better harness the knowledge and skills of our professional staff and ensure greater knowledge exchange.

In all we had four full day sessions between January and March 2015, thereby ensuring that all our staff: Administration, Management and Guardian, were trained in coaching. The training included sessions on *Understanding Coaching* (including defining coaching, key coaching skills and conversations), *Understanding Self Coaching* (such as qualities of a good coach, emotional intelligence and resilience) and *Creating the Context and Structure for Coaching* where attendees looked at areas like trust and a code of ethics.

NIGALA views this coaching training as the beginning of a process of embedding a coaching culture within the Agency. *Advance Coaching* is due to meet with the Senior Management Team early in the new business year to feedback on their reflections of the Agency and to start to formulate a plan for the further implementation of coaching throughout the organisation in the year to come.



Staff getting interactive with coaching!

As well as providing a programme of internal training Guardians, Managers and Admin staff attended numerous external seminars, workshops and conferences throughout the year to ensure their knowledge and skills are kept up to date. Some examples are listed below –

- BAAF Legal Seminar - Freeing Order Applications: Exploring the Implications of Recent Case Law;
- BAAF Workshop - Care Planning for Non National Children: Cultural Considerations;
- NISCC – Social Work Award Ceremony;
- HSC Leadership Centre - Information Asset Owner Senior Information Risk Owner Training;
- University of Ulster - Resilience: Maintaining Staff Morale and Quality Standards at a time of Shrinking Resources, Clark Baim;
- Adoption UK – Knowing You, Knowing Me – Life Story Work: Therapy of Child’s Play, Joy Rees and Louis Sydney; and
- Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Conference: The Business Benefits of Equality, Human Rights based approaches and Diversity.

Joint Guardian/Solicitor Training

Following the development of the NIGALA Solicitor Panel in 2013, a programme of joint training for Guardians and Solicitors commenced in October 2013 and included the following –

- The Toxic Trio – Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence and Mental Health;
- Child Sexual Exploitation.

Quality Assurance

The legislative mandate for NIGALA is unchanged since 1995, but the context within which the Agency operates has changed significantly over the years. Increased workload demands, the Guide to Case Management in Public Law proceedings and the forthcoming Joint Departmental Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings Pilot have combined to determine the need to refine the role of the Guardian. The RQIA Independent Review of the Governance Arrangements of the NIGALA, (March 2013) identified the need for enhanced accountability in live cases whilst safeguarding the Guardians’ professional independence. Specific reference was made to the Guardians’ reports –

NIGALA should keep under review the format of Court reports to make sure that they are sufficiently analytic and provide only relevant information in a format that is both succinct and proportionate to the complexity of the case. NIGALA should introduce a system of quality assuring live reports produced by Guardians.

During the year work continued on the development of the overarching Quality Assurance Framework that supports accountability arrangements, tracking the Guardians’ input in a case from allocation to case closure to evidence compliance to quality standards. NIGALA has had a set of Professional Standards since 2007 and as part of the *Social Care Governance Committee action plan 2014/15*, it was agreed that NIGALA would review the NIGALA Professional Standards.

The Standards relate to the day to day work of the Guardian in their role as the independent representative for the child or young person and are specific to the practice of the Guardian. In reviewing the Standards, it was agreed that they remained fit for purpose but needed to better reflect service user outcomes and evidence of meeting the standards. The reviewed standards were approved by the Social Care Governance Committee (SCGC) in March 2015 and following consultation with staff will be implemented in 2015/16.

As with the Standards revision, this plan will be consulted on with staff prior to implementation.

In 2014/15 NIGALA undertook three audits in respect of:

- Adoption Reports;
- Child Sexual Exploitation Reports of Cases Reported to the Thematic Review of Child Sexual Exploitation; and
- Recording Practice.

Audit of Adoption Reports

An audit was carried out on adoption reports with regard to timeliness, quality and compliance with statutory requirements and a report on this audit brought to SCGC in March 2015. The audit originated from the *Social Care Governance action plan 2014/15* and tasked the SCGC with ensuring that Guardians are fulfilling the statutory obligations placed on them under Adoption (NI) Order 1987.

The report was compiled jointly by the Assistant Director with responsibility for adoption within the Agency and the Quality Assurance and Training Manager. A random sample of ten adoption case files

were selected for audit to include freeing and placement adoptions. The sample comprised eight placement adoption and two freeing cases. The reports were audited against the following:

- Compliance with statutory requirements;
- Lodgement on time in line with Court directed submission date;
- Use of appropriate report format;
- Quality of information;
- Overall layout and presentation; and
- Identification of recurrent issues/themes.

Overall a high standard of report writing was identified within the audit with a number of the reports being considered as exemplars of good practice by the auditors. The report also highlighted the importance of opportunities for training and development to address the challenges of adoption. The themes relating to the availability and quality of lifestory work and differing contact arrangements could usefully form the basis of a future audit to consider issues that could be addressed within the regional adoption forums.

Child Sexual Exploitation Reports of Cases Reported to the Thematic Review of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

In 2013 the then Minister for Health, Mr Edwin Poots announced that the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) would conduct a Thematic Review into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Northern Ireland. In 2014 NIGALA Senior Management Team undertook an audit of the court reports presented to Court by Guardians Ad Litem in these cases to identify any learning and recommendations for future practice.

The audit, based on the SBNI's Terms of Reference, involved children subject of both Care and Secure Accommodation applications, a number of which constituted repeat applications involving the same child or young person.

The files were audited against the following criteria:

- The nature and quality of assessments;
- The effectiveness of care planning, risk assessment, risk management and review processes;
- The adequacy and effectiveness of the provision of care;
- The adequacy effectiveness and timeliness of Agencies response to any of the 22 children being reported as absent from any placement or setting without permission and responses to allegations of criminal offences being committed against any of the 22 children;
- The effectiveness of reporting and information sharing systems; and
- The involvement and support provided by Senior Management to frontline staff.

Overall the cases reviewed highlighted the cumulative impact of multiple adversities manifested by children and young people placing themselves in a range of high risk situations where they may have experienced further abuse or harm. Overall the cases audited accurately identified and commented on the core areas of concern and risk, with Guardians providing evidence of assessments which were clear, concise and analytical. The Thresholds for intervention for Secure Accommodation were deemed to have been met in all the cases reviewed.

Building on existing Standards of Practice, NIGALA in 2014 undertook staff training on Child Sexual Exploitation and further to NIGALA's internal review will incorporate the Child Sexual Exploitation and Risk Framework into the Agency's Risk Analysis Framework.

Recording Practice

A significant challenge facing NIGALA in recent years has been how best to balance the growing demands on Guardians Ad Litem while maintaining high Standards of Practice which is child focused and timely. Part of this work has included reviewing Standards of Practice in the context of Agency Policies. In 2014 an audit was carried out on recording practice which considered the important function of recording as part of the Professional role, including evidencing 'quality' and 'accountability'. As a result NIGALA has revised its Recording Policy strengthening links with legislation and information standards.

Evaluation of Black Minority Ethnic Practice

During the year an evaluation of working practices within the Agency in working with children and families from Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities was undertaken. In recent years the population of Northern Ireland has diversified, with the number of ethnic minorities more than doubling between 2001 and 2011. Research in the area of working with ethnic minorities in the care system remains limited and there is a significant lack of information in the Northern Irish context.

The main objectives of this study were to consider the volume of cases referred to NIGALA from ethnic minority groups in 2013/14; examine the location of cases by HSC Trust; identify case characteristics,

examine case durations and the number of Court hearings; and generate knowledge from the cases about cultural competence in the Agency.

A mixed methods approach was adopted in order to offset the weaknesses of using single methodologies. Data collection involved three tools, a file audit to review identified cases, a questionnaire administered to all Guardians and semi-structured interviews with ten Guardians.

The Agency has undertaken to share the findings of the evaluation both locally and nationally, is undertaking to have the work published in both a journal and electronic form and to hold a launch of the findings for staff, Panel Solicitors and other interested parties.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)

Service User Engagement and Personal and Public Involvement

Core themes for NIGALA in 2014/15 were:

- to enable stakeholders to influence and actively contribute to the strategic direction, effective operation and on-going development of the Agency;
- to put in place a mechanism for the effective engagement of children and young people into relevant NIGALA policy development and decision making processes; and
- to ensure effective feedback from service users and stakeholders.

To further these aims a number of initiatives were undertaken in 2014/15 and include the following:

Stakeholder Events

Care Proceedings in Northern Ireland - A Snapshot Study.

In 2014/15 NIGALA presented the results of this study in a series of seminars to a range of professionals including Trust Social Workers and Management along with Solicitors involved in Family Law. The study, albeit small, indicated some key themes in compliance to Northern Ireland Guide to Case Management (2009), the timeliness of Trust Article 50 applications and provided some insight into factors influencing delay.

The study was further presented to the Childcare in Practice Annual General Meeting on 26 June 2014 and was presented as Cafe Conversations to the Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care (NICON) conference on 5 and 6 March 2014. In addition the study formed the basis for two seminars to legal and social work professionals in 2014.



Figure 2 (l-r) Bernard Mitchell (NIGALA Chair), Jerome Dawson (DHSSPS), Patricia Nicholl (CEO NIGALA), Michael McCluskey (AD Acting NIGALA) and Anthony Douglas (CEO CAF/CASS)

Tackling Delay and Working Together.

On 13 February 2015 NIGALA hosted a Stakeholder Event at the Antrim Civic Centre. As part of an on-going action plan the event focused on the need for improved liaison between NIGALA and HSC Trusts and also focused on the pending DHSSPS Pilot on Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings.

55 people attended in total, including Practitioners and Management from each of the HSC Trusts, representative from the HSCB, members from the DHSSPS members of NIGALA including Guardians ad Litem, members of the Executive Team and the Board Chair.



Figure 3 Attendees at the NIGALA single Agency breakout session

Further to the event NIGALA proposes to convene further joint events with the Trusts involved to further explore the issues for the Pilot in 2015 when the Terms of Reference and timescales of, and arrangements for, the Pilot are clarified.

In addition, NIGALA will convene a meeting with the Principal Practitioners of the 5 Trusts to further examine broader liaison arrangements going forward.

Consultation with the Judiciary

During 2014/15 the Agency continued to convene one to one bi-annual meetings with representatives from the judiciary including the Head of the Family Division of the High Court, Mr Justice Maguire. Meetings took place on the 19 May 2014 and 16 December 2014.

The Chief Executive also attended a meeting between the Directors of Childcare for the Trusts and the Head of the Family Division of the High Court on the 30th June 2014, to discuss matters of common interest.

In addition, the Agency continued to collaborate with the judiciary through regular attendance of the Chief Executive at COAC meetings and attendance of Operational Managers at regional Family Court Business Committees.

Effective Engagement of Children and Young People

During 2014/15 NIGALA has progressed this matter with the assistance of the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC). VOYPIC produced a Benchmarking Paper which, along with a scoping exercise by NIGALA of arrangements for involving children and young people by other Childcare Agencies in Northern Ireland and CAFCASS in England and Wales, will form the basis of the Agency's approach to the engagement of children and young people in NIGALA.

Further to a workshop with NIGALA Senior Management Team a draft strategy for the participation of children and young people was devised. Further consultation on the draft strategy will be undertaken with young people before proposals are presented to the Agency's Board for approval.

Children's Report

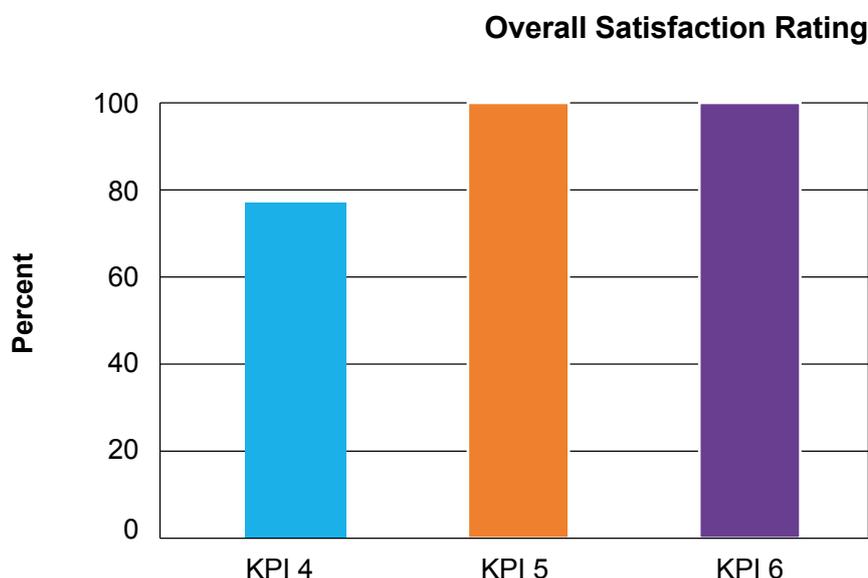
In 2014/15 NIGALA progressed the development of a Children's Report. This document holds the child's views and comments from the Guardian as how those views were expressed in court and if the Guardian was recommending something to the contrary, the reasons why. This form could be kept by the child or included in the child's file. NIGALA will be implementing this form in 2015/16.

Service User and Stakeholder Feedback

All Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to the satisfaction of service users and stakeholders with the service were met in 2014/15. Three KPIs relate to service feedback and are reported here in detail. The DHSSPS set the Agency a KPI of **75%** of responses to our survey from stakeholders to give a satisfaction rating of **'good'** or **'excellent'**. The satisfaction rating among the stakeholders is detailed in Chart 10 below.

In addition, NIGALA seeks quantitative and qualitative information from service users and key stakeholders on an annual basis. Such information provides baseline data for the Agency to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the service and the experience which users and stakeholders derived from its service delivery.

CHART 10

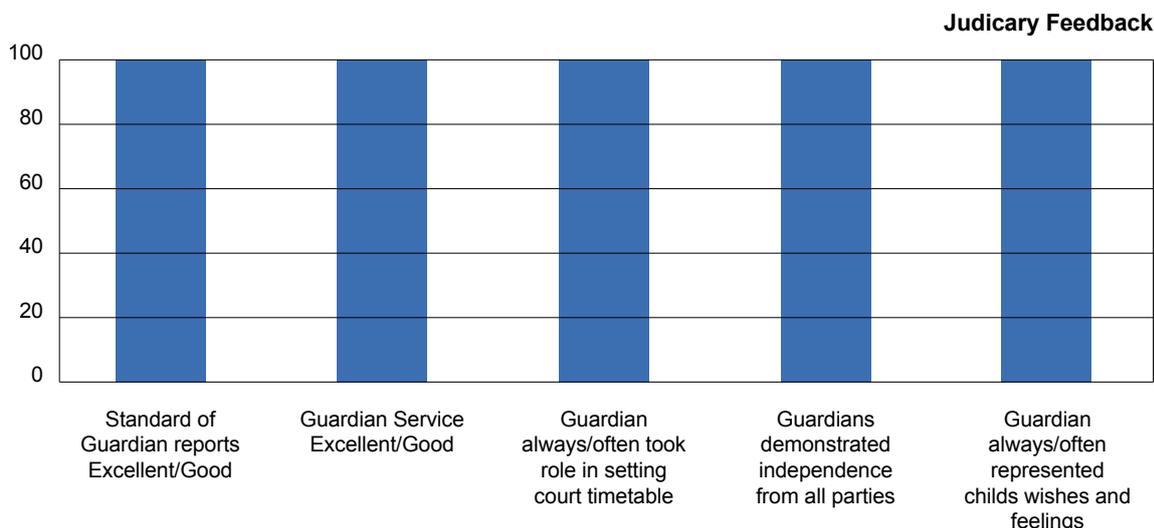


Evaluation of the Guardian ad Litem Service by the Judiciary

7 out of 18 members of the Judiciary returned feedback (39%).

The Agency sought more detailed response from the Judiciary on the key roles of the Guardian ad Litem in Court proceedings.

CHART 11



The results are as follows:

- 100% respondents found the Guardian’s oral evidence to be clear and well substantiated;
- The standard of Guardian reports was described as either ‘excellent’ (86%) or ‘good’ (14%);
- All the respondents felt Guardians ‘always’ (57%) or ‘often’ (43%) took a role in setting the court timetable;
- All the respondents gave an overall assessment of the Guardian ad Litem service as either ‘excellent’ (71%) or ‘good’ (29%);
- All respondents (100%) found Guardians, ‘always’ represented the child’s wishes and feelings; and
- All of the respondents (100%) felt the Guardians demonstrated independence from all parties.

