



NIGALA

NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency

a voice for children

NIGALA ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16



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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 2016

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

9 August 2016



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.

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Mr Peter Reynolds (Chief Executive - Acting)
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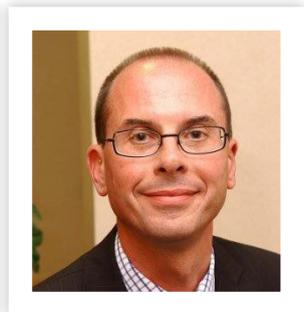


INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As Chair and Chief Executive of NIGALA we are pleased to introduce this overview to the NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) Annual Report and Accounts for 2015-16.



Mr Bernard Mitchell



Mr Peter Reynolds

The NIGALA constantly strives to deliver a service of the highest quality and seeks to utilise the resources at our disposal in the most efficient and effective manner. We are confident that our focus has always been, and will always remain, the children who we serve and a high priority is therefore afforded to resourcing and maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of our front line service. In this context, the contribution of the Guardian Ad Litem to effective case management, incorporating timely and high quality evidence based analysis for Courts is a key component of their role. There are few more vulnerable in our society, than children, about whose lives the courts and state make significant and often life changing decisions.

In 2015-16 the NIGALA engaged in a number of initiatives aimed at delivering a service to children which is strong, professional and supportive of wider mechanisms for safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children. As the year has progressed, we have been diligent in developing internal work-streams aimed at strengthening the baseline knowledge and skills for Guardians, concentrating on complex issues such as disability, attachment, diversity and cultural competence. We look forward to developing mechanisms for promoting children's participation and placing children *at the centre of NIGALA's decision making processes*. Recognising the changing profile of children in the past twenty

years, NIGALA has developed its Case Information System (GCIS) to capture data relating to children's disabilities and ethnicity.

We have also worked closely with key stakeholders as part of a wider strategic debate as to what future structures and processes may look like in the delivery of timely and positive outcomes in court proceedings which preserve the rights of all involved. Our constant challenge is keeping pace with demand while maintaining a critical focus on the child or young person. NIGALA remains a demand led service with regional variations and while the increase in the number of case appointments has been small in the period for 2015-16, this is against a backdrop of significant rising demand since 2011.

NIGALA recognises the growing pressures on the family justice system and welcomes further debate on some of the key recommendations arising from the Report of the Access to Justice Review (Part Two) published in 2015.

The joint DOJ/DHSSPS '*Care Proceedings Pilot – Improving Children's Lives*' commenced in January 2016, supported by NIGALA and is running in parallel with the Civil Family Justice Review, chaired by The Right Honourable Lord Justice Gillen, both of which are welcome. Learning lessons from past failings and building on success is an imperative.

The care proceedings pilot is therefore founded on a need to achieve timely, child focused outcomes for children and young people and it is encouraging to note a 5% reduction in the duration of care proceedings from 345 days in 2014-15 to 327 days in 2015-16. Significantly the pilot will inform consideration of whether there is a need for legislative change, similar to those introduced in England and Wales under the Children and Families Act 2014, which among other key elements introduced a statutory time limit of 26 weeks for care proceedings. Improving outcomes and minimising prejudicial delay, promoting good decision making for children and young people subject to public law proceedings is a key imperative. We await with interest the outcomes and recommendations of the pilot expected in 2017.

During the year Agency reports identified organisational issues which required addressing; an engagement exercise with staff and a corresponding action plan is currently in progress. Managing and responding positively to change is a key planning objective for the forthcoming year. NIGALA recognises the many challenges it has faced and faces in the forthcoming year, but seeks to develop cultural change where increased value is placed on learning, development and enhanced collective working across the Agency. In 2016-17 the Agency's Professional and Development Framework remains a key platform for review and developing approaches to learning and performance management.

Finally a deep appreciation and thanks is extended to all the members of the NIGALA Board, the Executive Management Team, Corporate and Administrative staff and of course our Guardians ad Litem, who provide a high quality and professional service in the pursuit of safeguarding and promoting the best interests of children.

NIGALA also wishes to acknowledge the continued help and support of our sponsoring department, the DHSSPS in achieving a financial settlement for 2016-17 which recognises the resource required to support front line staff in a climate of continued financial austerity.



Mr Bernard Mitchell, Chair



Mr Peter Reynolds, Acting CEO

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SECTION ONE

PERFORMANCE REPORT

Overview

Public Law Proceedings and Adoption Proceedings

While the Agency's legislative mandate in respect of the governing legislation, the Children (NI) Order 1995 and the Adoption (NI) Order 1987, remains unchanged, the strategic context is evolving. The underlying theme of delivering a quality service in a timely manner within the confines of financial constraints permeate a range of DHSSPS and DOJ initiatives. The outworking of the DOJ Access to Justice Review alongside the Civil Family Justice Review being led by The Right Honourable Lord Justice Gillen together with the findings from the joint DOJ/DHSSPS Care Proceedings Pilot will undoubtedly influence practice going forward. The challenge remains that of balancing the Human Rights Act 1998 Article 6 Rights (right to a fair hearing) and Article 8 Rights (right to family life) whilst taking account of the 'child's time frame' and withstanding challenge as evidenced in judgements of Re: B and Re: B-S.

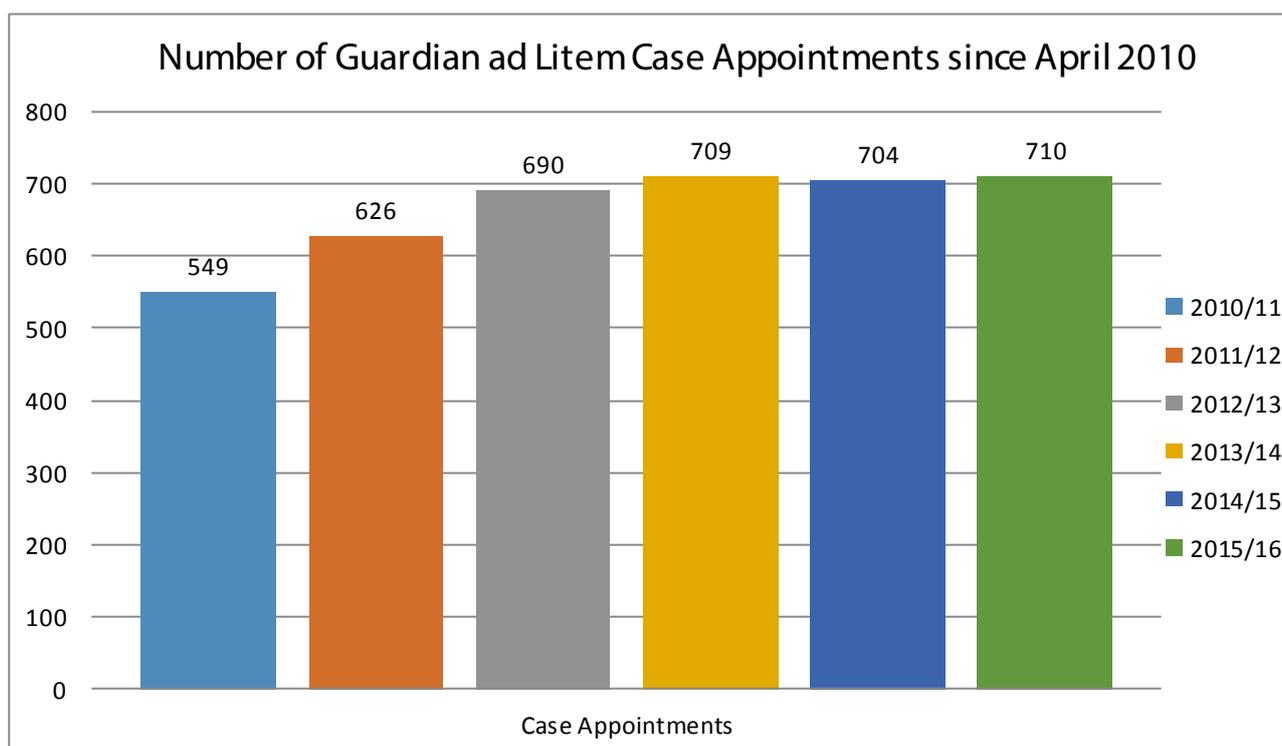
Permanence historically referenced adoption as the option for achieving stability and legal security for young children for whom it was viable to remain in their birth parents care. Anecdotally there is a perception that increasingly kinship care, under the auspices of a Care Order, is the identified care plan for a number of children for whom return to their birth parents is not achievable. Capturing and collating the detail of care proceedings care plans would be of interest in addressing the diversity of outcomes that reflect the particular circumstances and assessed needs of the children relative to their age and situation.