Overall, while the responses from the Judiciary are positive there is a need to improve feedback rates. NIGALA will review the details of those Judiciary who have not responded on a consistent basis with a view to assessing why this is the case.

In addition the Judiciary provided some individual comments:

- “Generally the standard is very good indeed”;
- “Most reports evidence their findings well and identifying the pertinent issues”;
- “It would be excellent if all reports were lodged on court directed date”; and
- “They answer questions put to them well and clearly state their position with concise reasons”.

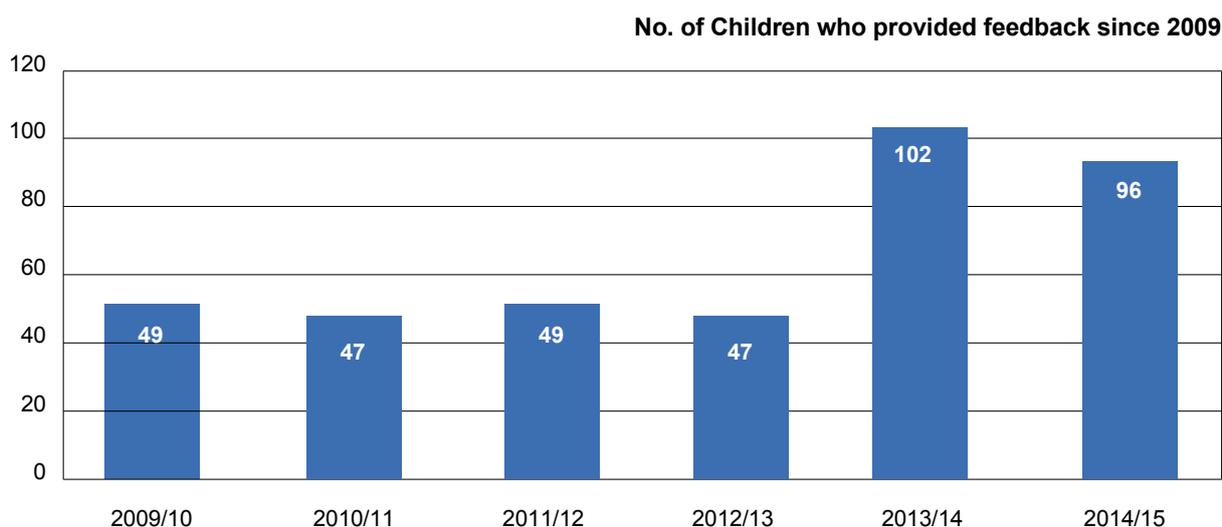
Feedback From Children

Between April 2014 and March 2015 NIGALA sought feedback from young children through several ways:

- **Paper questionnaires.** - These were forwarded to younger children.
- **On Line feedback through the Viewpoint system (On Line Interactive Electronic Questionnaire).** - This was offered to children over the age of 7.

NIGALA aims to obtain feedback from a representative sample (10%) of children in the relevant age groups availing of the NIGALA service. This represents a percentage decrease of 5% when compared with figures from April 2013 – March 2014 [N= **102**]. The feedback sample represents 8.5% of children availing of NIGALA services in 2014/15.

CHART 12



Feedback through Viewpoint was completed by the child or assisted by VOYPIC. The process of assistance from VOYPIC (in these circumstances and on request VOYPIC will complete the questionnaire through a structured interview process with the child) was halted from September 2014 to January 2015 following review of spending in the context of required 2.5% efficiency savings.

As a consequence from April 2014 – March 2015, 34 children have completed feedback through Viewpoint.

Evaluation of the Guardian ad Litem Service by Children and Young People-

Paper questionnaires.-These were forwarded to younger children under the age of 9 and children who chose this method or for whom this method was deemed more suitable. 62 paper questionnaires were returned. Girls and boys gave responses in equal numbers.

77% reported their Guardian as either 'excellent' or 'good'. 92% of the children reported that they 'definitely' or 'most of the time' understood what the Guardian had said to them. 90% reported that they mostly or definitely found their Guardian easy to talk to. 94% felt their Guardian had 'mostly' or 'completely' listened to what they had said.

Viewpoint Questionnaires- 104 Viewpoint questionnaires were offered to young people. 54 young people (52%) opted for the opportunity to complete the feedback themselves, 50 (48%) opted for VOYPIC assisted feedback. 34 (30%) were completed overall.

19% of the 54 young people who opted to complete their questionnaires alone returned responses compared to 40% of those referred to VOYPIC. This may indicate the value of continued involvement of VOYPIC in the process of seeking children's feedback using Viewpoint.

Profile of Children and Young People who Provided Feedback (on Viewpoint)

Not all respondents completed the profile queries, however, from those who provided this information the following profile emerges. Of the Viewpoint questionnaire respondents [N = 33]: 30.3% were male and 69.7% were female.

The Nature of Proceedings via Viewpoint

Data from the Viewpoint questionnaire [N = 33] indicates that:

- 81.8% respondents were subject to Care Order proceedings;
- 6.06% of respondents were subject to Adoption proceedings under the Adoption Order; and
- 12.12% of respondents were subject to an application for Secure Accommodation.

Satisfaction with Service through Viewpoint

The Viewpoint questionnaire asked participants to rate their satisfaction on a sliding scale of 0-100. All the children answered the question and 77% gave their Guardian a rating of 70 or more.

61% of Viewpoint respondents indicated a satisfaction rating of 100. Comparison with figures from 2013-14 indicates an increased satisfaction rate from the children who responded.

The Context Within which Guardians Engage with Children and Young People

Young people were asked about their ability to discuss areas of concern with Guardians. Viewpoint responses indicated that, against this background, of those who responded to this question:

- 75% of respondents rated their Guardian as having between a 70-100 score in listening to what they had to say; and
- 77% of respondents felt their Guardian asked how they felt about issues and about what was being decided in court.

Best Interests Decisions

An inherent element of the Guardian role is the requirement to act in the best interests of the child/young person which may, on occasion, be contrary to the wishes of the child. In such circumstances, this may impact on the expressed level of satisfaction of young people with their Guardian. When correlation is undertaken between the two questions:

- Overall, how happy were you with your Guardian?; and
- Did you and your Guardian agree with what should happen next?.

The feedback established that, where respondents indicated the Guardian agreed with their decision, satisfaction ratings of over 70 were 46.35%, compared to satisfaction ratings over 70 of 17% where the Guardian disagreed with the child's view of what should happen.

Children's Comments

Children's comments on the Guardian varied. On the issue of overall satisfaction with the Guardian ad Litem children's comments through Viewpoint were:

- "She did listen quite well";
- "I was very pleased with my Guardian and she was my favourite social worker ever!!!"; and
- She is kind, gentle and very understanding".

Time Spent with the Child

In relation to the question of the Guardian's level of contact with children the children's Viewpoint comments indicated a need to be aware of the impact of time spent with some children.

82% of children felt their Guardian had spent enough time with them. 18% did not feel so. Some comments from these children included:

- "I think we should have had more of the Guardian";
- "We did not meet enough"; and
- "It improved with time".

The comments from these children reinforce the need to negotiate with children at a satisfactory level of contact.

Evaluation of the Guardian ad Litem Service by the NIGALA Solicitor Panel

- **43 out of 72 Solicitors have returned feedback forms (60%);**
- 100% of responses to our survey of accredited Solicitors gave a satisfaction rating of 'good' (16%) or 'excellent' (84%);
- 100% of Solicitors reported Guardians' reports as 'excellent' (86%) or 'good' (14%);
- 100% of Solicitors reported Guardians always clearly reflected children's wishes and feelings;
- 100% of Solicitors felt Guardians' oral evidence was (a) well substantiated and (b) clear;
- 100% of Solicitors reported Guardians 'always' (57%) or 'often' (43%) took a role in setting the Court timetable;
- 100% of Solicitors reported Guardians demonstrated independence from all parties; and
- Solicitors reported the overall standard of the Service as 'excellent' (71%) or 'good' (29%).

Notable issues arising from the feedback are those of Guardians playing a role in timetabling of cases more often and the continued strength of the Guardians' independence.

In 2015/16 NIGALA will, as part of its reconstitution of its Solicitor Panel, reintroduce reciprocal feedback between Solicitors and Guardians.

Comments Made by the Solicitors About the Guardians ad Litem

Several themes emerged out of comments made by Solicitors:

1. A High Standard of Service;

- » *"I have always had a very positive experience of the Guardians I work with. My experience is that the Guardians are impartial, excellent problem solvers and bring high levels of professionalism to their work".*
- » *"The GALs are extremely busy but remain focused on each case to a very high standard which is of enormous help to a panel solicitor".*
- » *"I have been impressed in all the dealings I have had with GALS both in cases when I have been instructed by GAL and in cases when I represent a parent. The GAL will almost always bring their considerable experience coupled with objectivity to proceedings and this is almost always very positive contribution for the Court to consider and be guided by".*

2. A Range of Experience and Practice

- » *"As with any organisation there is a spectrum of service provision by GALs. In the main however the service is of a very high standard"*
- » *"Not all Guardians operate in the same way. Some are more experienced and effective than others. Effort should be made to maintain the highest standards".*

3. Concern About the Impact of Future Changes on the Guardians Role.

- » *"The GALs may find that, due to financial constraints in Trusts, that they are required to carry out additional in-depth investigation/ research and that they will have to be 'stronger' with the Trust to ensure best interests of children".*
- » *"Personally, I find the GALs are at times forced to 'fight their corner' now more than ever due to Trust and Courts determination to close cases prematurely".*

Feedback will be analysed and an action plan to address emerging themes taken forward through the NIGALA Social Care Governance Committee.

Other Matters Related to Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)

Involvement in Regional PPI Forum

NIGALA has continued its involvement in the regional PPI Forum, contributing and obtaining information on other projects at enhancing engagement with service users.

DHSSPS Standards for PPI

NIGALA has adopted the Standards for Audit of PPI Involvement launched by the DHSSPS in March 2015. The Agency carried out an audit against the standards in October 2014 when they were first drafted through the Regional PPI Forum. The Agency will carry out a new audit of the Agency's compliance to the standards in 2015/16 in light of changes that have occurred to the standards on final launch.

PPI Screening

NIGALA has introduced screening of new policies for the need to consult with service users or stakeholders. The Screening Process is based on guidance developed by the Regional PPI Forum and considers whether the Policy should be subject to consultation, how wide and what level such consultation should take.

Feedback on the Management of Complaints

NIGALA has developed a feedback form for service users and staff to enable both to provide feedback on how the Agency has managed complaints by service users.

Response to Consultations

NIGALA completed responses to the following consultations during 2014/15

- Consultation on the recommendations contained in Sir Liam Donaldson's report- *The Right Time, The Right Place*.
- Consultation on the Social Work Research Strategy;
- Consultation on the proposals for the *Rationalisation of the Court Estate*;
- Consultation on the *Examining the Use of Expert Witnesses appearing in the Courts in Northern Ireland*;
- Consultation on the *DHSSPS Draft Budget 2015/16 Consultation*; and
- Consultation on the *'Response on Access to Justice (2) Northern Ireland'*



Ms Patricia Nicholl
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

9 July 2015

Date

Section 5

Sustainability Report



Sustainability Action Plan

As outlined in the NIGALA Sustainable Development Plan the Agency is committed to putting sustainable development at the centre of its business processes and this commitment is highlighted in the NIGALA Corporate and Business Plan 2014/15. As part of the DHSSPS objectives within the Sustainable Development Strategy “Everyone’s Involved” and the Strategy Implementation Plan “Focused on the Future”; NIGALA has produced a Sustainability action plan for 2013-17 with all actions monitored annually by the Executive Team and six monthly by the NIGALA Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

During 2014/15 NIGALA revised its in house recycling facilities for waste and put in place a group to look at less paper working. NIGALA has promoted its flexible working approach and put in place initiatives such as the ‘Cycle To Work Scheme’, encouraging the use of public transport through the Translink Tax Smart Card and Commuter Link Card, along with promoting the use of teleconferencing and the promotion of sustainable development practices which are outlined in the bi-annual NIGALA staff newsletter.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee, which reports to the NIGALA Executive Team, has a responsibility to promote measures which ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff at work and for oversight of the NIGALA Sustainability action plan.

The Committee has representation from Administration, Guardians Ad Litem, and Management, and also representation from each NIGALA office.

The Committee meets twice yearly and during 2014/15 met on the following dates:

- 25 June 2014; and
- 3 February 2015

The following initiatives were undertaken during 2014/15:

- Annual review of Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee Terms of Reference;
- Completion of annual office risk assessments and reporting to Health Estates Investment Group (HEIG);
- DSE risk assessments continuing for staff;
- Appointment of two additional First Aid Officers for NIGALA, Centre House;
- Publication of the annual Health and Safety Newsletter;
- Oversight of the NIGALA Sustainability action plan;
- Oversight of the NIGALA Property Asset Management Plan;
- Carecall awareness raising sessions for staff;
- New Deputy Fire Warden appointed for NIGALA, Centre House;
- Staff completion of annual Fire Awareness E-Learning module;
- Provision of annual report to the NIGALA Board; and
- Annual review of fire safety and health and safety compliance via Departmental Controls Assurance Standards in which substantive compliance in both areas has been achieved.

NIGALA has access to an Occupational Health Service. In addition the Agency continues to fund and operate a programme of employee assistance and confidential counselling through the Carecall organisation.

Our Buildings

NIGALA holds three office accommodation leases sited strategically in Belfast, Londonderry and Armagh. All leases are due for review in August 2015 and NIGALA has put in place an Accommodation Steering Committee in November 2014 with representatives from the DHSSPS, Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) Department of Legal Services (DLS) and NIGALA to ensure that Strategic Outline Business Cases are prepared for approval by the DFP.



Ms Patricia Nicholl
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

9 July 2015

Date

Section 6

Committee Reports including the Remuneration Report



The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report

This Committee is responsible to the Board for reviewing the establishment and maintenance of an effective system of integrated governance, internal control and risk management across the whole of the organisation's activities. In carrying out this work the committee will primarily utilise the work of Internal Audit, External Audit and other assurance functions.

The Committee met on the following dates in 2014/15:

- 29 May 2014;
- 24 June 2014;
- 8 October 2014; and
- 27 February 2015.

Its membership is as follows:

- Mr David Watters (Chair);
- Mr Fred Smyth; and
- Dr Karen Winter (Effective from 17 July 2014).

NIGALA can confirm that Internal Audit, External Audit and representatives from the Business Services Organisation (BSO) attend the Audit Committee. The Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) and the Corporate Services Manager are the Executive Officers responsible for servicing the Audit Committee.

The following activities were undertaken by the Audit Committee in 2014/15:

- review of the three year Internal Audit plan;
- reviewed progress against issues raised by Internal Audit;
- considered the External Audit Plan;
- monitored progress on the NIGALA Risk and Governance Processes;
- review of the Mid-Year and Annual Governance Statement;
- completed a review of the Committee's effectiveness;
- ensured the NIGALA Accounts were prepared in accordance with the relevant statutory regulations; and
- provided assurance to the NIGALA Board on the Risk Assurance Framework.

In respect of all audits in 2014/15 conducted by BSO Internal Audit on NIGALA - 'Satisfactory Assurance' was received on:

- Financial Review;
- Information Governance;
- Governance including a Review of Board Effectiveness; and
- Risk Management.

In respect of the implementation of previous priority two recommendations at Mid-Year and again at Year End. At Year End 87% of the 37 recommendations examined have been fully implemented, 13% have been partially implemented.

Summary findings were also provided by the Internal Auditor in relation to BSO Shared Services functions which NIGALA contracts with for services.

The following assurance levels were reported to the NIGALA Audit Committee:

Audit	Assurances
Recruitment Shared Service	Satisfactory
Payments Shared Service	Satisfactory – overall Limited - Duplicate Payments
Payroll Shared Service	Limited

NIGALA has sought assurance from the BSO Accounting Officer that actions have or will be put in place to ensure contracted services meet satisfactory assurance by the time of the next audit.

The Remuneration Report

The Remuneration Committee; a Sub Committee of the NIGALA Board exists to advise the full Board on:

- The performance, development, succession planning and appropriate remuneration and Terms of Service for the Chief Executive;
- The setting of robust objectives, performance measures and evaluation processes for the Chief Executive;
- The oversight of appropriate contractual arrangements for the Chief Executive including the proper calculation and scrutiny of termination payments taking account of such national guidance as is appropriate; and
- The contractual arrangements and level of fees and expenses to be paid to the self-employed contracted members who have been appointed to the Agency's Panel for the purposes of undertaking Guardian ad Litem work.

The Remuneration Committee is also responsible for the determination of the remuneration of Senior Managers and, in the case of NIGALA, this is confined to the Chief Executive since the introduction of Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions of Service for all other members of staff.

Guidance on remuneration of Senior Managers is issued centrally by the DHSSPS.

Assessment of performance of the Chief Executive is carried out annually by the Board Chairman who makes a full report including a recommendation to the Remuneration Committee on the percentage of Performance Related Pay (PRP) to be awarded.

The assessment of performance is carried out following annual appraisal and the review of performance against Chief Executive objectives set at the beginning of the financial year.

Remuneration Committee Membership

The Remuneration Committee membership is as follows:

- Mr Bernard Mitchell – Committee Chair (Board Chair);
- Mr David Watters; and
- Mr Fred Smyth.

The Human Resource Director of the Business Services Organisation, with which NIGALA has a Service Level Agreement for personnel services attends upon invitation.

The NIGALA Corporate Services Manager attends upon invitation.

The committee met on the following dates in 2014/15:-

- 29 May 2014; and
- 4 July 2014.

Policy Statement on Remuneration of the Chief Executive

The overall objective of the Senior Manager remuneration arrangements is to achieve a fair, transparent, affordable and defensible pay and grading system for all Senior Executives employed across the HSC.

Executive Pay Arrangements as would this section be

The main components of the arrangements are:

- pay and Terms and Conditions of Service for the Chief Executive are determined by the DHSSPS;
- the Chief Executive post is subject to evaluation by the DHSSPS Evaluation Panel which is responsible for the management, maintenance and integrity of the evaluation process;
- pay ranges will be reviewed annually and the effective date for any extension of the pay ranges following review of the ranges by the Minister will be 1 April in the year of the review; and
- there will be progression through the pay range subject to fully acceptable performance.

Service Contract 2014/15

Ms Patricia Nicholl was appointed as Chief Executive of NI Guardian ad Litem Agency on a permanent basis commencing 15 April 2013. She accepted Senior Executive Terms and Conditions of Service under the current Senior Executive Contract.

HSC appointments are made on the basis of the merit principle in fair and open competition and in accordance with all relevant legislation. Unless otherwise stated the employee/s covered by this report are appointed on a permanent basis, subject to satisfactory performance.

Notice Periods

3 months' notice is to be provided by either party except in the event of summary dismissal. There is nothing to prevent either party waiving the right to notice or from accepting payment in lieu of notice.

Early Retirement and Other Compensation Schemes

During the 2014/15 year there were no departures agreed in relation to early retirement or other compensation schemes as disclosed in note 3.4 to the accounts on page 118.

Salary and Pension Entitlements

The salary, pension entitlement and the value of any taxable benefits in kinds paid to both Executive and Non-Executive Directors is set out in the table page 56. (This information is subject to audit):

There is a requirement for the Remuneration Report to include a Single Total Figure of Remuneration. The figure includes salary, bonus/performance pay, benefits in kind as well as pension benefits. The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decreases due to a transfer of pension rights. This is also included on the following page.

Senior Employees Remuneration (Audited)

2014/15		2013/14								
Name	Salary £000s	Bonus / Performance Pay £000	Benefits in kind (rounded to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits £'000	Total £'000	Salary £000s	Bonus / Performance Pay £000	Benefits in kind (rounded to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits £'000	Total £'000
Non Executive Member										
Bernard Mitchell	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	-	-	-	-
David Watters	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Gillian McGaughy	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Fred Smyth	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Karen Winter	0-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Greg Kelly	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Ann McMahon	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Alistair Steenson	-	-	-	-	-	0-5	-	-	-	-
Executive Members										
Patricia Nicholl ⁴	55-60	-	500	19	75-80	55-60	-	200	-5	55-60
Ronnie Williamson ⁵	-	-	-	-	-	5-10	-	-	-	-

⁴ Performance related pay in respect of Patricia Nicholl was not available at time of publication as the Senior Executive Circular was not yet approved by the DHSSPS.

⁵ Ronnie Williamson retired on 11th April 2013 therefore no Performance Related Pay was due.

Pensions of Senior Management (Audited)

Name	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60	Total accrued pension at age 60 and related lump sum	CETV at 31/03/15	CETV at 31/03/14	Real increase in CETV after adjustment for inflation and changes to market investment factors
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Non Executive Members ⁶					
Bernard Mitchell	-	-	-	-	-
David Watters	-	-	-	-	-
Gillian McGaughey	-	-	-	-	-
Fred Smyth	-	-	-	-	-
Karen Winter	-	-	-	-	-
Executive Members					
Patricia Nicholl	2.5-5	80-85	399	436	24

⁶ Please note that the salary bandings for each board member within the remuneration table are reflective of applicable salary increases following the Senior Executive pay award payable from 1 April 2014. Approval in respect of this was not granted until 14 May 2014 and as such the CETV values noted above have been calculated using pre adjustment salary figures.

HSC Superannuation, Pension Schemes and Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

As Non-Executive members do not receive pensionable remuneration, there will be no entries in respect of pensions for Non-Executive Members. Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capital value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued as a member accrued benefits in any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme.

CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme, or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when a member leaves the scheme or chooses to transfer their benefits accrued in their former scheme. The Pension figures showing relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2004/05 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefits in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the HSS Pension Scheme.

They also include any additional pension benefits accrued to the member as a result of them purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost. CETVs are calculated within the guidelines of framework prescribed by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

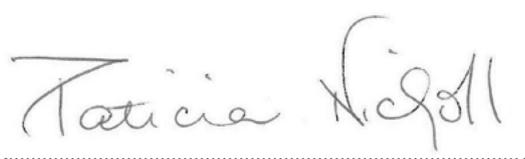
Real increase in CETV – this reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It takes account of the increase of accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employees (including the value of any benefits transfer from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses column market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Fair Pay Statement

The Hutton Fair Pay Review recommended that, from 2011/12, all public service organisations publish their top to median pay multiples each year. The DHSSPS subsequently issued Circular HSC (F) 23/2012, setting out a requirement to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the most highly paid Director in the organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation’s workforce. Following application of the guidance contained in Circular (F) 23/2012, the following can be reported:

Fair Pay (Audited)	2014/15	2013/14
Band of Highest Paid Director’s Total Remuneration:	55-60	55-60
Median Total Remuneration	47,088	47,088
Ratio	1.2	1.2

Further details about the Health Service pension arrangements can be found at the website www.hscpensions.hscni.net



9 July 2015

Ms Patricia Nicholl
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

Date

Social Care Governance Committee Report

The Social Care Governance Committee supports the Board in all aspects of Social Care Governance by providing an objective review of the adequacy and effectiveness of controls systems and processes in place to support the delivery of the Guardian ad Litem service to children and young people.

Activities of the Committee

The Committee has developed an action plan based on its Terms of Reference. The activities of the Committee under its terms of reference are as follows:

- Ensure compliance with quality, safety and standards in Health and Social Care;
- Monitor Professional Standards for the Guardian ad Litem Service;
- Ensure the Agency meets Social Care Delegated Statutory Functions in Adoption and Public Law proceedings;
- Ensure appropriate organisational arrangements to learn lessons from serious professional risk, adverse incidents and complaints;
- Ensure appropriate Personal and Public Involvement including stakeholder and user feedback;
- Compliance with Professional regulation;
- Supporting research and education and associated governance; and
- Considering other matters excluding finance that pertain to good Social Care Governance.

The Committee's Terms of Reference require it to meet a minimum of 4 times per year. Given its early history the Committee continued to meet bi-monthly and met on 6 occasions during 2014/15. The dates are as follows:

7 May 2014	18 November 2014
25 July 2014	21 January 2015
25 September 2014	18 March 2015

Membership

During 2014/15 the Committee saw a changed membership with the appointment of two new Board Members (a new Chair and a Non Executive Director). In addition the Committee established a pool of 4 Guardians ad Litem who would attend as required. The new Guardians ad Litem were provided with separate Terms of Reference from the other members of the Committee.

The Committee membership is as follows:

- Dr Karen Winter – Committee Chair;
- Mrs Gillian McGaughey;
- Ms Patricia Nicholl (Chief Executive);
- Mr Michael McCluskey (Assistant Director);
- Mr Peter Reynolds (Assistant Director);
- Ms Patricia O'Kane (Assistant Director);
- Mr Declan McAllister (Corporate Services Manager);
- Mrs Ann Hopkins (Guardian ad Litem);
- Mrs Teresa Fallon (Guardian ad Litem);
- Mrs Anne Christie (Guardian ad Litem); and
- Mrs Brenda Sheeran (Guardian ad Litem).

Under its Terms of Reference, the Committee has carried out the following activities in 2014/15:

- ***Ensure Compliance with Quality, Safety and Standards in Health and Social Care***

Following its Audit of Compliance with HSSPS (HSC) Quality standards relating to “Safe and Effective Care” in 2013/14 the Committee monitored the implementation of recommendations during 2014/15. The Committee’s proposal to review two other HSSPS standards as part of its 2014/15 action plan was not implemented as these were replaced by audits of Child Sexual Exploitation files in support of the Regional Thematic Review and an audit of Guardian recording practice.

- ***Monitor Professional Standards for the Guardian ad Litem Service***

During 2014/15 the Committee reviewed and gave approval to updated professional standards for Guardians ad Litem within the Service. These updated standards took account updated standards for the profession in general and the development of outcome and client focused standards (as a recommendation of the review of HSPPS standards above). The standards were linked to the implementation of the NIGALA Accountability Framework which emanated from an RQIA report recommendation for the Agency to “review of the role of supervision, appraisal and general file review and GCIS in supporting the maintenance of accountability leading to recommendations for change”.

In November 2014 the SCG Committee approved a revised NIGALA Quality Assurance Mechanism. The paper proposed that the Agency introduce an Audit Mechanism for Professional Practice.

During 2014/15 the Committee approved the implementation plan for the

Accountability Framework and will monitor its implementation during 2015/16. In addition the Committee reviewed an audit on professional recording.

- ***Ensure the Agency meets Social Care Delegated Statutory Functions in Adoption and Public Law Proceedings***

In 2013/14 the Committee developed a detailed summary of the statutory functions of a Guardian ad Litem and the Agency.

During 2014/15, at each meeting, the Committee reviewed a Social Care Statutory Functions report which details data from the NIGALA Business Performance Report as it relates to case activity.

In addition the committee reviewed annual reports on the compliance of Guardians ad Litem to statutory functions under Adoption Legislation. This annual audit provided a positive picture of compliance.

The Committee has begun review of matters relevant to Section 75 of the Reform (NI) Act and is seeking an annual report on issues arising from Guardians involvement with Section 75 service users, particularly ethnic minorities.

- ***Learning Lessons from Serious Professional Risk, Adverse Incident Management and Complaints Management***

During 2014/15 the Committee reviewed, at every meeting, risks on the Agency’s Risk Register that relate to professional practice and made recommendations as appropriate. The format of review reports in 2014/15 have been amended to provide the Committee with more detail of the incidents involved and more focus on the lessons learned. As part of its on-going focus on lessons learned the Committee has, as its action plan each year, a

requirement to access any completed Case Management Reviews, and will seek to establish any relevant lessons for the Agency and action as appropriate.

In 2014/15 the Committee reviewed and approved the Agency's protocol for considering and referring cases to the "Safeguarding Board" for consideration of a Case Management Review. In Addition, while no case Management Reviews were considered by the Committee during 2014/15, the Committee did review those cases that NIGALA had referred to the "Safeguarding Board" and the outcome of such, during the period.

- ***Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Including Stakeholder and User Feedback***

In 2013/14 the Committee clarified the Agency's statutory responsibilities in this area and established an action plan to monitor the Agency's implementation of PPI.

In 2014/15 The Committee reviewed the Agency's action plan for PPI which, among other matters (referenced in this report under PPI) focused on the identification of named Executive and Non Executive leads a for PPI, the development of proposals to enhance the involvement of children in Agency decision making, developing children's feedback mechanisms in individual cases and the development of a revised Complaints Policy.

- ***Professional Regulation***

During 2014/15 the Committee sought an annual report from the Agency as to status of professional registration of Guardians with the N.I. Social Care Council. The Committee reviewed the circumstances of an incident of failure to comply with workforce regulation requirements and approved an Agency action plan to prevent such reoccurrences.

- ***Research and Education Governance***

As part of its remit for 2014/15 the Committee has been appraised of on-going research within the agency on "An Evaluation of Practice within NIGALA in Working with Families from Black/Minority Ethnic Communities." The Committee has also in 2014/15 approved the agency's strategies for Training Induction and Staff Support and will monitor their implementation in 2015/16.

- ***Other Matters Excluding Finance That Pertain to Good Social Care Governance***

The Committee's Terms of Reference require to be reviewed annually. The Terms of Reference were reviewed and approved by the Board in February 2014 and will be presented to the Committee meeting for further review in June 2015.

The Committee has approved its action plan for 2015/16 which, in addition to its on-going monitoring functions, is in large part monitoring the implementation of action plans arising from reviews in 2013/14. In particular will be the implementation of the Accountability Framework and the Agency's involvement in the joint DHSSPS/ DoJ Pilot in Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings.

The Committee has in addition developed a mechanism for self-assessment and has undertaken this during 2014/15.

Overall, the Committee continues to play a strong role in the assurance of Social Care Governance in the Agency.

The Information Governance Committee Annual Report

This Committee is responsible to the Board for the development and implementation of the information governance agenda and ensuring that robust objectives, performance measures and evaluation processes are in place to provide an effective system of control of information across the whole of the organisation's activities. In carrying out this work the Committee primarily utilise the work of internal audit and other assurance functions. The Committee met on the following dates in 2014/15:

- 29 April 2014;
- 23 September 2014;
- 25 November 2014; and
- 3 February 2015.

Its membership is as follows:

- Mr Fred Smyth, Chair;
- Mrs Gillian McGaughey;
- Ms Patricia Nicholl (Chief Executive);
- Mr Michael McCluskey (Assistant Director);
- Mr Declan McAllister (Corporate Services Manager); and
- Mr James Lawne (Information and Records Officer).

The following activities were undertaken by the Information Governance Committee:

- Review of Information Governance Committee Terms of Reference;
- Review of the NIGALA Information Governance action plan incorporating the monitoring of the Information Commissioner's Recommendations following an Information Loss Incident;
- Progress and assurance on the implementation and monitoring of the Unreturned Case Files Strategy;
- Review of progress on the transfer of technology and data project from NIGALA to BSO ITS;
- Oversight of Information Requests Received by NIGALA;
- Oversight and progress of reintroduction of the RFID case file tracking system;
- Review of progress on the development of the Guardian case management system (GCIS);
- Monitoring and review of the appraisal of historical records held in long term storage; and
- Completion of an Annual Report by the Chair of the Committee which provides assurance to the NIGALA Board on the work of the Committee.