Workload trends for 2015-16

Specified proceedings are defined in Article 60 (6) of the Children (NI) Order 1995 within which the Guardian has a general duty to safeguard the interests of the child having due regard to the child's welfare as paramount. 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.

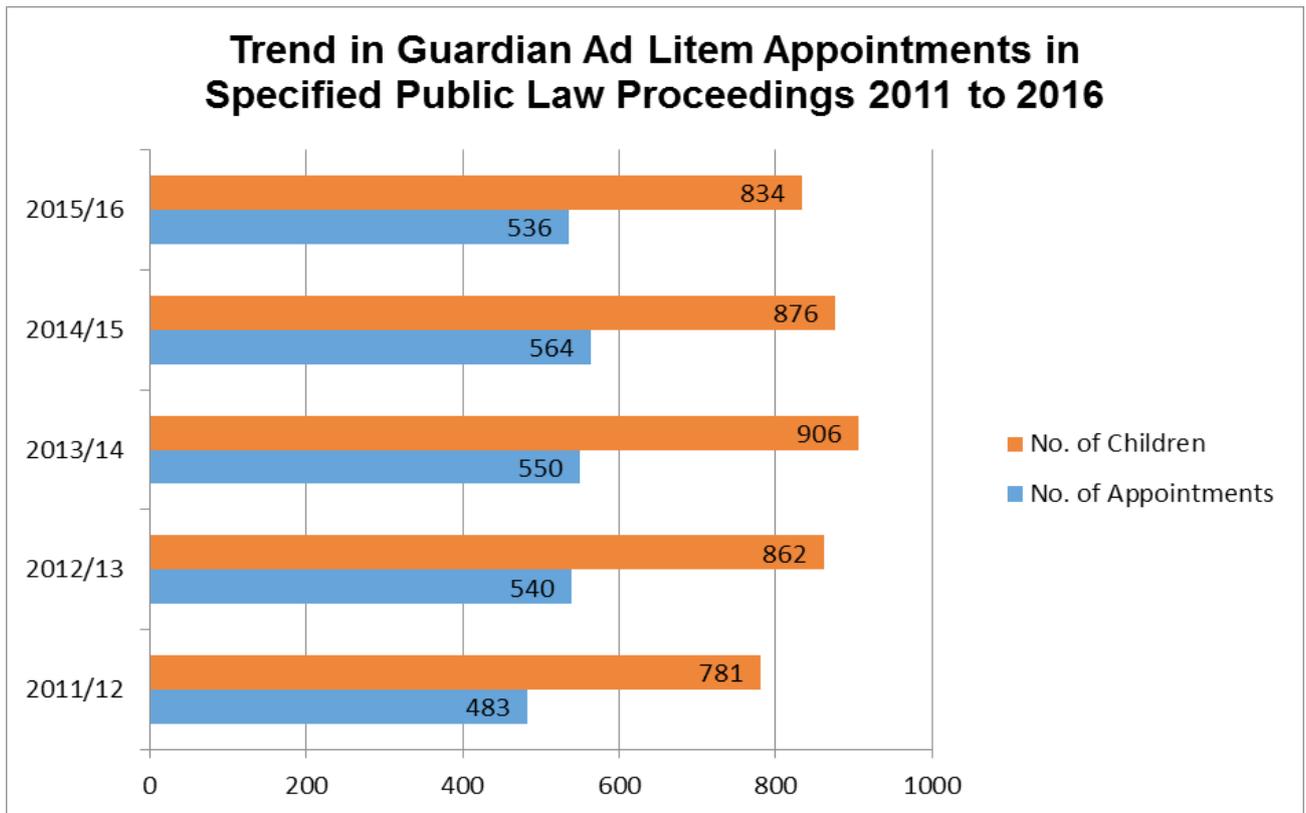
There was a slight overall increase in the number of case appointments from 704 in 2014-15 to 710 for the reporting period in 2015-16. This reflects an upward trend since 2010 as outlined in chart 1.

Chart 1



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 overleaf details the gradual increase in Specified Public Law Proceedings up to last year with a decrease witnessed for the first time this year in over 5 years.

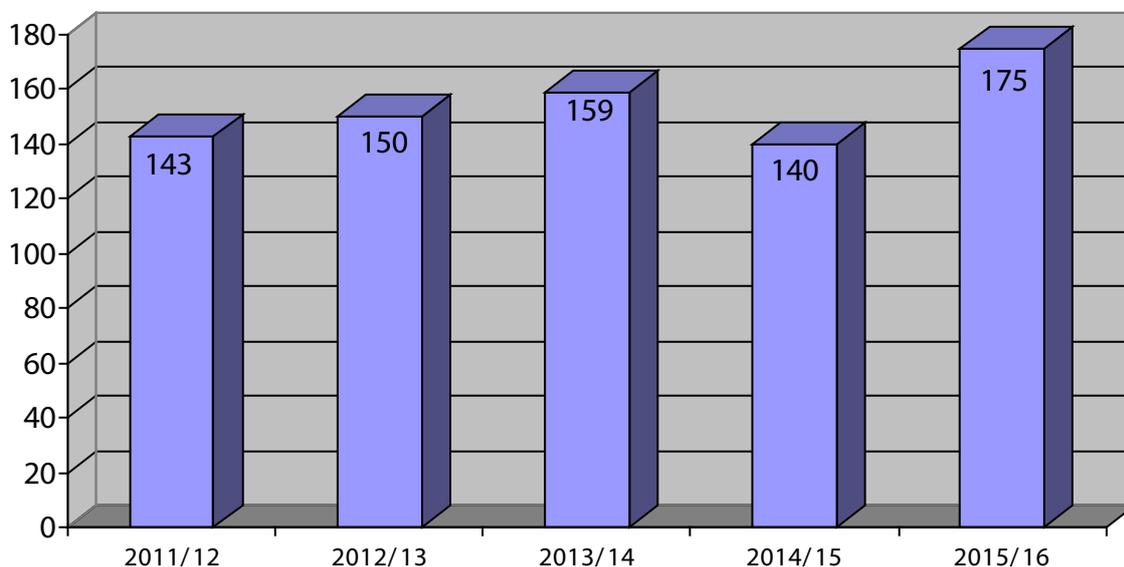
Chart 2



Appointments of Guardians in adoption proceedings accounted for 25% of the workload (175 cases involving 221 children) compared to 20% for the preceding year (140 cases involving 164 children). See chart 3 overleaf. The 5% increase in adoption work was in contrast to the 10% reduction in care order applications from 357 involving 571 children in 2014-15 to 321 involving 533 cases during 2015-16.

Chart 3

Trends in Guardian ad Litem Appointments in Adoption Proceedings 2011 to 2016



There was regional variation in Trust overall activity relative to adoption and specified proceedings as outlined in Charts 4 and 5 overleaf. The Belfast HSC Trust generated the highest number of combined appointments 179 involving 269 children (145 specified cases with 229 children, 34 adoption cases with 40 children). While the Northern HSC Trust had a combined total of 149 cases (89 specified cases involving 60 children, 60 adoption cases involving 81 children) their adoption cases represented a significantly higher figure relative to the other four HSC Trusts. The South Eastern HSC Trust had 141 appointments (115 specified cases relating to 167 children relative to 26 adoption cases involving 31 children). The Southern HSC Trust had 132 appointments relating to 193 children (106 specified cases involving 160 children and 26 adoptions relating to 33 children). The Western HSC Trust had the lowest number of appointments for adoption and specified proceedings with a combined total of 103 appointments involving 136 children (82 specified cases in respect of 136 children and 21 adoption cases involving 27 children).

Chart 4:

Trends in Guardian ad Litem Appointments in Adoption Applications by Originating Trusts from 2011 to 2016

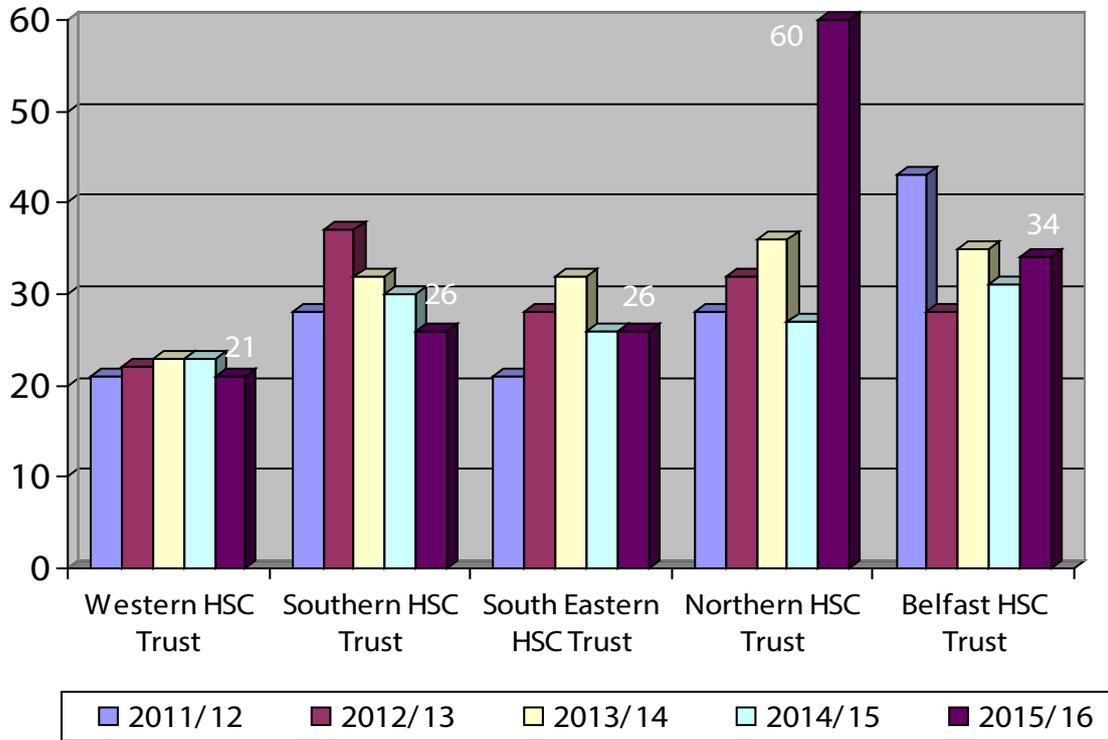
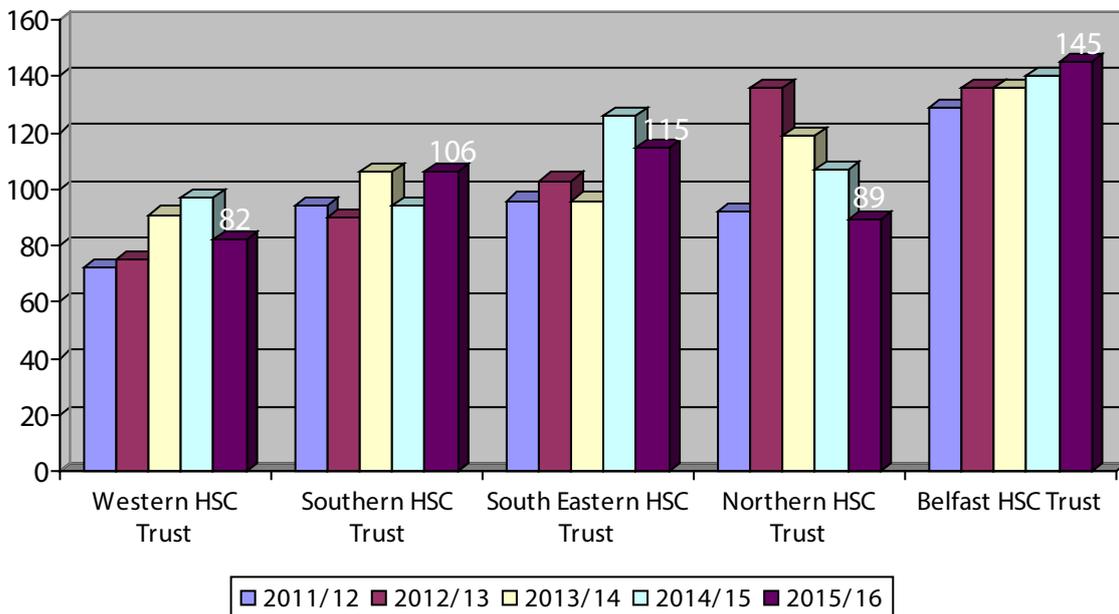


Chart 5:

Trends in Guardian ad Litem Appointments in Specified Public Law Applications by Originating Trusts from 2011 to 2016



It is of note that there was a significant increase in adoption appointments in the Northern HSC Trust (60 in 2015-16 compared with 27 in 2014-15) with a decrease in specified cases (89 in 2015-16) relative to the 107 applications in the preceding year. The Belfast HSC Trust appointments showed slight increases in both specified (145 in 2015-16 compared with 140 in 2014-15) and adoption proceedings (34 in 2015-16 relative to 31 in 2014-15) The Southern HSC Trust had a slight reduction in adoption appointments (26 in 2015-16 compared with 30 in the preceding year) and an increase in specified cases (up from 94 in 2014-15 to 106 in 2015-16).