Risk Management Report

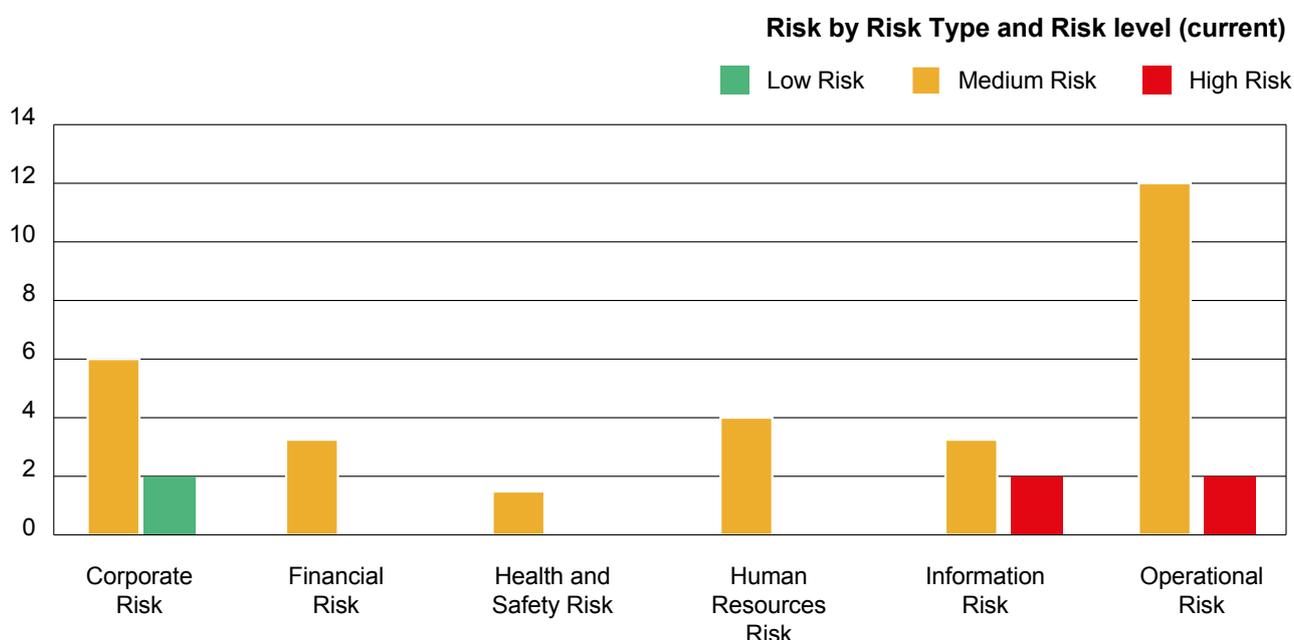
The work of the NIGALA Risk Management Committee (Executive Committee) during 2014/15 has involved the regular review of the NIGALA Risk Register and the identification of appropriate controls and actions necessary to mitigate against risk.

The Senior Management Team has kept the Corporate Risk Register under review on a monthly basis with a complete review of the Risk Register by the Risk Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which has responsibility for the oversight of Risk Management is provided with regular reports on the NIGALA Risk Register, Risk Action Plan progress and Risk Assurance Framework.

Chart 13 and the associated table below show all current risks by risk types and levels at the 31 March 2015.

CHART 13



Risk Area	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Total
Corporate Risk	2	6	0	8
Financial Risk	0	3	0	3
Health and Safety Risk	0	1	0	1
Human Resources Risk	0	4	0	4
Information Risk	0	3	1	4
Operational Risk	0	12	1	13
Total	2	29	2	33

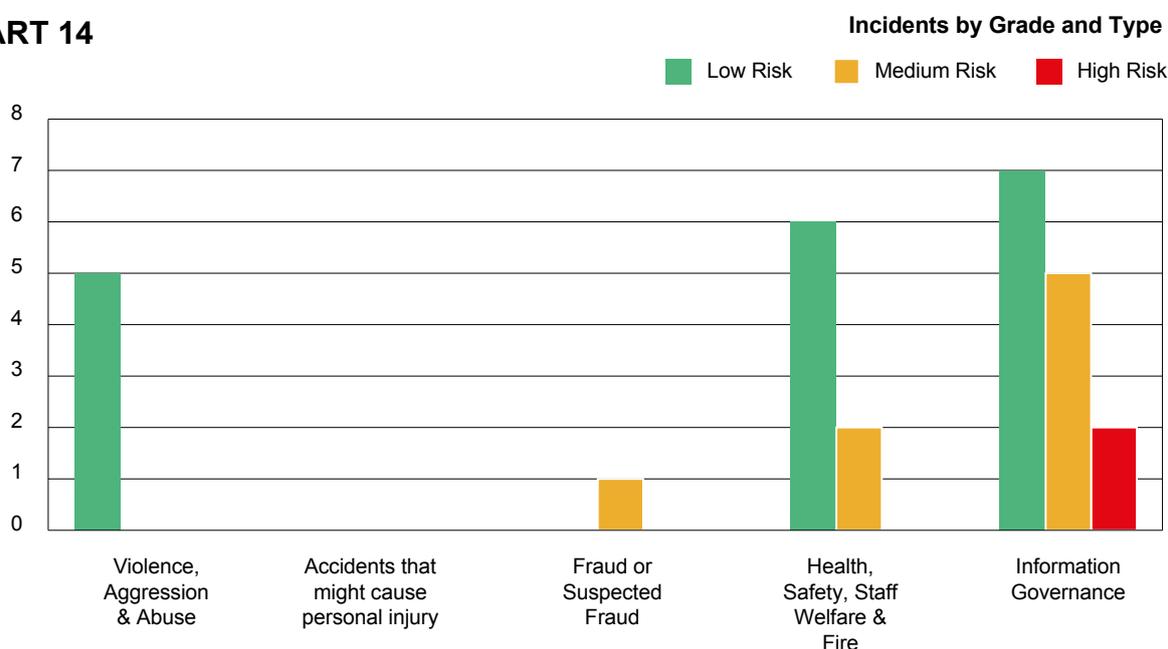
The Risk Management team has completed 124 actions in relation to reducing risk, managing incidents, updating standings and implementing controls during 2014/15.

Numbers and Types of Incidents

In support of the management of risk, NIGALA has an effective incident management system in place to capture the categories of incidents. During the year 2014/15 there were 28 reported incidents (see chart and table below).

Five incidents were linked to violence, aggression and abuse of staff. Eight of the incidents were in relation to health, safety, staff welfare and fire, two of which were considered medium risk and six low risk. One incident was in relation to fraud or suspected fraud. With regard to information governance, there were a total of 14 incidents recorded, 7 of which were considered low risk, five graded at medium risk and two as high risk. One of the high risk incidents related to a data handling matter and involved a near miss information loss which was reported to the Information Commission.

CHART 14



Risk Level	Violence, Aggression & Abuse	Accidents that might cause personal injury	Fraud or Suspected Fraud	Health, Safety, Staff Welfare & Fire	Information Governance	Total
Low Risk	5	0	0	6	7	18
Medium Risk	0	0	1	2	5	8
High Risk	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total	5	0	1	8	14	28

The Risk Management Committee takes staff safety extremely seriously and it is not uncommon for Guardian ad Litem staff to suffer verbal abuse in the conduct of their duties. All incidents are managed by an individual manager with all outcomes and lessons learned recorded and relevant actions plan implemented to ensure policies and procedures are updated and to avoid any recurrence.

Numbers and Types of Comments, Compliments and Complaints

A key element which also informs the management of risk is the NIGALA Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and reporting system. During the period 2014/15 NIGALA received a total of 24 Comments, Compliments and Complaints; 6 arriving by email, 8 by formal letter, 4 in person and 5 via telephone. These are outlined in the table below:

	Email	Letter	Personal	Phone	Total
Comment	3	5	3	4	15
Compliment	3	2	1	0	6
Complaint	0	2	0	1	3
Totals:	6	9	4	5	24

Compliments:

NIGALA received a total of 6 compliments in period with 4 compliments reflecting the positive work of the Guardians Ad Litem in cases. One of the compliments was from adoptive parents praising the work of the Guardian ad Litem during proceedings. One compliment was received from an independent fostering agency that was extremely positive about the role of the Guardian and the specific role of listening to the child.

Comments:

A total of 15 comments were received. 5 of these comments were received initially as complaints made by parents (one made by third party on behalf of parents). As the complaints related to case matters which were still live before the court, the parents/complainants were advised the issues being raised could only be dealt with in the court arena. NIGALA still recorded these as comments. 2 of the 5 parents/complainants decided not to pursue/follow up after case closure and 1 of the initial complaints is still live before the Court.

One comment was a complaint made by a non-party in a children case which was live before the Court and therefore the complaint could not be accepted, however the complainant was offered the

opportunity of a meeting to discuss issues raised, however this was not taken up.

Further comments included a NIGALA Panel Solicitor querying their number of case-related appointments, four comments from the Judiciary with respect to querying the need for a hard copy annual report, practice in a case, querying the allocation of a case and the fourth comment was expressing discontent a Guardian ad Litem did not attend Court. It transpired the date had been changed and the Guardian ad Litem had not been advised.

A member of an independent organisation commented with regard to a case that they felt the child's welfare was not being treated with paramount importance and is effectively lost within proceedings. A meeting took place to discuss the comment and the issue was resolved.

Three comments were received from Guardians Ad Litem regarding Line Manager support.

Complaints:

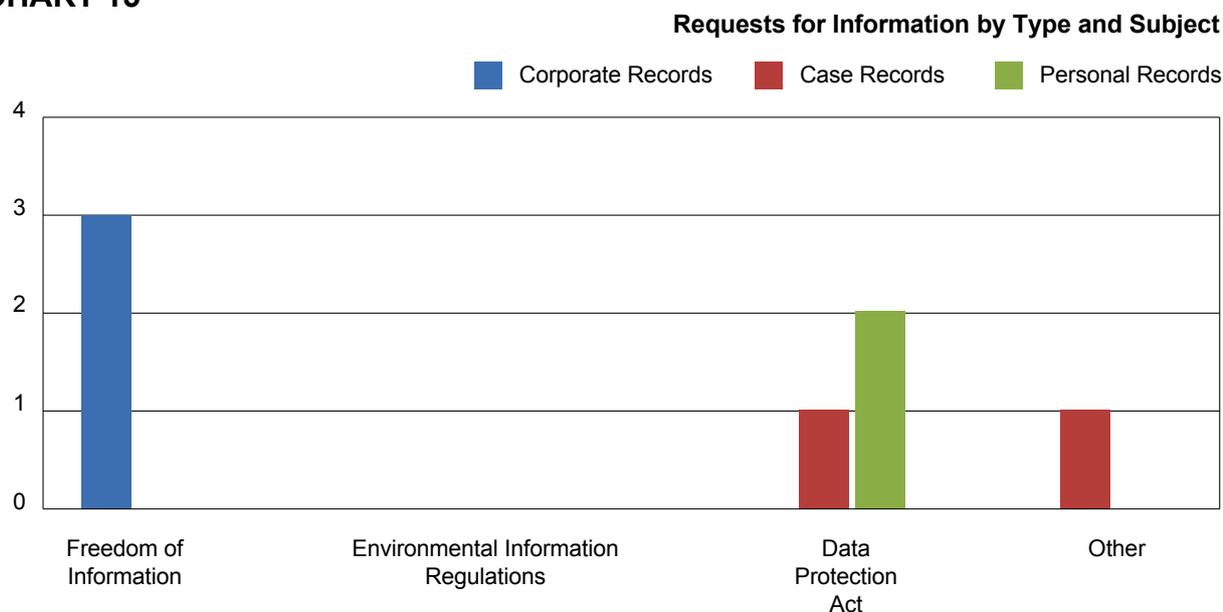
NIGALA received a total of 3 case-related complaints in period. One complaint was made by a parent, another by adoptive parents, and the third complaint was made by prospective adoptive parents. Two of these complaints were resolved at Stage

1 local resolutions of the NIGALA Complaints Procedure and one complaint proceeded to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. All actions and lessons learned are recorded by the responsible Manager and implemented where relevant across the organisation.

Requests for Information

NIGALA received 7 information requests in the 2014/15 year as illustrated below:

CHART 15



The table below details the outcome of the requests received by the Agency.

Request type	Number received	Number responded to within timescales	Notes
Freedom of Information – Corporate Records	3	3	All requests were responded to within timescale and no further correspondence was received in relation to these requests
Environmental Information Regulations	0	0	
Data Protection Act – Case Records	1	1	This request was responded to within timescale and no further correspondence was received in relation to this request.
Data Protection Act – Personnel records	2	2	All requests were responded to within timescale and no further correspondence was received in relation to these requests.
Other Information Requests	1	1	This request was responded to and dealt with and no further correspondence was received in relation to this request.

Section 7

Financial Review



Financial Review

The Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency receives an annual “grant in aid” allocation from the DHSSPS made up for both capital and revenue amounts, which it manages through a strict system of internal financial control. Under the Management Framework and Financial Memorandum agreed with NIGALA’s sponsoring unit at the DHSSPS, the Agency accounts have been prepared on the going concern basis. Management are not aware of any conditions or events, currently or in the future, that would bring this assumption into question. The accounts have been audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). An unqualified opinion on the financial systems and accounts has been provided by NIAO.

Financial Position

For the accounting period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 NIGALA met its breakeven target with an underspend of £10,085 which is within the 0.25% target. Under the capital allocations provided to NIGALA during 2014/15 a small underspend of £650 has been recorded which is within capital Accounting Policy.

Financial Summary

Post Balance Sheet Events

There were no post Balance Sheet events.

Charitable Donations

NIGALA did not make any charitable donations during the year.

Pension Liabilities

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the Agency and employees pay specified percentages of pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DHSSPS. A full disclosure is referenced in the Annual Accounts in Section 8 note 1.20.

Prompt Payment Policy

NIGALA is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Confederation of British Industry’s Prompt Payers Code. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is the latter. Regular reviews conducted to measure how promptly NIGALA paid its bills found that 94% of bills were paid within this standard. The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002 provides small businesses with a statutory right to claim interest on the late payment of commercial debt. During the year, NIGALA incurred no interest payments.

Audit

The accounts and supporting notes relating to NIGALA’s activities for the year ended 31 March 2015 have been audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General is included on Page. So far as the Chief Executive is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which NIGALA’s auditors are unaware. The Chief Executive has taken all the appropriate steps to ensure awareness of any relevant audit information and to establish that the entity’s auditors are aware of that information.

The external audit fee for the year ended 31 March 2015 was £9100.

National Fraud Initiative

NIGALA has participated in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) during 2014/15 and has ensured that all items identified have been checked and updated with the BSO Shared Services centre. The NFI fee for 2014/15 was £1,232.

Annual Accounts

These accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 have been prepared in accordance with Article 90(2) (a) of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, as amended by Article 6 of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, in a form directed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The full set of Financial Statements in Section 8 outlines the financial performance of the Agency over the period. However, to gain a more complete picture of the activities and performance of the Agency, the Auditor's report for the year ended 31 March 2015 should also be consulted.

Section 8

Financial Statements for The Year Ended 31 March 2015





NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

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**NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

FOREWORD

These accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 have been prepared in accordance with the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009, in a form directed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES.

Under the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has directed the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The financial statements are prepared on an accruals basis and must provide a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency, of its income and expenditure, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the financial statements the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of Government Financial Reporting Manual (FREM) and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, including relevant accounting and disclosure requirements and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in FREM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going-concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency will continue in operation;
- keep proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency; and
- pursue and demonstrate value for money in the services the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency provides and in its use of public assets and the resources it controls.

The Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, as Principle Accounting Officer for Health and Personal Social Services Resources in Northern Ireland, has designated Patricia Nicholl, of the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency, as the Accounting Officer for the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency's assets are set out in the Accountable Officer Memorandum, issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

**NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

CERTIFICATE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 103 to 154) which I am required to prepare on behalf of the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency have been compiled from and are in accordance with the accounts and financial records maintained by the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency and with the accounting standards and policies for HSC bodies approved by the DHSSPS.

Tatiana Nigoll

9 July 2015

Chief Executive

Date

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 103 to 154) as prepared in accordance with the above requirements have been submitted to and duly approved by the Board.

Smithell

9 July 2015

Chairman

Date

Tatiana Nigoll

9 July 2015

Chief Executive

Date

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. Introduction/Scope of Responsibility

The Board of the NI Guardian ad Litem Agency ('the Agency') is accounting for internal control. As Accounting Officer and Chief Executive of the Board, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of good governance that supports the achievement of the organisation's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am responsible in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

As Accounting Officer, I represent the Agency's aims and objectives on a number of external groups which include the multi-disciplinary Children Order Advisory Committee (COAC) chaired by the Family Judge of the Royal Courts of Justice, Northern Ireland and the Law Society of Northern Ireland Solicitor Accreditation Panel. With the introduction of Shared Services Systems in 2012/13 I have ensured representation of the Agency on the Regional Organisations Partnership Forums managed by the Business Services Organisation. NIGALA is also represented on the Fostering Task Force and a range of regional working groups such the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Social Work Advisory Group, the Regional Adoption Forum and the Regional Personal and Public Involvement Forum. NIGALA recognises the inter-dependence of partner stakeholder groups aligned to Family Justice and in this regard works collaboratively with all Court Business Committees and meets regularly with NI Courts and Tribunals Service and the Directorate of Legal Services. NIGALA has been represented on the DHSSPS Adoption and Children Bill Stakeholder Group.

As Accounting Officer, I further our aims and objectives through internal committees of the organisation i.e. the Agency Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Remuneration Committee, Information Governance Committee and Social Care Governance Committee. The aims and objectives of NIGALA are also progressed through the formal sponsorship arrangements with the DHSSPS Child Care Policy Directorate.

NIGALA has a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum in place which sets out the strategic control framework within which NIGALA is required to operate, the conditions under which Government funds are provided as detailed in Government Accounting Northern Ireland. The Accounting Officer and the Chair of NIGALA appraise the DHSSPS at the highest level of engagement through twice yearly Accountability Meetings, and at the same time the NIGALA works in partnership with the DHSSPS Sponsor Branch to ensure operational and strategic issues are raised appropriately with the DHSSPS throughout the year.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Best Practice

NIGALA applies the principles of Good Practice in Corporate Governance and continues to further strengthen its governance arrangements. The NIGALA Board does this by undertaking continuous assessment of its compliance with Corporate Governance Best Practice by exercising strategic control over the operation of the organisation through a system of corporate governance which includes:-

- The regular review by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of governance documents including standing financial instructions, standing orders, the standards of business conduct for all staff and the review of this Governance Statement;
- The existence in standing orders of a schedule of matters reserved solely for Board decisions;
- The existence in standing orders of a scheme of delegation, which delegates decision making authority within set parameters to the Chief Executive and other officers;
- The agreement of regular reports which come before the Board for approval;
- A robust system for the approval of relevant Agency policies;
- The production of a Mid-Year Assurance Statement and end of year Governance Statement;
- A Board approved accountability structure of Board sub committees as outlined in Figure 1;
- Annual assessment of the Governance Controls Assurance Standard; and
- A completion of a self assessment tool for all Board committees.

The action plan from the Board self assessment for 2013/14 was progressed throughout the year and the NIGALA Board completed a further self-assessment for year ended 31 March 2015 and developed a revised action plan which it will review on a six monthly basis at Board Level to ensure continual improvement in governance and best practice.

The summary assessment for NIGALA was RAG RATED green and this includes the section on data quality and information received by the Board. There were no RAG RATED red compliance areas.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

3. Governance Framework

3.1 Role and Performance of Committees

The Board's Committee structure is outlined in figure 1 below:

FIGURE 1



The NIGALA Board has corporate responsibility to ensure the achievement of all aims and objectives set by the Minister, and for promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. The Board comprises of a Chair, four Non-Executive Directors and the Chief Executive. All Non-Executive Director positions have now been filled. The Board has delivered the following key functions:

1. Established the overall strategic direction of the organisation within the policy and resources framework determined by the Minister;
2. Overseen the delivery of planned results by monitoring performance against objectives and ensuring corrective action is taken when necessary;
3. Implemented effective financial stewardship through value for money, financial control and financial planning and strategy;
4. Ensured high standards of corporate governance and personal behaviour are maintained in the conduct of NIGALA business;
5. Appraised and remunerated the Chief Executive;
6. Made well-informed and high-quality decisions based on a clear line of sight into the business;
7. Ensured that there is effective dialogue between NIGALA and its stakeholders on its plans and performance and that these are responsive to stakeholder needs;
8. Ensured that NIGALA has robust and effective arrangements in place for social care governance and risk management;
9. Approved and reviewed progress against the NIGALA Communication Strategy; Learning and Development Strategy; Professional Development Framework and Accountability Framework;
10. Revised the NIGALA Standing Orders;
11. Revised the Terms of Reference for the Board sub Committees; and
12. Overseen the Social Care Governance Action Plan including compliance to the recommendations of the Francis Report.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

The NIGALA Board met on 8 occasions during 2014/15. Attendance of members at the Board committee is set out in the table below:

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 8 meetings
Bernard Mitchell	100%	8
Patricia Nicholl ⁷	100%	8
David Watters (Appointed 5 August 2013)	88%	7
Gillian McGaughey (Appointed 18 January 2014)	88%	7
Fred Smith (Appointed 18 January 2014)	100%	8
Karen Winter (Appointed 12 May 2016) ⁸	100%	6

The NIGALA Audit and Risk Assurance Committee advises the Board and Accounting Officer with regard to their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and the reliability of associated assurances provided by the External and Internal Auditor; through a process of constructive challenge. This Committee has met on four occasions during 2014/15 and provides an annual written report to the Board on Committee work and actions taken during 2014/15. Key highlights from the Committee include the reporting of breakeven during 2014/15 and the continued development of the NIGALA Risk Assurance Framework. The performance of the Committee was assessed using the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee checklist which was reported to the DHSSPS in September 2014.

Committee Attendance

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 4 meetings
David Watters (Appointed 5 August 2013)	100%	4
Fred Smith (Appointed 18 January 2014)	75%	3
Karen Winter (Appointed 12 May 2016)	100%	2

The NIGALA Remuneration Committee makes recommendations to the Board on all aspects of Remuneration and Terms and Conditions of Employment for the Chief Executive and the contract for services and fee structure for self employed Guardians ad Litem. This Committee has met on two occasions during 2014/15 and provides an annual written report to the Board on Committee work and actions taken during 2014/15.

⁷ Deputising arrangements for the Chief Executive were in place for 1 of the 8 Board meetings

⁸ Dr Winter completed induction in July 2014 and attended all Board meetings from this point forward in 2014/15.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

Key highlights from the Committee included the reporting of performance assessment for the Chief Executive in line with the DHSSPS Senior Executive Pay circular and the work completed in relation to the review of the Self Employed Contract for services.

Committee Attendance

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 2 meetings
Bernard Mitchell	100%	2
Fred Smith (Appointed 18 January 2014)	50%	1
Gillian McGaughey (Appointed 18 January 2014)	100%	2

The Social Care Governance Committee supports the Board in all aspects of social care governance by providing an independent and objective review of the adequacy and effectiveness of control systems and processes in place to support the delivery of the Guardian ad Litem service to children and young people. The Committee met on six occasions during 2014/15. The Terms of Reference of the Committee have been amended to include a requirement for the Chair of the Committee to be a member of the Agency's Audit Committee. The Committee is chaired by a member of the Board and reports to the Board after every meeting.

Committee Attendance

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 6 meetings
Bernard Mitchell ⁹	100%	3
Karen Winter (Appointed 12 May 2016)	100%	6
Gillian McGaughey (Appointed 18 January 2014)	67%	4

The NIGALA Information Governance Committee has primary responsibility for advising the Board on relevant processes and assurances which are required to manage all personal and corporate information handled by the Agency. This Committee has met on four occasions during 2014/15.

⁹ Bernard Mitchell transferred the role of Chair to Dr Karen Winter following the 3rd meeting of the SCG Committee

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

The Committee has overseen the Agency Action Plan for delivery of the ICO recommendations following an information security breach report in 2013/14. NIGALA has completed an evaluation of the Committee's effectiveness for 2014/15 and an associated action plan is in place.

Committee Attendance

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 4 meetings
Bernard Mitchell ¹⁰	100%	2
Fred Smith (Appointed 18 January 2014)	100%	4
Gillian McGaughey (Appointed 18 January 2014)	50%	2

4. Business Planning and Risk Management

Business planning and risk management are at the heart of NIGALA governance arrangements to ensure that statutory obligations and ministerial priorities are properly reflected in the management of business at all levels within the organisation. In the period 2014/15 all Business Plan Objectives were met in accordance with an agreed strategic direction. Two business objectives for 2014/15 were impacted by the 2.5% reduction in RRL in September 2014. These objectives are currently being progressed as part of the 2015/16 plan.

¹⁰ Bernard Mitchell transferred the role of Chair to Mr Fred Smyth following the first meeting of the committee and attended the second meeting before standing down.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

Business Planning

The system of business planning is designed to take account of strategic and operational priorities and ensure feedback from NIGALA staff, stakeholders and the DHSSPS sponsoring unit. The system of business planning involves the following:

- Taking cognisance of independent assurance reports and recommendations on the NIGALA Internal Control Framework;
- DHSSPS Priorities as issued in advance to NIGALA to be included in the Business Plan;
- Review of prior year objectives and whether continued progress needs to be identified in the current business planning cycle;
- Identification of objectives through regular business planning preparation meetings between the Executive Team, Board Members and Staff; and
- Cognisance of the external environment and potential risks impacting on the Guardian ad Litem service delivery and the identification of key actions to be included in the business planning process.

Objectives in the Business Plan are monitored by SMT on a monthly basis using a RAG rating approach, and are monitored by the Board on a quarterly basis with progress updates submitted to DHSSPS Sponsor Branch six monthly in accordance with the Business Plan monitoring arrangements set out in the DHSSPS letter dated 11 November 2013.

Risk Management

The Risk Management Strategy and the system of risk management and internal control at NIGALA is based on the mitigation of risk to a reasonable level and seek to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives where possible. The system is based on an on-going process designed to:

- Identify and prioritise risks to the achievement of organisational policies, aims and objectives; and
- Evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility to the Board for risk management. The Corporate Services Manager, assisted by an Assistant Director, is responsible for implementation of the Risk Management Strategy. The Risk Management Strategy now forms the basis for systematic (monthly) review of risk by the Senior Management Team. In 2014/15 all new and existing risks identified were assessed in terms of likelihood of occurrence and level of impact on the organisation. The top five risks are reviewed on a monthly basis at the Senior Management Team meeting and at each Audit and Risk Assurance Committee the Risk Register, Risk Action Plan and Risk Assurance Framework are reviewed as standing reports. The embedding of risk management within the Agency is carried out in the following ways:

- The full Risk Register is formally reviewed quarterly at each Risk Management Committee;
- The Agency's Risk Register is 'live' on Datix (a software for supporting risk management) and the top five risks are reviewed by the Senior Management Team on a monthly basis;
- Risk management, adverse incident and complaints awareness training now form part of the induction programme for new staff;
- Risk management is a standing item on the agenda of each Audit Committee (this includes a report on the Risk Register and update on action plan progress);
- The Board receives a six monthly progress report on risk management;
- The top five corporate risks are communicated to all staff via the bi-annual Agency newsletter;
- Trend analysis reports are brought to each meeting of the Agency's Risk Management Committee and improvements to service delivery are developed through actions on lessons learned; and
- There is a direct link between management's Risk Committee and the Social Care Governance Committee which identifies possible risks impacting on the professional service delivered by NIGALA having taken account of the views of the judiciary and the children who are subjects of proceedings.

Leadership for risk management is provided through the Senior Management Team and the Risk Management Committee which adheres to existing Guidance and Policy on the management of the Risk Register, actions to mitigate risk and learning lessons from reports on incident management and complaints.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Agency for the year ended 31 March 2015, and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts accords with DHSSPS Guidance. A Mid-Year Assurance Statement was submitted on the 17 October 2014 which updated progress on the continuing effectiveness of the system of internal control to the Permanent Secretary of the DHSSPS.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

5. Information Risk

In terms of information risk, the Agency deals directly with sensitive personal client information. During 2014/15 a further information loss event was reported to the Information Commissioner which was subsequently determined as a near miss following a formal internal investigation and securing of the file. A revised action plan for 2015/16 will be put in place following the formal investigation. NIGALA has progressed all the recommendations from the Information Commissioner's recommendations as part of the internal Information Governance Action plan for 2014/15. This has included the development of a range of Records Management Policies, the implementation of new Key Performance Indicators for the management of the return of case files on discharge and the delivery of mandatory training for all staff on Information Governance.

The Agency has also implemented a range of actions to ensure the security of personal client information and to mitigate any risk of personal data loss within the Agency as follows:

- Implementation and training of key staff in their roles as Senior Information Risk Owner and Information Asset Owner;
- An audit of staff awareness of data protection legislation and records management;
- Continued oversight of a Data Sharing Agreement with the NIGALA Panel of Solicitors;
- Quarterly review of information governance arrangements within the Agency by the Information Governance Committee;
- Quarterly review of the Information Governance Action Plan by SMT and the Information Governance Committee; and
- Annual review of the Protocol for Electronic Exchange of Information within Family Proceedings between all stakeholders.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

6. Public Stakeholder Involvement

The Agency has a Personal and Public Involvement (PPIS) Strategy which includes a user and stakeholder map and action plan to inform and promote effective engagement with our users and stakeholders.

In 2014/15 the mechanism for obtaining feedback from children subject to Court proceedings was affected by a 2.5% reduction in RRL from September 2014. This culminated in the termination of the Service Level Agreement with VOYPIC. The number of children providing feedback in 2014/15 has decreased from 102 in 2013/14 to 74. A decrease of 27%.

In addition a Business Objective for progressing the Agency's strategy for engagement of children and young people in Agency decision making was delayed due to the termination of the Service Level Agreement with VOYPIC. This work is now being undertaken in the 2015/16 business year under the Agency's PPI action plan.

Feedback on the service was also taken from the Judiciary and Solicitors representing the children.

The Agency identified in 2014/15 a KPI of 75% of respondents giving a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'. The results were as follows:

- **78%** satisfaction rating among children (8 years +);
- **100%** satisfaction rating among the Judiciary; and
- **100%** satisfaction rating among accredited Solicitors.

NIGALA is an active participant in the HSC wide PPI Forum and actively engages with the key stakeholders as follows:-

- Has in place quarterly review meeting with the Family Court Business Committees;
- Has established a quarterly Solicitors Panel Reference Committee meeting;
- Has conducted two stakeholder review seminars during 2014/15 the outcomes of which have been incorporated into the 2015/16 Social Care Governance Action Plan;
- Implemented a template for screening all new policies to determine whether they impact on PPI and, if so, with which groups of stakeholders for purposes of wider consultation and involvement;
- Has reviewed the liaison and engagement between NIGALA and HSC Trusts; and
- Developed a Children's Report to improve feedback and information to children about Court proceedings and the role of the Guardian.

**NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

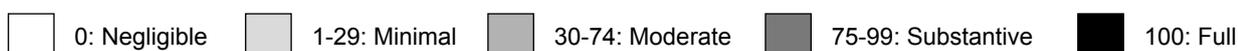
7. Assurance

The Board receives regular assurance from a range of sources which include internal and external audit, Sub Committee reports and minutes and a schedule of assurance reports from the Senior Management Team. The Chair appraises the quality of the information and performance of the Committees in the annual appraisal of each of the Non-executive Directors.

7.1 Controls Assurance Standards

NIGALA assessed its compliance with the applicable Controls Assurance Standards which were defined by the Department and against which a degree of progress was expected in 2013/14. Action plans are kept under review for all relevant Controls Assurance Standards and the following table outlines the current assessment score for each standard during 2014/15.

Controls Assurance Standard	NIGALA Compliance % Rating 2014/15	DHSSPS Indicator 2014/15	Internal Auditor Assessments
Risk Management (core standard)	92%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	NIGALA's assessment verified by Internal Audit 13/14
Governance (core standard)	93%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Financial Management (core standard)	90%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Research Governance	89%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Buildings, Land, Plant and non medical equipment	84%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Purchasing and Supply	90%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	Not Reviewed by Internal Audit in 14/15
Information, Communication and Technology	82%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Information Management	80%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Health and Safety	88%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Human Resources	94%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Environmental Management	79%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Security Management	94%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Emergency Planning	79%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Waste Management	90%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Fire Safety	92%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	



NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

Standards which have been assessed as not applicable to the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency are as follows:

- Food Hygiene;
- Decontamination of Medical Devices;
- Environmental Cleanliness;
- Fleet and Transport Management;
- Infection Control;
- Medical Devices and Equipment Management; and
- Medicines Management.