Both the South Eastern HSC Trust and Western HSC Trusts, who are participating in the Care Proceedings Pilot, had reduced number of care applications. While it is too early to make definitive comment this could reflect pre-proceedings activity in line with the Guide to Case Management. While adoption appointments in the Southern HSC Trust mirrored the 2014-15 figure (26) there was a slight reduction in the Western HSC Trust.

In line with the aforementioned variations in Trust activity the Court appointments reflect this albeit that the Trust boundaries and Court divisions are not co-terminus as some courts deal with cases from a number of Trusts. Belfast Family Proceedings Court generated 112 Guardian appointments in 2015-16 an increase of 6 on the preceding year. Londonderry Family Proceedings Court made 50 Guardian appointments in 2014-15 an increase of 10 compared with the previous year. Lisburn Family Proceedings Court had an increase of 6 appointments from 20 to 26 in 2015-16. Appointments generated by Newtownards reduced from 63 to 43 and in Ballymena there was a reduction from 53 to 38 in 2015-16. The impact of the pending court closures subsequent to the Care Proceedings Pilot will be of interest.

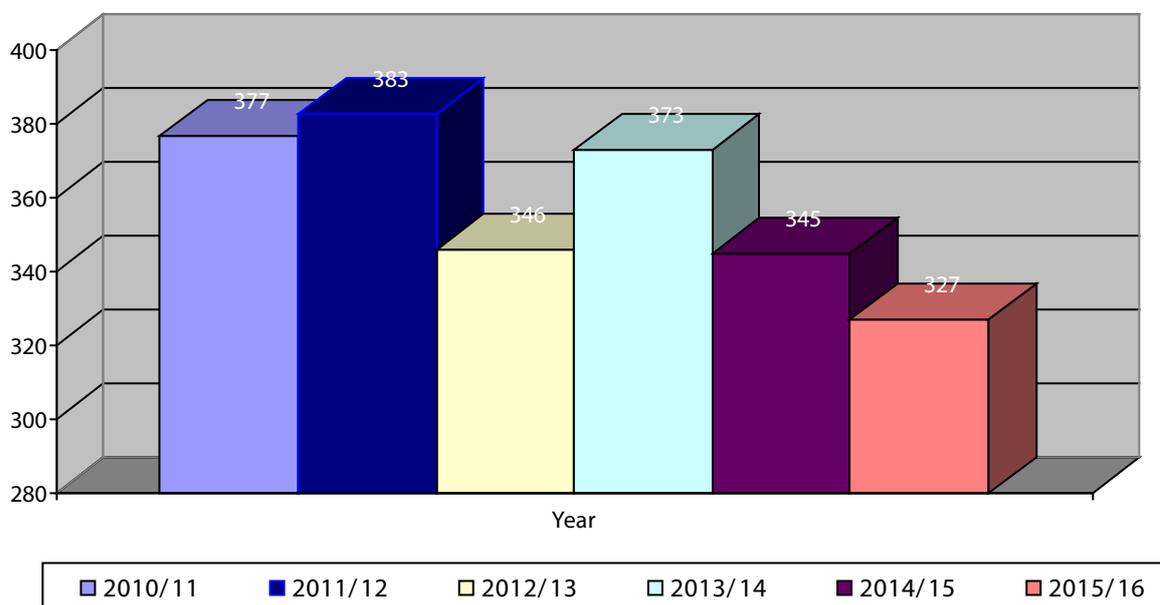
The majority of adoption applications (74%) were made at County Court level. 45 cases were dealt with in the High Court compared with 70 in Belfast Care Centre and 29 in Craigavon Care Centre. The other courts dealt with single figures.

Duration of Proceedings

The increased duration of care proceedings has been the source of shared concern. While the Children and Families Act 2014 has introduced a statutory time limit of 26 weeks it is not anticipated that this will be enacted in revised legislation within the jurisdiction, in respect of which the timescale for consultation is not known. The Care Proceedings Pilot commenced in January 2016 and cases are being tracked to monitor progress. It is encouraging to note that the duration of care application proceedings reduced from an average of 345 days in 2014-15 to 327 in 2015-16.

Chart 6

Trends in Average Duration (in Days) of Care Proceedings 2010 to 2016



Duration figures for Article 53 Contact applications reduced from an average of 144 days in 2014-15 to 130 in 2015-16. Likewise the average duration of Article 58 Discharge of Care Order applications reduced marginally from 128 to 125 days.

Increased duration was evidenced in both Article 56 (30 cases) and Supervision Order (9 cases) applications. Article 56 proceedings have invariably been the subject of longstanding, acrimonious Article 8 private law proceedings and can involve personal litigants. It is of note that the duration figures rose from an average of 158 days in 2014-15 to 208 days in 2015-16. The average duration of Supervision Order proceedings rose from 206 in 2014-15 to 375 in 2015-16.

Timescales for the completion of placement adoptions increased from 159 to 171 days. There was also an increase in the duration of Freeing proceedings (53 cases) from 179 to 223 days which by virtue of the draconian nature of securing a Freeing Order thereby extinguishing the parent's parental responsibility warrant judicial scrutiny. Freeing consolidated proceedings (joining freeing to ongoing care proceedings), whilst few in number (5) were concluded in a reduced timescale (430 days compared with 646 in 2014-15).

Profile of Children

The Guardian Case Information System (GCIS) is being enhanced to capture data in respect of children's disabilities and ethnicity. The profile of children has changed since the inception of the Agency in 1996 with an increasing number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds alongside children with special needs. Existing data captures the age and gender profile of children.

There were 513 children subject of Care proceedings relating to 242 females relative to 271 males, a significant number of whom were aged five and under. It would be interesting to capture the case outcomes in respect of the identified care plan to consider patterns and trends across the Province.

Of the 64 children who were subject of Freeing proceedings there were similar number of males and females (34 and 30) 53 of whom were aged between 1 and 5 years old.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) and Stakeholder Involvement

Core themes for NIGALA during 2015-16 were;

- To promote engagement with stakeholders in order to improve service delivery.
- To progress processes of engagement with children and young people.

Sharing skills

As part of an ongoing process looking at engagement and participation with children and young people, in February 2016 NIGALA held a “sharing skills” session for staff to explore the range of knowledge and skills within the Guardian group as a basis for progressing mechanisms for effective engagement with children and young people. A number of workstreams were established whose purpose is to revisit resources for engagement with children and young people, consider methods for obtaining feedback as well as address processes for children’s participation in NIGALA.

Stakeholder Events

During 2015-16, NIGALA has co-ordinated two events with stakeholders as part of the Care Proceedings Pilot - *Improving Children’s Lives*. These events were held in Belfast and in the North West and were attended by the Judiciary, representatives from the Department of Health and Northern Ireland Court Service, as well as Social Workers from the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts, Solicitors and Guardians. In addition to presentations from the Department of Health and NIGALA there was also input from Queens University who provided a visual portrayal of a child’s timescales which set the scene for the purpose of the pilot study.

Engagement with Stakeholders

During 2015-16 NIGALA has continued its engagement with the judiciary through attendance at the Family Court Business Committees and Children Order Advisory Committee (COAC). NIGALA has also engaged with stakeholders through membership of other fora with Trusts including Legal Issues Group and the Regional Adoption and Fostering Taskforce.