8. Sources of Independent Assurance

NIGALA obtains independent assurance from the following sources:

Internal Audit

NIGALA has an internal audit function which operates to defined standards and whose work is informed by an analysis of risks to which the organisation is exposed and annual audit plans are based on this analysis. In 2014/15, the Internal Auditor reviewed the following systems: Financial Management, Information Governance, Risk Management and Governance including Board effectiveness. Follow up reviews were conducted on previous actions with reports provided at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in October 2014 and February 2015. The Internal Auditor provided satisfactory assurance for all audits with one priority one audit on the information governance audit which specifically related to:

- The Management of the Access of Case Files after Closure Policy and the Case Recording Policy have not yet been finalised and circulated to the necessary staff.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

These two policies are key to the management of case files and have taken some time to implement due to negotiations and revisions required. These policies are now going through final consultation arrangements and both policies will be in place by 31 August 2015.

A number of priority two recommendations were noted on the audit reports and these have now been incorporated into the NIGALA Operational Plan for action during 2015/16.

In her Annual Report, the Internal Auditor reported satisfactory assurance in relation to NIGALA's system of internal controls and the recommendations linked to weaknesses in control identified, had relevant action plans in place or were being implemented.

The Agency has a Service Level Agreement with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) for: Human Resources, Procurement, Equality, Shared Services, Financial Payments, Payroll and Travel and the review of these systems by the Internal Auditor is reported as part of the BSO annual assurance report. Provisional assurance was received from the BSO Accounting officer in April 2015 with all services receiving satisfactory assurance with the exception of payroll and payments which received limited assurance. BSO have given an assurance that they have accepted all of the recommendations in the 2014/15 internal audit reports issued to date and recommendations to address these control weaknesses have been or are being implemented. Further assurance has been sought from the Accounting Officer (BSO) in a formal letter from the NIGALA Chief Executive.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

External Audit

The Financial Statements of NIGALA are audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the results of their audit are set out in their Annual Report to those Charged with Governance. A representative from the Northern Ireland Audit office attends the NIGALA Audit and Risk meetings. The External Auditor is required to certify, examine and report on each of the statements comprising the financial statements of the Agency.

Regulation Quality and Improvement Authority (RQIA)

NIGALA had its first inspection conducted by RQIA during 2012/13. NIGALA submitted an update to the progress of the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Governance Arrangements at the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency in 2014. Recommendations have all been progressed with further implementation planned in 2015/16.

Investors in People (IiP)

Investors in People conducted a post recognition review of the NIGALA in July 2013 and recommended that the Agency should continue to be awarded Investors in People Bronze. A number of recommendations have been delivered during 2014/15 and the Agency plans to apply for reaccreditation at silver award level in 2015/16.

9. Review of Effectiveness of the System of Internal Governance

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for the review of effectiveness of the system of internal governance. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal governance is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors, by assurance reports from the Executive Managers within the Agency who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the Internal Control Framework and comments made by the External Auditors in their management letter and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Board, Audit Committee, Social Care Governance Committee, Information Governance Committee and Risk Management Committee and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement to the system are in place.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

10. Internal Governance Divergences – Current and New for 2014/15

10.1 Update on prior year control issues which have now been resolved and are no longer considered to be control issues.

In terms of professional risk, during the course of 2014/15, the Agency continued to experience an increase in workload demand from the Courts up to January 2015, however there was a decrease in workload to the end of March 2015 resulting in a 1% decrease for the year when compared with 2013/14. Issue updates are as follows:

- NIGALA was granted non-recurrent funding of £360k for 2014/15. This has enabled the risks to service delivery to be managed through the appointment of additional Guardians ad Litem;
- NIGALA successfully secured the agreement of the Minister to the recurrent allocation of £360K in September 2014. However the decision remains subject to wider financial considerations;
- NIGALA has maintained the absence of a waiting list throughout 2014/15; and
- NIGALA successfully agreed a Business Case for the Guardian Case Information System (GCIS) enhancement to support the developments to case allocation, caseload management, staff supervision and appraisal within the Agency aimed at further improving efficiencies.

In the Mid-Year Assurance Statement I highlighted the progress in a Project to review case referral and allocation practice designed to improve KPI's in respect of case allocation. KPI's in respect of case allocation waiting times are reviewed on a monthly basis at SMT and reported as each Board meeting.

**NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

Case Allocation Type	KPI	Achievement 2013/14	Achievement 2014/15
Adoption	90% in 8 working days	94%	98%
Secure	95% in 8 working days	100%	100%
Care	50% in 8 working days	80%	89%

In this period a number of significant practice developments were also achieved including the implementation of a revised Guardian Court report template in Public Law Specified proceedings.

In terms of the Agency’s recruitment and selection process, policies are based on the principle of equality of opportunity and controls are in place to ensure that all such decisions are taken in accordance with the relevant legislation.

In relation to payments in respect of Litigation and Legal Services, the Agency Controls, put in place by management are robust and operating effectively and comply with the DHSSPS Circular HSS F 67-2006. The Agency also appoints Solicitors from the NIGALA Solicitor Panel and all Solicitors are also members of the Northern Ireland Law Society’s Children’s Panel to represent children under the Children (NI) Order 1995. All payments in respect of these cases are managed through the Legal Services Commission Legal Aid Regulations.

10.2 Update on prior year control issues which continue to be considered control issues

In terms of prior year significant governance issues, the Agency is anticipating a continued increase in demand in Public Law applications in the next financial year. The Business Plan for 2015/16 includes a focus on improving the allocation process to reduce the numbers of cases allocated outside of the 8 day KPI and to reduce the management time devoted to allocation processes and to improve transparency and equity in Guardian workload.

The success of this strategy and other change management initiatives will be contingent on appropriate and effective communication across the Agency and this Business Objective will be a priority for 2015/16.

In relation to unreturned case files a Strategy has been put in place which has reduced the number of case files waiting to be returned outside the Key Performance Indicator. While this Strategy has been successful and new KPIs introduced in 2014/15 have been met a further near miss file loss incident in 2015 has reduced the risk appetite in this area. A Strategy for 2015/16 has now been developed aimed at ensuring full compliance to Agency Policy.

The introduction of the Shared Services Finance and Human Resource Systems by the Business Services Organisation (BSO) during 2012/13 continue to impact on NIGALA.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

The Chief Executive has written to the Chief Executive of BSO formally seeking assurance that appropriate actions will be taken to address a number of incidents which have occurred during 2014/15. Although a satisfactory assurance for NIGALA's financial systems in 2014/15 was received from the Internal Auditor, the issues within the BSO Payments Team in the first half of the 2014/15 year resulted in NIGALA missing the 30 day Prompt Payment target of 95%. NIGALA achieved 93.91%. This percentage remains one of the highest achievements within the HSC when benchmarked against other HSC Bodies.

The continued allocation of non-recurrent funding coupled with a decision to reduce the RRL by 2.5% in September 2014 impacted on the Agency's capacity to progress a number of objectives in the 2014/15 Business Plan. Likewise there was an impact on the capacity of the Agency to recruit to vacant positions during 2014/15. The continued non-recurring funding position requires to be addressed as a matter of urgency in relation to the future financial stability of the organisation.

10.3 Identification of new issues in the current year

The need to review the NIGALA Panel Regulations is being kept under review by the Senior Management Team and the Board. This change is being taken forward by the DHSSPS Sponsoring Unit; however the timescale for the delivery of this work is contingent on the progress of the Primary legislation- the Adoption and Children Bill which has not been approved in this Assembly mandate for consultation.

NIGALA highlighted the information loss and assurances of the management of case files at the Mid-Year Accountability Meeting. The Information Commissioner's report provided a set of three recommendations for actions for NIGALA which have resulted in additional controls being put in place and mandatory training has been undertaken in order to manage this risk. The occurrence of a further near miss file loss incident in December 2014 led to a further notification of an information security breach to the ICO. This incident is subject to a formal investigation and will culminate in a revised action plan for the management of information governance risks.

NIGALA has been advised by the Law Society of Northern Ireland that the proposed Department of Justice (DOJ) reforms to the remuneration of legal aid may have an adverse impact on the availability of Family Law Solicitors and the quality of legal representation available to the child. While negotiations are on-going in respect of the reform proposals the Agency will continue to monitor the impact and highlight the need for cross departmental monitoring of this emerging risk in relation to any adverse impact on children and families involved in Specified Public Law proceedings.

With regard to the wider control environment, the Agency has in place a range of organisational controls commensurate with the current assessment of risk which is designed to ensure the efficient and effective discharge of its business in accordance with the law and Departmental direction. Every effort is made to ensure that the objectives of the Agency are pursued in accordance with the recognised and accepted Standards of Public Administration.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

11. Conclusion

NIGALA has a rigorous system of accountability which I can rely on as Accounting Officer to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money NI. In maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal governance, the Board has put in place a schedule of reports of varying frequency covering areas such as Finance, Performance, Health and Safety, Social Care Governance, Equality, Risk Management, Comments, Compliments and Complaints and Personal and Public Involvement. These reports are integrated within the Risk Assurance Framework and keep the Board up to date with performance against set targets and planned developments. Similarly the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee receives an annual report outlining compliance against the set Controls Assurance Standards expected by the DHSSPS.

I remain alert to the significant issue of the implications of the increasing levels of caseload and the requirements for reform and change to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of NIGALA systems and processes in the coming year and the impact on staff and management which will be notified to the DHSSPS and will be monitored regularly. As necessary, risks to the Guardian ad Litem service from this source will be brought to the attention of all key stakeholders with a view to appropriate action being taken. NIGALA has already taken action on bringing forward proposals on the review of the Guardian ad Litem role and has written to the Department seeking further discussion in respect of its Business Case for recurrent funding to support the efficient delivery of the Guardian ad Litem service from 2015/16 onwards.

Further to considering the Accountability Framework within the Agency and in conjunction with assurances given by the Head of Internal Audit who has confirmed a satisfactory level of assurance; I am content that NIGALA has operated a sound system of internal governance during the period of 2014/15.



9 July 2015

Ms Patricia Nicholl
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

Date

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency for the year ended 31 March 2015 under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. The financial statements comprise the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity, Cash Flows, and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Remuneration Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

Respective responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by me in the course of performing the audit. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my certificate.

I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Opinion on financial statements

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2015 and of the net expenditure, cash flows and changes in taxpayers' equity for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety directions made under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972; and
- the information given in Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with Department of Finance and Personnel's guidance.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



KJ Donnelly
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

27th July 2015

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2015

	NOTE	2015 £	2014 £
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3.1	(3,203,276)	(3,247,553)
Depreciation	4	(38,519)	(45,748)
Other expenditures	4	(1,037,975)	(972,255)
		<u>(4,279,770)</u>	<u>(4,265,556)</u>
Income			
Income from activities	5.1	-	-
Other Income	5.2	11,346	761
Deferred Income	5.3	-	-
		<u>11,346</u>	<u>761</u>
Net Expenditure		<u>(4,268,424)</u>	<u>(4,264,795)</u>
Revenue Resource Limit (RRL)	25.1	4,278,509	4,270,014
Surplus against RRL		<u>10,085</u>	<u>5,219</u>

OTHER COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE

		2015	2014
	NOTE	£	£
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of property, plant & equipment	6.1/10/6.2/10	3,004	4,768
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of intangibles	7.1/10/7.2/10	-	-
Net gain/ (loss) on revaluation of available for sale financial assets		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2015		(4,265,420)	(4,260,027)

The notes on pages 103 to 154 form part of these accounts

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT of FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 March 2015

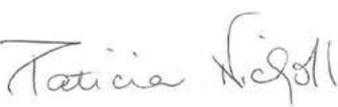
		2015		2014	
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
Non Current Assets					
Property, plant and equipment	6.1/6.2	111,744		100,951	
Intangible assets	7.1/7.2	128,438		88,460	
Financial assets	8	-		-	
Trade and other receivables	12	-		-	
Other current assets	12	-		-	
Total Non Current Assets			240,182		189,411
Current Assets					
Assets classified as held for sale	9	-		-	
Inventories	11	500		500	
Trade and other receivables	12	49,326		17,525	
Other current assets	12	47,531		32,814	
Financial assets	8	-		-	
Cash and cash equivalents	13	24,268		24,752	
Total Current Assets			121,625		75,591
Total Assets			361,807		265,002
Current Liabilities					
Trade and other payables	14	(480,744)		(388,619)	
Other liabilities	14	-		-	
Provisions	16	-		-	
Total Current Liabilities			(480,744)		(388,619)

Non Current Assets plus/less Net Current Assets/Liabilities		<u>(118,937)</u>	<u>(123,617)</u>
Non Current liabilities			
Provisions	16	-	-
Other payables > 1 yr	14	-	-
Financial liabilities	8	-	-
Total Non Current Liabilities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Assets less liabilities		<u>(118,937)</u>	<u>(123,617)</u>
Taxpayers' Equity			
Revaluation reserve		13,654	10,650
SoCNE Reserve		(132,591)	(134,267)
		<u>(118,937)</u>	<u>(123,617)</u>

The notes on pages 103 to 154 form part of these accounts

Signed  (Chairman)

Date 9/7/15

Signed  (Chief Executive)

Date 9/7/15

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

		2015	2014
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net expenditure after interest		(4,268,424)	(4,264,795)
Adjustments for non cash costs		78,491	87,321
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		(46,518)	80,056
<i>Less movements in receivables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in receivables relating to the sale of property, plant and equipment		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to the sale of intangibles		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to finance leases		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts		-	-
(Increase)/decrease in inventories		-	-
Increase/(decrease) in trade payables		92,125	8,544
<i>Less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of property, plant and equipment	14	(46,308)	8,010
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of intangibles	14	(4,350)	-
Movements in payables relating to finance leases		-	-
Movements in payables relating to PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts		-	-
Use of provisions	16	-	-
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(4,194,984)	(4,080,864)

Cash flows from investing activities

(Purchase of property, plant & equipment)	6	-	(16,494)
(Purchase of intangible assets)	7	(66,500)	(40,000)
Proceeds of disposal of property, plant & equipment		-	-
Proceeds on disposal of intangibles		-	-
Proceeds on disposal of assets held for resale		-	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities		<u>(66,500)</u>	<u>(56,494)</u>

Cash flows from financing activities

Grant in aid		4,261,000	4,019,700
Cap element of payments - finance leases and on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements		-	-
Net financing		<u>4,261,000</u>	<u>4,019,700</u>

Net increase (decrease) in cash & cash equivalents in the period		(484)	(117,658)
Cash & cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	13	24,752	142,410
Cash & cash equivalents at the end of the period	13	<u>24,268</u>	<u>24,752</u>

The notes on pages 103 to 154 form part of these accounts

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT OF CHANGES in TAXPAYERS' EQUITY for the year ended 31 March 2015

	Note	SoCNE Reserve £	Revaluation Reserve £	Total £
Balance at 31 March 2013		102,028	5,882	107,910
Changes in taxpayers' equity 2013-14				
Grant from DHSSPS		4,019,700	-	4,019,700
Transfers between reserves		-	-	-
(Comprehensive expenditure for the year)		(4,264,795)	4,768	(4,260,027)
Transfer of asset ownership		-	-	-
Non cash charges - auditors remuneration	4	8,800	-	8,800
Balance at 31 March 2014		(134,267)	10,650	(123,617)
Changes in Taxpayers' Equity to 2014-15				
Grant from DHSSPS		4,261,000	-	4,261,000
Transfers between reserves		-	-	-
(Comprehensive expenditure for the year)		(4,268,424)	3,004	(4,265,420)
Transfer of asset ownership		-	-	-
Non cash charges - auditors remuneration	4	9,100	-	9,100
Balance at 31 March 2015		(132,591)	13,654	(118,937)

The notes on pages 103 to 154 form part of these accounts

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. Authority

These accounts have been prepared in a form determined by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety based on guidance from the Department of Finance and Personnel's Financial Reporting manual (FReM) and in accordance with the requirements of Article 90(2)(a) of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 No 1265 (NI 14) as amended by Article 6 of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The accounting policies follow IFRS to the extent that it is meaningful and appropriate to the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency (the Agency). Where a choice of accounting policy is permitted, the accounting policy which has been judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Agency for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The Agency's accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the accounts, unless otherwise stated.

1.1 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment.

1.2 Currency

These accounts are presented in UK Pounds sterling.