Feedback from Children and Young People

Between March 2015 and March 2016 NIGALA sought feedback from children and young people through the following methods:

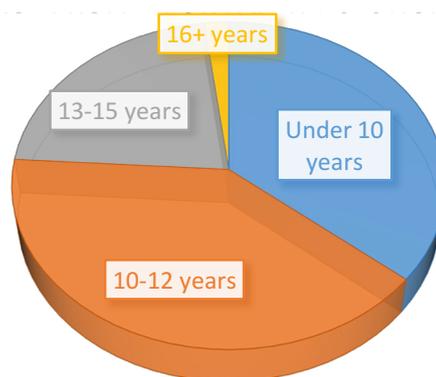
- Hard copy paper questionnaires
- Online questionnaires through the Viewpoint system
- Assisted VOYPIC interview with the child/young person.

Profile of Children and Young People who provided Feedback through HARD COPY Paper Questionnaires

NIGALA sent out 207 hard copy questionnaires to children and young people. Of those 53 were completed. Of the children who provided written feedback 51% were male and 49% female.

AGE PROFILE FOR PAPER QUESTIONNAIRES

- 36% were less than 10 years old
- 40% were between 10-12 years old
- 22% were between 13-15 years old
- 2% were aged 16+ years



The Paper Questionnaire asks a number of short questions which were responded to as follows:

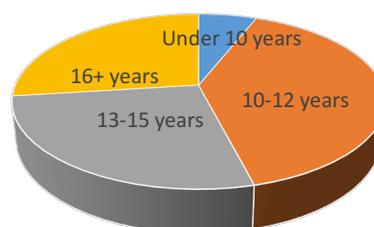
- 74% of the children answered **yes definitely** to the question, *Did you understand what your Guardian said to you?*, whilst 17% replied **most of the time**
- 64% found their guardian easy to talk to, 24% found that they were mostly easy to talk to.
- 91% of children and young people found that the guardian listened to what they had to say, 6% found that the guardian mostly listened.
- 58% found the guardian understood how they felt, 30% felt they understood most of the time.
- Overall 81% were happy with their Guardian ad Litem with 64% rating their Guardian as **excellent**, 17% rating their Guardians ad Litem as **very good**.

Profile of Children and Young People who provided Feedback through ONLINE Questionnaires

NIGALA sent out 53 online questionnaires to children and young people of which 15 (26%) were returned. Of the 15 children who returned feedback 6 (40%) were male and 9 (60%) were female. The age ranges of the children and young people were as follows;

AGE PROFILE FOR ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES

- 6% were less than 10 years
- 40% were between 10-12 years
- 27% were between 13-15 years
- 27% were 16+ years



■ Under 10 years ■ 10-12 years ■ 13-15 years ■ 16+ years

Thirteen identified as being white, one identified as “other” and one child identified as being Asian. One child identified as having a disability.

The Online Questionnaire was responded to as follows:-

- **Understanding of the Guardian Role**

93% of respondent identified that their social worker explained the guardian role to them and this number also indicated that they understood the role of the guardian.

- **Level of Comfort talking to Guardian**

93% of respondents reported that they were happy to answer questions guardians asked about their life.

93 % found it ok or very easy to talk to their guardian about their past

93% found it ok or very easy to talk to the guardian about what they wanted in the future. 86% felt they had been consulted about what was happening in Court.

- **Contact with Guardian**

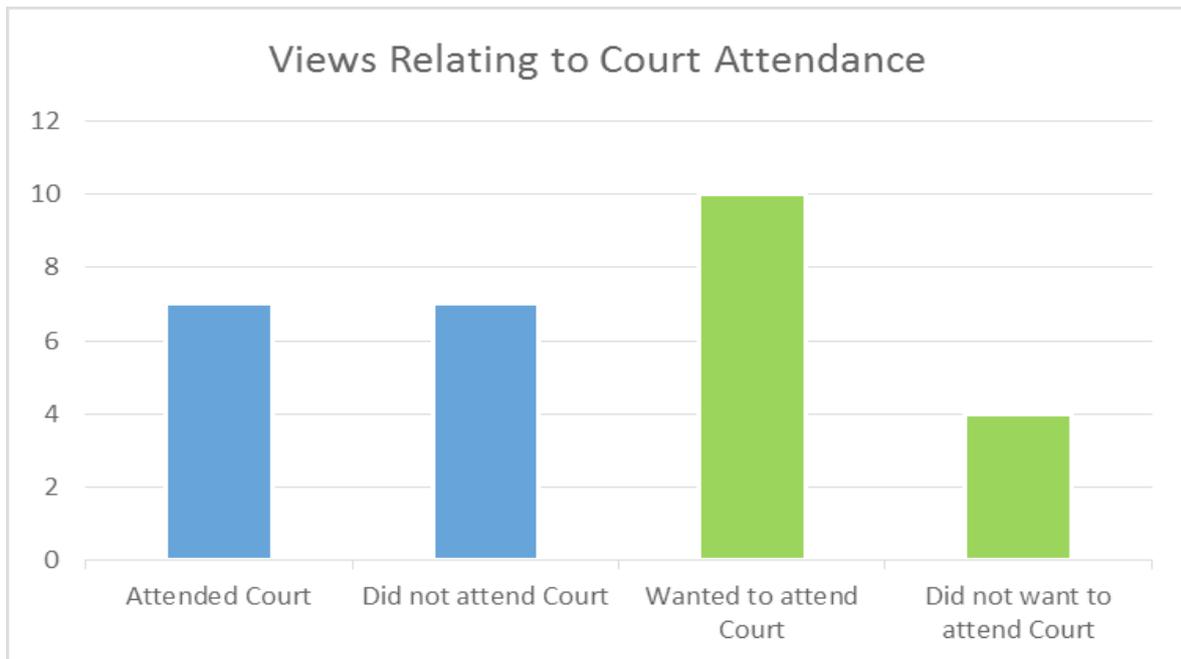
Respondents were asked whether they thought they had enough contact with their guardian. Of the 15 respondents 14 (93.3%) replied yes, 1 (6.7%) did not respond.

- **Views relating to Court attendance and Court proceedings.**

Regarding attendance at Court

7 (47%) attended Court, whilst 7 (47%) did not attend court. One respondent did not answer the question.

10 (66%) responded that they had wanted to attend Court, 4 (26.7%) indicated that they did not want to attend Court. One respondent did not answer the question.



In response to the question about whether attending Court made a difference about decisions which were made about them, 2 (13%) respondents felt that not attending Court did not make a difference to decisions which were made about them: 5 (33%) identified that they were not sure, and the remaining 7 (54%) respondents did not answer.

- **Satisfaction with Court Outcome**

In response to their satisfaction with what the Court decided:-

12 (80%) respondents felt that the Court decided what they wanted

2 (13%) replied that the Court had not decided what they had wanted

1 (7%) did not answer

In response to whether they had a say in what the Court decided

12 (80%) respondents felt that what they had a say in what the Court decided

2 (13%) felt they did not have a say in what the Court decided

1 (7%) did not respond

- **Respondents Views of the Plans**

Regarding the Plans that were made for them

14 (93%) agreed with the guardian about what should happen next

1 (7%) did not respond

In response to “how happy the respondents were with the plans” 9 (60%) indicated that they were over 80% happy with the plans that were made for them

4 (26%) did not respond

1 (7%) said 60/100

1 (7%) said 50/100

- **Involvement**

In response to the question “what could have been done to make you more involved in decisions about your future”

8 (52%) did not feel there was anything else which could have made them more involved in decisions about their future

3 (20%) did not know

1 (7%) said “for all the social workers to be gone”

1 (7%) said “let me speak for myself at Court”

1 (7%) said “more meetings”

1 (7%) did not respond

- **Influence on Outcome**

11 (73%) of children and young people who responded using the online questionnaire felt that what they had said had affected the final decision made in Court

3 (20%) did not think what they had said affected the final decision made by the Court.

1 respondent did not answer the question

- **Satisfaction Ratings**

Children and young people were asked how happy were you with your guardian?

6 (40%) respondents gave a satisfaction rating of 100%

2 (13%) respondents gave a satisfaction rating of 90%

1 (7%) respondent gave a satisfaction rating of 30%

6 (40%) respondents did not answer

Profile of Children and Young People whose feedback interview was assisted by VOYPIC

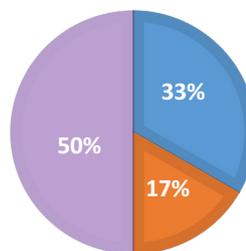
One of the options available for children and young people to give feedback on their experience of the Guardian ad Litem service is with the assistance from an advocate from Voice of Young People In Care (VOYPIC).

During the period 2015-16, 29 children identified that they would complete feedback with VOYPIC; 12 were completed (41%). Of those completed 6 (50%) of respondents were male and 6 (50%) were female.

AGE PROFILE

- 33% were less than 10 years
- 17% were between 10-12 years
- 50% of respondents were between 13-15 years

■ Under 10 years ■ 10-12 years ■ 13-15 years



Regarding ethnicity, three children (25%) identified themselves in the “mixed” category, eight (67%) identified as “white,” and one (8%) identified themselves as “other”

The VOYPIC interviews provided the following feedback responses:-

- **Understanding of the Guardian Role**

100% of the children felt that their social worker had explained the role of the guardian to them and 11 (92%) felt that they understood the guardian role. One respondent did not answer the question.

- **Level of Comfort when engaging with guardian**

11 (92%) of the children and young people identified that they were happy to talk to their guardian about their life, and of these 7 (58%) found that it was either difficult or very difficult to talk about their past, 5 (42%) felt it was ok to talk about the past.

7 (58%) felt they had been asked how they felt about what was happening in Court whilst 2 (17%) felt they had not been asked and 3 (25%) indicated that they could not remember.

- **Contact with Guardian**

In response to questions about whether they felt they had enough contact with their guardian

8 (67%) replied yes

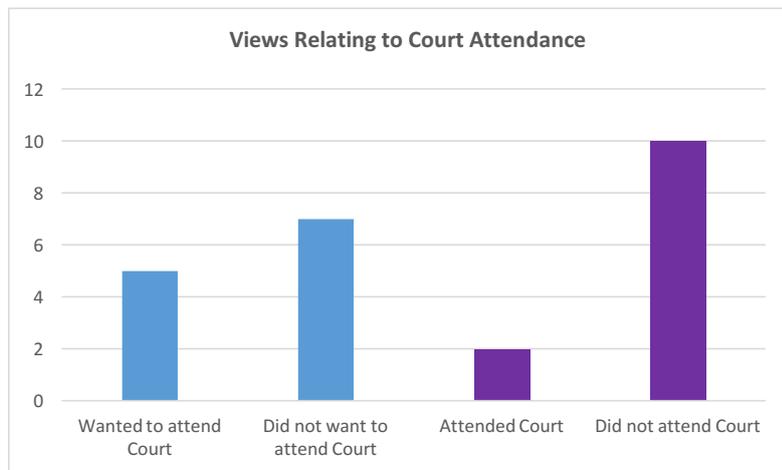
4 (33%) replied no

- **Views relating to Court Attendance and Court Proceedings**

In response to attendance at Court

5 (42%) responded that yes they did want to attend Court

7 (58%) responded that no they had not wanted to attend Court



2 (17%) of respondents said they had attended court

10 (83%) replied that they did not attend court

4 (33%) of respondents felt that by not attending Court that this did have an effect on decisions that were made about them

4 (33%) felt that it did not have an effect

3 (25%) were not sure

1 (9%) did not answer

- **Respondents View of the Plans**

Respondents were asked did you and your guardian agree with what should happen next?

8 (67%) said yes

4 (33%) said no

In response to how did you feel about the plans that were made for you?

2 (17%) were 100% happy

2 (17%) were 90% happy

1 (8%) was 60% happy

1 (8%) was 50% happy

1 (8%) was 10% happy

3 (25%) were 0% happy

2 (17%) respondents did not answer the question

- **Influence on Outcome**

In response to a question about whether the child or young person felt that what they had said affected the final decision in Court

5 (42%) responded yes that what they had said had affected the decision

6 (50%) noted what they had said had not affected the final decision about them

1 (8%) did not respond

- **Involvement**

Respondents were asked what could have been done to make you more involved in decisions about your future.

3 (25%) said nothing

2 (17%) said I don't know

3 (25%) said let me speak for myself at Court

4 (33%) did not respond

- **Satisfaction Ratings**

Respondents were asked overall how happy were you with your guardian?

6 (50%) gave 100% satisfaction rating

1 (8%) gave an 80 % satisfaction rating

3 (26%) gave a 50% satisfaction rating

1 (8%) gave a 40% satisfaction rating

1 (8%) gave a 0 % satisfaction rating

Children's Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms

In 2015-16 NIGALA continued with a process of revisiting resources for engaging with children and young people, as well as revisiting mechanisms for obtaining feedback. The aim is to increase children's involvement in their own Court proceedings as well as enable children and young people's feedback to contribute to service delivery. The feedback which was returned provides a picture both of positive engagement by guardians with children as well as identifying areas for further consideration and development.

Best Interests Decisions

Whilst Guardians have a role in reflecting the child's wishes and feelings to the Court, the Guardian also has a responsibility to state what in their own view is in the child's best interests, which may not correlate with what the child would like to happen.

In considering the feedback received, of those children who completed online feedback 14 out of 15 (93.3%) agreed with the Guardian about what should happen next. Of those children 7 out of 15 (46%) attended Court and 12 (80%) felt that the Court had decided what they had wanted. Twelve respondents (80%) felt that what they had said had mattered in what the Court had decided. Eight out of 15 respondents (53%) gave a satisfaction rate of 90% or higher with their guardian.

The findings from the online survey are consistent with these children and young people having had the sense that they had their voices heard and that what they had said had made a difference.

Of those children and young people who completed a feedback form with a VOYPIC advocate, 8 out of 12 (66%) said they agreed with the guardian about next steps while 4 (33.3%) did not agree. Two (16.7%) out of 12 attended court, 5 (41.7%) felt that what they had said had affected the decision made about them, whilst 6 (50%) noted that what they had said had not affected the decision. Seven children and young people, (58%) gave a satisfaction rating for their guardian of 80% or higher.

The picture emerging from those children and young people who provided feedback with the assistance of a VOYPIC advocate presents a picture where there was less attendance in Court and less agreement with the guardian, less contentment with the plans which were made and a lesser sense that their voice was heard than the picture which emerges from the results of the completed online feedback.

Comments made by children and Young People:-

“She was really supportive of my decisions”

“She was really nice, I liked seeing her”

“I would like to have seen her more. Sometimes I could answer the questions and sometimes I couldn’t”

“He is just really helpful”

“She is amazing”

Stakeholder Feedback

Evaluation of the Guardian Ad Litem Service by the Judiciary

6 out of 16 members of the Judiciary returned feedback and indicated the following:-



Written comments from the Judiciary stated:-

"I invariably find that the reports of the Guardian are of immense assistance to me in reaching a determination in cases. The quality of the work is very impressive".