1.3 Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment assets comprise Land, Buildings, Dwellings, Transport Equipment, Plant & Machinery, Information Technology, Furniture & Fittings, and Assets under construction.

Recognition

Property, plant and equipment must be capitalised if:

- it is held for use in delivering services or for administrative purposes;
- it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to, or service potential will be supplied to the entity;
- it is expected to be used for more than one financial year;
- the cost of the item can be measured reliably; and
- the item has cost of at least £5,000; or
- collectively, a number of items have a cost of at least £5,000 and individually have a cost of more than £1,000, where the assets are functionally interdependent, they had broadly simultaneous purchase dates, are anticipated to have simultaneous disposal dates and are under single managerial control; or
- items form part of the initial equipping and setting-up cost of a new building, ward or unit, irrespective of their individual or collective cost.

On initial recognition property, plant and equipment are measured at cost including any expenditure such as installation, directly attributable to bringing them into working condition. Items classified as “under construction” are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position to the extent that money has been paid or a liability has been incurred.

Valuation of Land and Buildings

Land and buildings are carried at the last professional valuation, in accordance with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Valuation – Professional Standards in so far as these are consistent with the needs of the HSC.

The last valuation was carried out on 31 January 2015 by Land and Property Services (LPS) which is part of the Department of Finance and Personnel. The valuers are qualified to meet the ‘Member of Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors’ (MRICS) standard. Professional revaluations of land and buildings are undertaken at least once in every five year period and are revalued annually, between professional valuations, using indices provided by LPS.

Land and buildings used for the Agency’s services or for administrative purposes are stated in the Statement of Financial Position at their revalued amounts, being the fair value at the date of revaluation less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and impairment losses.

Fair values are determined as follows:

- Land and non-specialised buildings – open market value for existing use
- Specialised buildings – depreciated replacement cost

- Properties surplus to requirements – the lower of open market value less any material directly attributable selling costs, or book value at the date of moving to non current assets.

Modern Equivalent Asset

DFP has adopted a standard approach to depreciated replacement cost valuations based on modern equivalent assets and, where it would meet the location requirements of the service being provided, an alternative site can be valued. Land and Property Services (LPS) have included this requirement within the latest valuation.

Assets Under Construction (AUC)

Assets in the course of construction for service or administration purposes are carried at cost, less any impairment loss. Assets are revalued and depreciation commences when they are brought into use.

Short Life Assets

Short life assets are not indexed. Short life is defined as a useful life of up to and including 5 years. Short life assets are carried at depreciated historic cost as this is not considered to be materially different from fair value and are depreciated over their useful life.

Where estimated life of fixtures and equipment exceed 5 years, suitable indices will be applied each year and depreciation will be based on indexed amount.

Revaluation Reserve

An increase arising on revaluation is taken to the Revaluation Reserve except when it reverses an impairment for the same asset previously recognised in expenditure, in which case it is credited to expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there. A revaluation decrease is recognised as an impairment charged to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the reserve for the asset and, thereafter, to expenditure.

1.4 Depreciation

No depreciation is provided on freehold land since land has unlimited or a very long established useful life. Items under construction are not depreciated until they are commissioned. Properties that are surplus to requirements and which meet the definition of “non current assets held for sale “ are also not depreciated.

Otherwise, depreciation is charged to write off the costs or valuation of property, plant and equipment and similarly, amortisation is applied to intangible non-current assets, less any residual value, over their estimated useful lives, in a manner that reflects the consumption of economic benefits or service potential of the assets. Assets held under finance leases are also depreciated over the lower of their estimated useful lives and the terms of the lease. The estimated useful life of an asset is the period over which the NIGALA expects to obtain economic benefits or service potential from the asset. Estimated useful lives and residual values are reviewed each year end, with the effect of any changes recognised on a prospective basis. The following asset lives have been used.

Asset Type	Asset Life
Freehold Buildings	25 – 60 years
Leasehold property	Remaining period of lease
IT Assets	3 – 10 years
Intangible assets	3 – 10 years
Other Equipment	3 – 15 years

1.5 Impairment loss

If there has been an impairment loss due to a general change in prices, the asset is written down to its recoverable amount, with the loss charged to the revaluation reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the reserve for the asset and, thereafter, to expenditure within the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. If the impairment is due to the consumption of economic benefits the full amount of the impairment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and an amount up to the value of the impairment in the revaluation reserve is transferred to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve. Where an impairment loss subsequently reverses, the carrying amount of the asset is increased to the revised estimate of the recoverable amount but capped at the amount that would have been determined had there been no initial impairment loss. The reversal of the impairment loss is credited firstly to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there and thereafter to the revaluation reserve.

1.6 Subsequent expenditure

Where subsequent expenditure enhances an asset beyond its original specification, the directly attributable cost is capitalised. Where subsequent expenditure which meets the definition of capital restores the asset to its original specification, the expenditure is capitalised and any existing carrying value of the item replaced is written-out and charged to operating expenses.

The overall useful life of the NIGALA'S buildings takes account of the fact that different components of those buildings have different useful lives. This ensures that depreciation is charged on those assets at the same rate as if separate components had been identified and depreciated at different rates.

1.7 Intangible assets

Intangible assets includes any of the following held – software, licenses, trademarks, websites, development expenditure, Patents, Goodwill and intangible Assets under Construction. Software that is integral to the operating of hardware, for example an operating system is capitalised as part of the relevant item of property, plant and equipment. Software that is not integral to the operation of hardware, for example application software, is capitalised as an intangible asset. Expenditure on research is not capitalised: it is recognised as an operating expense in the period in which it is incurred. Internally-generated assets are recognised if, and only if, all of the following have been demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the intangible asset so that it will be available for use
- the intention to complete the intangible asset and use it
- the ability to sell or use the intangible asset
- how the intangible asset will generate probable future economic benefits or service potential
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the intangible asset and sell or use it
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the intangible asset during its development.

Recognition

Intangible assets are non-monetary assets without physical substance, which are capable of sale separately from the rest of the NIGALA'S business or which arise from contractual or other legal rights. Intangible assets are considered to have a finite life. They are recognised only when it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to, or service potential be provided to, the NIGALA; where the cost of the asset can be measured reliably. All single items over £5,000 in value must be capitalised while intangible assets which fall within the grouped asset definition must be capitalised if their individual value is at least £1,000 each and the group is at least £5,000 in value.

The amount recognised for internally-generated intangible assets is the sum of the expenditure incurred from the date of commencement of the intangible asset, until it is complete and ready for use.

Intangible assets acquired separately are initially recognised at fair value.

Following initial recognition, intangible assets are carried at fair value by reference to an active market, and as no active market currently exists depreciated replacement cost has been used as fair value.

1.8 Non-current assets held for sale

Non-current assets are classified as held for sale if their carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through continuing use. In order to meet this definition IFRS 5 requires that the asset must be immediately available for sale in its current condition and that the sale is highly probable. A sale is regarded as highly probable where an active plan is in place to find a buyer for the asset and the sale is considered likely to be concluded within one year. Non-current assets held for sale are measured at the lower of their previous carrying amount and fair value, less any material directly attributable selling costs. Fair value is open market value, where one is available, including alternative uses.

Assets classified as held for sale are not depreciated.

The profit or loss arising on disposal of an asset is the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying amount. The profit from sale of land which is a non depreciating asset is recognised within income. The profit from sale of a depreciating asset is shown as a reduced expense. The loss from sale of land or from any depreciating assets is shown within operating expenses. On disposal, the balance for the asset on the revaluation reserve is transferred to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure reserve.

Property, plant or equipment that is to be scrapped or demolished does not qualify for recognition as held for sale. Instead, it is retained as an operational asset and its economic life is adjusted. The asset is de-recognised when it is scrapped or demolished.

1.9 Inventories

Inventories are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value. This is considered to be a reasonable approximation to fair value due to the high turnover of stocks.

1.10 Income

Operating Income relates directly to the operating activities of the NIGALA and is recognised when, and to the extent that, performance occurs, and is measured at the fair value of the consideration receivable.

Grant in aid

Funding received from other entities, including the Department and the Health and Social Care Board are accounted for as grant in aid and are reflected through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve.

1.11 Investments

The NIGALA does not have any investments.

1.12 Other expenses

Other operating expenses for goods or services are recognised when, and to the extent that, they have been received. They are measured at the fair value of the consideration payable.

1.13 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature in 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

1.14 Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases when substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

NIGALA as lessee

NIGALA do not have any finance leases.

Operating lease payments are recognised as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term. Lease incentives are recognised initially as a liability and subsequently as a reduction of rentals on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Contingent rentals are recognised as an expense in the period in which they are incurred.

NIGALA as lessor

NIGALA do not act as a lessor.

1.15 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transactions

NIGALA had no PFI transactions during the year.

1.16 Financial instruments

- **Financial assets**

Financial assets are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Agency becomes party to the financial instrument contract or, in the case of trade receivables, when the goods or services have been delivered. Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights have expired or the asset has been transferred.

Financial assets are initially recognised at fair value.

- **Financial liabilities**

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Agency becomes party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument or, in the case of trade payables, when the goods or services have been received. Financial liabilities are de-recognised when the liability has been discharged, that is, the liability has been paid or has expired.

Financial liabilities are initially recognised at fair value.

- **Financial risk management**

IFRS 7 requires disclosure of the role that financial instruments have had during the period in creating or changing the risks a body faces in undertaking its activities. Because of the relationships with HSC Commissioners, and the manner in which they are funded, financial instruments play a more limited role within the NIGALA in creating risk than would apply to a non public sector body of a similar size, therefore the NIGALA is not exposed to the degree of financial risk faced by business entities. The NIGALA has limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day to day operational activities rather than being held to change the risks facing the NIGALA in undertaking activities. Therefore the HSC is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

- **Currency risk**

The NIGALA is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. The NIGALA has no overseas operations. The NIGALA therefore has low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

- **Interest rate risk**

The NIGALA has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

- **Credit risk**

Because the majority of the NIGALA's income comes from contracts with other public sector bodies, the NIGALA has low exposure to credit risk.

- **Liquidity risk**

Since the NIGALA receives the majority of its funding through its principal Commissioner which is voted through the Assembly, it is therefore not exposed to significant liquidity risks.

1.17 Provisions

The NIGALA has no provisions.

1.18 Contingencies

The NIGALA has no contingent assets or liabilities.

1.19 Employee benefits

Short-term employee benefits

Under the requirements of IAS 19: Employee Benefits, staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the NIGALA is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any unused leave that has been earned at the year end. This cost has been determined using average staff numbers and total salary costs applied to the average unused leave balance determined from a report of the unused annual leave balance as at 31 March 2015. It is not anticipated that the level of unused leave will vary significantly from year to year. Unused flexi leave is estimated to be immaterial to the NIGALA and has not been included.

Retirement benefit costs

The NIGALA participates in the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the NIGALA and employees pay specified percentages of pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DHSSPS. The NIGALA is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the scheme on a consistent and reliable basis. Further information regarding the HSC Superannuation Scheme can be found in the HSC Superannuation Scheme Statement in the Departmental Resource Account for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The costs of early retirements are met by the NIGALA and charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure at the time the NIGALA commits itself to the retirement.

As per the requirements of IAS 19, full actuarial valuations by a professionally qualified actuary are required at intervals not exceeding four years. The actuary reviews the most recent actuarial valuation at the Statement of Financial Position date and updates it to reflect current conditions. The 2012 valuation for the HSC Pension scheme will be used in the 2014/15 accounts.

1.20 Reserves

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve

Accumulated surpluses are accounted for in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve.

Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve reflects the unrealised balance of cumulative indexation and revaluation adjustments to assets other than donated assets.

1.21 Value Added Tax

Where output VAT is charged or input VAT is recoverable, the amounts are stated net of VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or included in the capitalised purchase cost of fixed assets.

1.22 Third party assets

The NIGALA did not hold any third party assets at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

1.23 Government Grants

The NIGALA did not receive any Government Grants in either the year ended 31 March 2015 or year ended 31 March 2014.

1.24 Losses and Special Payments

Losses and special payments are items that the Assembly would not have contemplated when it agreed funds for the health service or passed legislation. By their nature they are items that ideally should not arise. They are therefore subject to special control procedures compared with the generality of payments. They are divided into different categories, which govern the way that individual cases are handled.

Losses and special payments are charged to the relevant functional headings in expenditure on an accruals basis, including losses which would have been made good through insurance cover had the NIGALA not been bearing their own risks (with insurance premiums then being included as normal revenue expenditure). However, the note on losses and special payments is compiled directly from the losses and compensations register which reports amounts on an accruals basis with the exception of provisions for future losses.

1.25 Accounting Standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted

Under IAS 8 there is a requirement to disclose those standards issued but not yet adopted.

The IASB have issued new and amended standards (IFRS 10, IFRS 11 & IFRS 12) that affect the consolidation and reporting of subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures. These standards have an effective date of 1 January 2013, and EU adoption is due from 1 January 2014.

Accounting boundary IFRS' are currently adapted in the FReM so that the Westminster departmental accounting boundary is based on Office National Statistics (ONS) control criteria, as designated by Treasury. A review of the NI financial process is currently under discussion with the Executive, which will bring NI departments under the same adaptation. Should this go ahead, the impact on DHSSPS and its Arms length bodies is expected to focus around the disclosure requirements under IFRS 12 'Disclosure of Interests in other entities.'

The impact on the consolidation boundary of NDPB's and trading funds will be subject to review, in particular, where control could be determined to exist due to exposure to variable returns (IFRS 10), and where joint arrangements need reassessing.

Management consider that any other new accounting policies issued but not yet adopted are unlikely to have a significant impact on the accounts in the period of the initial application.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

ANALYSIS OF NET EXPENDITURE BY SEGMENT

NOTE 2

The core business and strategic direction of the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency is to act as a 'voice' for children who are subjects of public law and adoption proceedings before the courts in Northern Ireland.

The Agency Board acts as the Chief Operating Decision Maker and receives financial information on the Agency as a whole and makes decisions on this basis. Hence, it is appropriate that the Agency reports on a single operational segment basis.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 3 STAFF NUMBERS AND RELATED COSTS

3.1 Staff Costs

Staff costs comprise	2015			2014
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Wages & Salaries	2,585,846	63,167	2,649,013	2,673,040
Social security costs	220,533	-	220,533	229,408
Other pension costs	333,730	-	333,730	345,105
Sub-Total	3,140,109	63,167	3,203,276	3,247,553
Capitalised staff costs				-
Total staff costs reported in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure	3,140,109	63,167	3,203,276	3,247,553
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments			-	-
Total net costs			3,203,276	3,247,553

Staff costs charged to capital projects during the year were £Nil (2014 £Nil).

The NIGALA participates in the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the NIGALA and employees pay specified percentages of pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DHSSPS. The NIGALA is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the scheme on a consistent and reliable basis.

As per the requirements of IAS 19, full actuarial valuations by a professionally qualified actuary are required at intervals not exceeding four years. The actuary reviews the most recent actuarial valuation at the Statement of Financial Position date and updates it to reflect current conditions. A full valuation for Resource Accounts purposes as at 31 March 2012 was completed in 2014 and will be used in the 2014/15 accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

3.2 Average number of persons employed

The average number of whole time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows;

	2015			2014
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.
Medical and dental	-	-	-	-
Nursing and Midwifery	-	-	-	-
Professions Allied to medicine	-	-	-	-
Ancillaries	-	-	-	-
Administrative and Clerical	26	-	26	24
Ambulance staff	-	-	-	-
Works	-	-	-	-
Other professional and technical	-	-	-	-
Social Services	40	-	40	43
Other	-	-	-	-
Total average number of persons employed	66	-	66	67
Less average staff number relating to capitalised staff costs	-	-	-	-
Less average staff number in respect of outward secondments	-	-	-	-
Total net average number of persons employed	66	-	66	67

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 3 STAFF NUMBERS AND RELATED COSTS

3.3 Senior Employees' Remuneration

Refer to Remuneration Report contained within the Annual Report section on page 53.

3.4 Reporting of early retirement and other compensation scheme – exit packages

During 2014/15 and 2013/14 there were no early retirements or other compensation schemes.

3.5 Staff Benefits

Refer to Remuneration Report contained within the Annual Report section on page 84.