"The GAL service is key to making the best decisions we can for children. It is a wonderful service and inspires me to do my best too!"

Evaluation of the Guardian Ad Litem service by Children's Panel Solicitors

38 completed questionnaires were returned by Solicitors:-

- **100% of respondents rated the quality of the service as good or excellent**
- **100% of respondents rated the level of analysis in the Guardians reports as excellent or good**
- **100% of respondents considered that the Guardians were credible witnesses at all times or the majority of the time**
- **100% of respondents considered the Guardians reflect the wishes and feelings of children at all times or the majority of the time**
- **95% of respondents found that Guardians promote the best interests of children at all times**
- **100% of respondents rate the level of analysis in the Guardians reports as excellent or good**
- **100% of respondents felt Guardians gave clear instructions at all times or the majority of the time**
- **97% of respondents felt that Guardians preserved their independence during proceedings at all times**
- **90% advised that Guardians advise the courts on attendance of the child at all times or the majority of time**
- **92% of respondents rated the Guardians advising the court on participation of the child at all times or majority of the time**

Written Comments from Solicitors

“The Agency continues to provide an invaluable service in the interests of children”.

“High quality across the board”

“Excellent professional service that really makes a difference in achieving the best outcome for children”

“I remain impressed by the service and professionalisms of the Guardians who I have worked with and feel they have been able to focus on the best interests of the children in each and every case I have been instructed in”.

Performance Analysis 2015-16

A wide range of performance indicators and KPI's across all aspects of the NIGALA business supported the delivery of the corporate objectives 2015-16. The core indicators are set out below -

PRODUCTIVITY

KPI	TARGET	OUTCOME	RAG
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 2015-16	11	11.70	ACHIEVED

CASE ALLOCATION

KPI	TARGET	OUTCOME	RAG
95% of Secure Accommodation cases allocated within 8 working days following court request	95%	100%	ACHIEVED
95% of Emergency Protection Order cases allocated within 3 working days following court request	95%	100%	ACHIEVED
60% of all Care ¹ Type cases allocated within 8 working days of court request	60%	95%	ACHIEVED
90% of Adoption Case appointments allocated by work day 8 following court request	92%	98%	ACHIEVED

PERSONAL AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

KPI	TARGET	OUTCOME	RAG
75% of responses to our survey from CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (8 yrs +) by means of paper questionnaire or Viewpoint to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	75%	78%	ACHIEVED
75% of responses to our survey from the JUDICARY to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	75%	100%	ACHIEVED
75% of responses to our survey of ACCREDITED SOLICITORS to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'.	75%	100%	ACHIEVED

¹ Care type cases include Article 56 investigations, Contact, Supervision and Care applications.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

KPI	TARGET	OUTCOME	RAG
90% of staff have an annual appraisal completed and a new learning plan and objectives set by June 2016	90%	92%	ACHIEVED
Maintain sickness absence levels to below 5%	5%	4.60%	ACHIEVED

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

KPI	TARGET	OUTCOME	RAG
Deliver breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is the greater)	0.25%/ £20k	0.23%	ACHIEVED
Pay 95% invoices upon full completion/receipt within 30 days	95%	96%	ACHIEVED

The KPI's are showing a steady improvement in achievement as NIGALA year on year continues to raise the target levels for achievement. Personal and Public Involvement targets are being reviewed during 2016-17 and a revised KPI target will be identified during this period.

Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Incidents

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 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 NIGALA received a total of 38 Comments, Compliments and Complaints; 16 arriving by email, 19 by formal letter, 0 in person and 3 via telephone. These are outlined in the table below:

	Email	Letter	In Person	Phone	Total
Comments	1	2	0	1	4
Compliments	15	16	0	1	32
Complaints	0	1	0	1	2
Total	16	19	0	3	38

Comments

A total of 4 comments were received. Two of these comments were initially received as complaints, however as the complaints related to case matters which were still live before the court, the complainants were advised the issues being raised could only be dealt with in the court arena. NIGALA recorded these as comments. A comment was received by NIGALA from a solicitor regarding the solicitor panel interviews held in 2015. The solicitor felt the way in which the process was managed had a detrimental effect on their performance throughout the interview. Whilst the solicitor did not wish to make formal complaint, they did wish their views to be recorded and as such this was recorded as a comment. A comment was received from a member of another organisation regarding the conduct of a Guardian at a meeting. A meeting took place to address the issues raised.

Compliments

NIGALA received a total of 32 compliments in period, categorised as follows:

Token of thanks	3
Letter of thanks	11
Positive feedback	17
Verbal thanks	1
Total	32

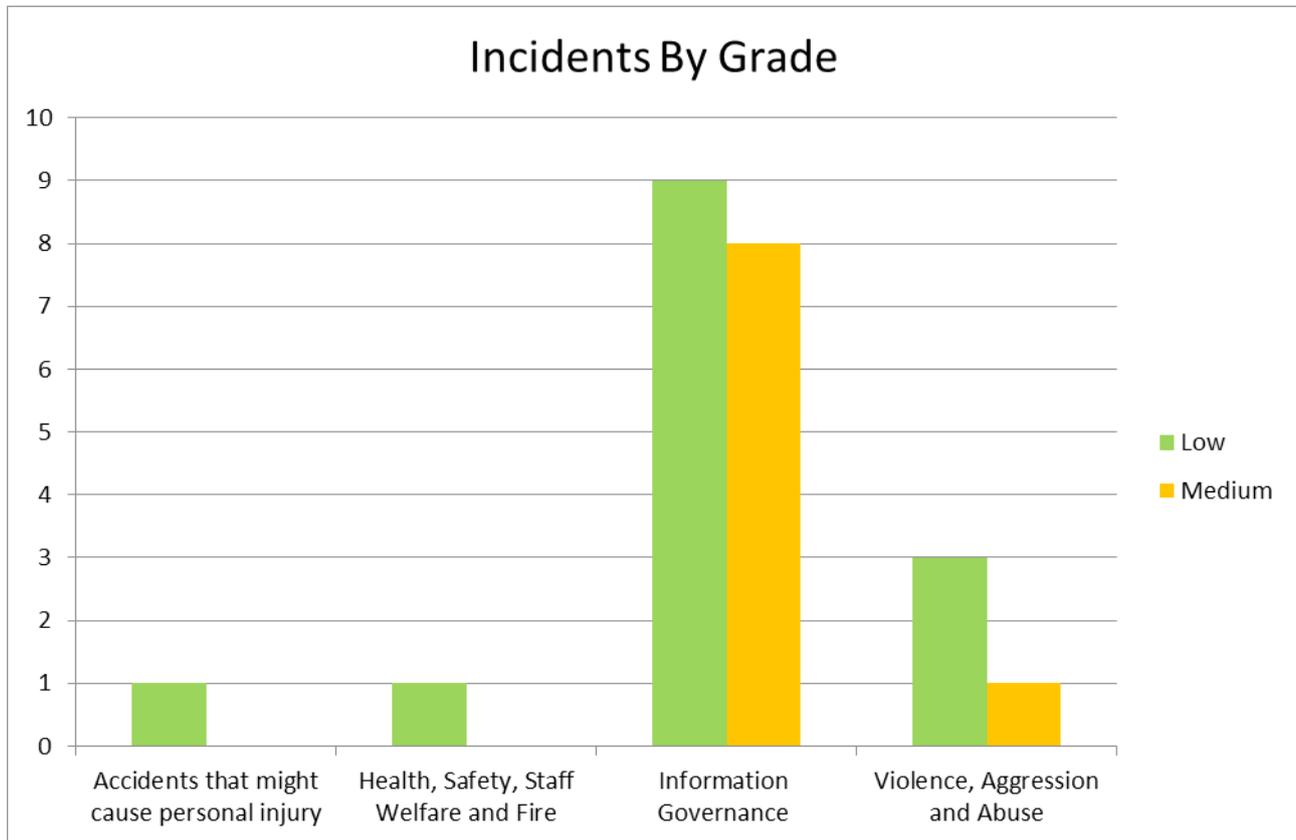
The compliments received included positive feedback from members of the Judiciary and Solicitors upon conclusion of cases regarding the work of the Guardian Ad Litem. Thanks were received from a number of parents regarding the work of the Guardian Ad Litem during cases in achieving positive outcomes for children. A number of compliments were made by staff at NIGALA which included thanks for positive feedback about training events.