3.6 Retirements due to ill-health

During 2014/15 there were no early retirements from the NIGALA agreed on the grounds of ill-health.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 4 OPERATING EXPENSES

4.0 Operating Expenses are as follows:-

	2015	2014
	£	£
Fees – Self Employed Guardians	255,557	264,120
Recharges from other HSC organisations	99,852	109,166
Supplies and services – general	9,854	8,452
Establishment	432,294	276,958
Transport	-	-
Premises	196,393	248,823
Bad debts	(12,000)	12,000
Miscellaneous	16,053	11,163

Non cash items

Depreciation	38,519	45,748
Amortisation	30,872	32,773
Impairments	-	-
(Profit) on disposal of property, plant & equipment (excluding profit on land)	-	-
(Profit) on disposal of intangibles	-	-
Loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment (including land)	-	-
Loss on disposal of intangibles	-	-

Provisions provided for in year	-	-
Cost of borrowing of provisions (borrowing costs on provisions)	-	-
Auditors remuneration	9,100	8,800
Total	1,076,494	1,018,003

During the year the NIGALA purchased non audit services to the value of £1,232 from its external auditor (NIAO) relating to the National Fraud Initiative Exercise (2014: £nil).

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 5 INCOME

5.1 Income from Activities

The Agency had no income from activities in 2014/15 and 2013/14.

5.2 Other Operating Income

	2015	2014
	£	£
Other income from non-patient services	11,346	761
Seconded staff	-	-
Charitable and other contributions to expenditure	-	-
Donations/ Government grant/ Lottery funding for non current assets	-	-
Profit on disposal of land	-	-
Interest receivable	-	-
Total	11,346	761

5.3 Deferred income

The NIGALA had no deferred income in 2014/15 and 2013/14.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 6.1 Property, plant & equipment – year ended 31 March 2015

Cost or Valuation	Land	Buildings (excluding dwellings)	Dwellings	Assets under Construction	Plant and Machinery (Equipment)	Transport Equipment	Information Technology (IT)	Furniture and Fittings	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
At 1 April 2014	-	418,361	-	-	45,785	-	115,132	8,484	587,762
Indexation	-	35,156	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,156
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,308	-	46,308
Donations/Government Grant/Lottery funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexation)	-	-	-	-	(1,446)	-	-	-	(1,446)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2015	-	453,517	-	-	44,339	-	161,440	8,484	667,780

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 6.1 (continued) Property, plant & equipment - year ended 31 March 2015

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Carrying amount									
At 31 March 2015	-	36,152	-	-	-	-	68,320	7,272	111,744
At 31 March 2014	-	53,729	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 6.2 Property, plant & equipment – year ended 31 March 2014

Cost or Valuation	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
At 1 April 2013	-	384,962	-	-	45,785	-	115,132	-	545,879
Indexation	-	33,399	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,399
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,484	8,484
Donations/Government Grant/Lottery funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SOCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexation)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2014	-	418,361	-	-	45,785	-	115,132	8,484	587,762

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 6.2 (continued) Property, plant & equipment - year ended 31 March 2014

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Carrying amount									
At 31 March 2014	-	53,729	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951
At 1 April 2013	-	71,501	-	-	4,568	-	57,378	-	133,447

Asset financing										
Owned										
Finance Leased										
On B/S(SOFP) PFI contracts and other service concession arrangement contracts		53,729	-	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951
Carrying amount										
At 31 March 2014										

Asset financing										
Owned										
Finance Leased										
On B/S(SOFP) PFI contracts and other service concession arrangement contracts		71,501	-	-	4,568	-	57,378	-	-	133,447
Carrying amount										
At 1 April 2013										

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 7.1 INTANGIBLE ASSETS – year ended 31 March 2015

	Software Licenses	Software	Total
Cost or Valuation	£	£	£
At 1 April 2014	1,895	352,528	354,423
Indexation	-	-	-
Additions	-	70,850	70,850
Donations / Government grant / Lottery funding	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(5,044)	(5,044)
At 31 March 2015	1,895	418,334	420,229

Amortisation

At 1 April 2014	875	265,088	265,963
Indexation	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(5,044)	(5,044)

Provided during the year	379	30,493	30,872
At 31 March 2015	1,254	290,537	291,791
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2015	641	127,797	128,438
At 31 March 2014	1,020	87,440	88,460
Asset financing			
Owned	641	127,797	128,438
Finance Leased	-	-	-
On B/S (SOFP) PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts	-	-	-
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2015	641	127,797	128,438

Any fall in value through negative indexation or revaluation is shown as an impairment.

The fair value of assets funded from Donations / Government Grants / Lottery funding during the year was £Nil (2014:£Nil).

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 7.2 INTANGIBLE ASSETS – year ended 31 March 2014

	Software	Software Licenses	Total
Cost or Valuation	£	£	£
At 1 April 2013	1,895	312,528	314,423
Indexation	-	-	-
Additions	-	40,000	40,000
Donations / Government grant / Lottery funding	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-
Impairment charged to SoCNE	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2014	1,895	352,528	354,423

Amortisation

At 1 April 2013	496	232,694	233,190
Indexation	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
Provided during the year	379	32,394	32,773

At 31 March 2014	875	265,088	265,963
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2014	1,020	87,440	88,460
At 1 April 2013	1,399	79,834	81,233
Asset financing			
Owned	1,020	87,440	88,460
Finance Leased	-	-	-
On B/S (SOFP) PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts	-	-	-
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2014	1,020	87,440	88,460
Asset financing			
Owned	1,399	79,834	81,233
Finance Leased	-	-	-
On B/S (SOFP) PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts	-	-	-
Carrying Amount			
At 1 April 2013	1,399	79,834	81,233

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 8 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The NIGALA had no financial instruments as 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 9 ASSETS CLASSIFIED AS HELD FOR SALE

The NIGALA did not hold any assets classified as held for sale in 2014/15 or 2013/14.

NOTE 10 IMPAIRMENTS

The NIGALA had no impairments in either 2014/15 or 2013/14.

NOTE 11 INVENTORIES

	2015	2014
	£	£
Classification		
Office supplies	500	500
Total	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 12.1 TRADE RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS

	2015	2014
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade receivables	19,742	4,512
Deposits and advances	-	-
VAT receivable	29,584	13,013
Other receivables – not relating to fixed assets	-	-
Other receivables – relating to property, plant and equipment	-	-
Other receivables – relating to intangibles	-	-
Trade and other receivables	<u>49,326</u>	<u>17,525</u>
Prepayments and accrued income	47,531	32,814
Current part of PFI and other service concession arrangements prepayment	-	-
Other current assets	<u>47,531</u>	<u>32,814</u>
Amounts falling due after more than one year		
Trade receivables	-	-
Deposits and advances	-	-
Other receivables	-	-
Trade and other receivables	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Prepayments and accrued income	-	-
Other current assets falling due after more than one year	-	-
TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES	49,326	17,525
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	47,531	32,814
TOTAL RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	96,857	50,339

The balances are net of a provision for bad debts of £Nil (2014: £12k).

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 12 TRADE RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS

12.2 Trade receivables and other current assets: Intra-Government balances

	Amounts falling due within 1 year 2014/15	Amounts falling due within 1 year 2013/14	Amounts falling due after more than 1 year 2014/15	Amounts falling due after more than 1 year 2013/14
	£	£	£	£
Balances with other central government bodies	41,778	13,494	-	-
Balances with local authorities	-	-	-	-
Balances with NHS /HSC Trusts	10,129	-	-	-
Balances with public corporations and trading funds	-	-	-	-
Intra-Government Balances	51,907	13,494	-	-
Balances with bodies external to government	44,950	36,845	-	-
Total Receivables and other current assets at 31 March	96,857	50,339	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 13 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2015	2014
	£	£
Balance at 1st April	24,752	142,410
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(484)	(117,658)
Balance at 31st March	24,268	24,752

The following balances at 31 March were held at	2015	2014
	£	£
Commercial Banks and cash in hand	24,268	24,752
Balance as at 31 March	24,268	24,752

The bank account is operated by Business Services Organisation (BSO) on behalf of the NIGALA. The account is in the legal name of the BSO.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 14.1 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2015	2014
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Other taxation and social security	65,277	117,497
VAT payable	-	-
Bank overdraft	-	-
Trade capital payables – property, plant and equipment	-	-
Trade capital payables - intangibles	-	-
Trade revenue payables	169,732	29,996
Payroll payables	95	(151)
BSO payables	123	-
Other payables	28,659	32,251
Accruals and deferred income	166,200	209,026
Accruals and deferred income – relating to property, plant and equipment	46,308	-
Accruals and deferred income – relating to intangibles	4,350	-
Trade and other payables	<u>480,744</u>	<u>388,619</u>
Total payables falling due within one year	480,744	388,619
Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 14 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

14.2 Trade payables and other current liabilities - Intra-government balances

	Amounts falling due within 1 year 2014/15	Amounts falling due within 1 year 2013/14	Amounts falling due after more than 1 year 2014/15	Amounts falling due after more than 1 year 2013/14
	£	£	£	£
Balances with other central government bodies	131,103	148,421	-	-
Balances with local authorities	-	-	-	-
Balances with NHS /HSC Trusts	2,333	-	-	-
Balances with public corporations and trading funds	-	-	-	-
Intra-Government Balances	133,436	148,421	-	-

Balances with bodies external to government	347,308	240,198	-	-
Total Payables and other liabilities at 31 March	480,744	388,619	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 14 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

14.3. Loans

The Agency did not have any loans payable at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 15 PROMPT PAYMENT POLICY

15.1 Public Sector Payment Policy - Measure of Compliance

The Department requires that NIGALA pay their non HSC trade creditors in accordance with applicable terms and appropriate Government Accounting guidance. The NIGALA's payment policy is consistent with applicable terms and appropriate Government Accounting guidance and its measure of compliance is:

	2015	2015	2014	2014
	Number	Value	Number	Value
		£		£
Total bills paid	608	539,023	547	413,969
Total bills paid within 30 day target	571	475,579	487	374,813
% of bills paid within 30 day target	93.9%	88.2%	89.0%	90.5%
Total bills paid	608	539,023	547	413,969

Total bills paid within 10 day target	458	341,515	400	255,637
<hr/>				
% of bills paid within 10 day target	75.3%	63.4%	73.1%	61.8%
<hr/> <hr/>				

15.2 The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002

The amount included within Interest Payable arising from claims made by small businesses under this legislation are as follows :

	£
Total	-
	<hr/> <hr/>

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 16 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

The Agency had no provisions for liabilities and charges at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 17 CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

Contracted capital commitments at 31 March not otherwise included in these financial statements

	2015	2014
	£	£
Property, plant and equipment	-	-
Intangible assets	-	39,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	39,000
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

NOTE 18 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES

18.1 Operating Leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods.

	2015	2014
	£	£
Obligations under operating leases comprise		
Land		
Not later than 1 year	-	-
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Buildings		
Not later than 1 year	40,007	41,897
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40,007	41,897
Other		
Not later than 1 year	-	-
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>

18.2 Finance Leases

The NIGALA had no Finance leases at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

18.3 Operating Leases: Commitments under Lessor Agreements

The NIGALA had not issued any operating leases at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 19 COMMITMENTS UNDER PFI CONTRACTS AND OTHER SERVICE CONCESSION ARRANGEMENT CONTRACTS

The NIGALA had no commitments under PFI Schemes at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 20 OTHER FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The NIGALA did not have any other financial commitments at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 21 FINANCIAL GUARANTEES, INDEMNITIES AND LETTERS OF COMFORT

The NIGALA did not have any financial instruments at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 22 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The NIGALA did not have any contingent liabilities at either 31 March 2015 or 31 March 2014.

NOTE 23 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The NIGALA is an arms length body of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and as such the Department is a related party with which the Agency has had various material transactions during the year.

In addition there were material transactions throughout the year with the Business Services Organisation who are a related party by virtue of being an arms length body with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

During the year, none of the Board members, members of the key management staff or other related parties has undertaken any material transactions with the NIGALA.

NOTE 24 THIRD PARTY ASSETS

The NIGALA holds no assets on behalf of third parties.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 25 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TARGETS

25.1 Revenue Resource Limit

The Agency is given a Revenue Resource Limit (RRL) which it is not permitted to overspend

The Revenue Resource Limit (RRL) for the Agency is calculated as follows:

	2015	2014
	Total	Total
	£	£
HSCB	-	-
PHA	-	-
SUMDE & NIMDTA	-	-
DHSSPS (excludes non cash)	4,200,018	4,182,693
Other Government Departments	-	-
Non cash RRL (from DHSSPS)	78,491	87,321
Total Agreed RRL	4,278,509	4,270,014
Adjustment for Income received re Donations/ Government grant/Lottery	-	-
Total Revenue Resource Limit to Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	4,278,509	4,067,097

25.2 Capital Resource Limit

The Agency is given a Capital Resource Limit (CRL) which it is not permitted to overspend.

	2015	2014
	Total	Total
	£	£
Gross Capital Expenditure	117,158	48,484
(Receipts from sales of fixed assets)	-	-
Net capital expenditure	<u>117,158</u>	<u>48,484</u>
Capital Resource Limit	<u>117,808</u>	<u>49,000</u>
Overspend/(Underspend) against CRL	<u>(650)</u>	<u>(516)</u>

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

25.3 Financial Performance Targets

The Agency is required to ensure that it breaks even on an annual basis by containing its net expenditure within +/- 0.25% of RRP limits, or £20,000, whichever is greater.

	2014/15	2013/14
	£	£
Net Expenditure	(4,268,424)	(4,264,795)
RRL	4,278,509	4,270,014
Surplus/(Deficit) against RRL	10,085	5,219
Break Even cumulative position(opening)	20,060	14,841
Break Even cumulative position (closing)	30,145	20,060

Materiality Test:

	2014/15	2013/14
	%	%
Break Even in year position as % of RRL	0.24%	0.12%
Break Even cumulative position as % of RRL	0.70%	0.47%

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 26 LOSSES AND SPECIAL PAYMENTS

Type of loss and special payment	2014-15		2013-14
	Number of Cases	£	£
Cash losses			
Cash Losses - Theft, fraud etc	-	-	-
Cash Losses - Overpayments of salaries, wages and allowances	-	-	-
Cash Losses - Other causes	-	-	-
Claims abandoned			
Waived or abandoned claims	-	-	-
Administrative write-offs			
Bad debts	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
Fruitless payments			
Late Payment of Commercial Debt	-	-	-
Other fruitless payments and constructive losses	-	-	-
Stores losses			
Losses of accountable stores through any deliberate act	-	-	-
Other stores losses	-	-	-
Special Payments			

Compensation payments			
- Clinical Negligence	-	-	-
- Public Liability	-	-	-
- Employers Liability	-	-	-
- Other	-	-	-
Ex-gratia payments	-	-	-
Extra contractual	-	-	-
Special severance payments	-	-	-
TOTAL	-	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

NOTE 26 LOSSES AND SPECIAL PAYMENTS

26.1 Special Payments

There were no other special payments or gifts made during the year.

26.2 Other Payments

There were no other payments made during the year.

26.3 Losses and Special Payments over £250,000

There were no losses or special payments over £250,000 during the year.

NOTE 27 POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

There are no post balance events having a material effect on the accounts.

DATE AUTHORISED FOR ISSUE

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 31st July 2015

Section 9

Feedback



Feedback

The Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency is interested in finding out what our readers think of the 2014/15 Annual Report and welcomes your views in order to help make further improvements in next year's publication. Please can you answer the questions below and return the sheet to the address at the bottom of this page.

Please tick the appropriate box

1. How easily understood was the information?

Too Simple About Right Too Detailed

2. How interesting was the information?

Not at all A little Very

3. How relevant was the information to you?

Not at all A little Very

4. How well is the annual report laid out?

Very Well About Right Badly

Comments

Once completed please place in an envelope and send free of charge to:
**NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY,
FREEPOST BEL 3049,
BELFAST BT1 4BR.**



NIGALA

NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
a voice for children

**Centre House
79 Chichester Street
Belfast, BT1 4JE.**

Tel: 028 90 316550

Fax: 028 90 319811

Text: 028 9032 9674

Email: admin@nigala.hscni.net

Website: www.nigala.hscni.net



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