Complaints

NIGALA received a total of 2 case-related complaints in period. One complaint was made by parents in a case raising a number of issues regarding the Guardian Ad Litem including withholding information from the court and harassment. Despite numerous attempts by NIGALA to make contact with the complainants via phone calls, letters arranging visits the complainants did not get back in touch with NIGALA and as such the matter was unable to be taken any further. A complaint was received by NIGALA from a parent who reported they had felt the Guardian had not shown due diligence in their assessment and had based their report largely on the Trust's perspective. Due to the complainants ill health this complaint is currently on hold and has been deemed inappropriate to proceed at this time.

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 2015-16 there were 23 reported incidents. The chart below details the incident type by Risk Grading (see chart and table below).



Risk Grade	Violence, Aggression & Abuse	Accidents that might cause personal injury	Fraud or Suspected Fraud	Health, Safety, Staff Welfare & Fire	Information Governance	Total
Low Risk	3	1	0	1	9	14
Medium Risk	1	0	0	0	8	9
High Risk	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	1	0	1	17	23

A total of 4 incidents were in relation to violence, aggression and abuse, 3 of which were considered low risk and 1 as a medium risk. One of the reported incidents was regarding an accident and 1 was in relation to health, safety and staff welfare; both were considered to be of low risk.

With respect to information governance 17 incidents were notified, 9 of which were considered low risk and 8 which were considered as medium risk. Of the low risk incidents 8 were related to torn post received and 1 related to damaged ICT equipment. With respect to the 8 medium risk incidents one was linked to a personal data loss incident which is still under investigation.

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. Relevant action plans are implemented to ensure policies and procedures are updated to avoid where possible, any recurrence.

Finance and Fraud

NIGALA obtains finance services under a shared services agreement with the Business Services Organisation. As detailed on page 136 of the financial statements NIGALA achieved its breakeven target for 2015-16. NIGALA can also confirm that there were no reported incidents relating to fraud or suspected fraud.

With respect to losses and special payments NIGALA can confirm that no losses or special payments were made during 2015-16 as outlined in the tables overleaf.

Losses and Special Payments

Audited

Type of loss and special payment	2015-16		2014-15
	Number of Cases	£	£
Cash losses			
Cash Losses - Theft, fraud etc	0	0	0
Cash Losses - Overpayments of salaries, wages and allowances			
Cash Losses - Other causes			
	0	0	0
Claims abandoned			
Waived or abandoned claims			
	0	0	0
Administrative write-offs			
Bad debts			
Other			
	0	0	0
Fruitless payments			
Late Payment of Commercial Debt			
Other fruitless payments and constructive losses			
	0	0	0
Stores losses			
Losses of accountable stores through any deliberate act			
Other stores losses			
	0	0	0
Special Payments			
Compensation payments			
- Clinical Negligence			
- Public Liability			
- Employers Liability			
- Other			
	0	0	0
Ex-gratia payments	0	0	0
Extra contractual	0	0	0
Special severance payments	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0

Special Payments

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

Other Payments and Estimates

There were no other payments made during the year

Losses and Special Payments over £250,000	Number of Cases	2015-16 £	2014-15 £
Cash losses	0	0	0
Claims abandoned	0	0	0
Administrative write-offs	0	0	0
Fruitless payments	0	0	0
Stores losses	0	0	0
Special Payments	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0

Remote Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the meaning of IAS37, the NIGALA also reports liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability.

Equality

NIGALA benefits from participating in the BSO Equality Consortium. The sharing of expertise and learning alongside the co-ordination of activities continues to assist in the development of a well-informed, pro-active approach to mainstreaming equality. The NIGALA Equality Scheme aligns and streamlines the equality agenda with Social Care Governance and Personal and Public Involvement initiatives thereby creating greater corporate ownership.

The Agency completed a five year review of the Equality Scheme which provided an opportunity to undertake a self-assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the scheme.

Sustainability Report

The Statutory Duty for Sustainable Development applicable to public authorities is set out at section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 and applies to all Northern Ireland Departments and District Councils.

The six priority areas are:

- Building a dynamic, innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and to lift communities out of poverty;
- Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone;
- Driving sustainable, long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development;
- Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment;
- Ensuring a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint;
- Ensuring the existence of a policy environment which supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government.

NIGALA continues to be committed to ensuring it makes an active contribution to those areas which it can influence. Prominence is therefore given to the way in which NIGALA conducts its work to minimise, where relevant, a negative impact on these duties, but more importantly to make sustainable improvements wherever possible.

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 2015-16. 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.

NIGALA continues to promote its flexible working approach and has 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 more recently videoconferencing. The promotion of sustainable development practices are outlined in the biannual 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, Corporate Services, Guardians Ad Litem, and Management, and also representation from each NIGALA office.

The Committee meets twice yearly and during 2015-16 met on the following dates:

- 15 November 2015
- 19 January 2016

The following initiatives were undertaken during 2015-16;

- Annual review of Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee Terms of Reference;
- Completion of annual office risk assessments and reporting to the Department;
- DSE risk assessments continuing for staff;
- Defibrillators purchased for each office and a number of staff trained in the operation of the device;
- Fire, Legionella, and Asbestos Risk Assessments conducted by external contractor;
- Oversight of the NIGALA Sustainability action plan;
- Oversight of the NIGALA Property Asset Management Plan;
- Mindfulness sessions for staff;
- Staff completion of annual Fire Awareness eLearning module;
- 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. In 2014-15 NIGALA put in place an Accommodation Steering Committee 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.

A renewal lease has been agreed for the Londonderry office which extends until July 2020. Negotiations are currently ongoing in relation to the offices in Belfast and Armagh.

Procurement

NIGALA as an Arm's Length Body (ALB) of the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS) complies with the NI Public Procurement Policy. The Agency has a service level agreement with BSO Procurement and Logistics Service (PaLs), who are a recognised Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE). PaLs undertake all procurement activity on NIGALA's behalf and adhere to all objectives and aims detailed in the NI Public Procurement Policy. Regular monitoring and performance meetings take place between NIGALA and staff from BSO to ensure all performance indices are met.



Mr Peter Reynolds
Chief Executive Acting

6 July 2016

Date: _____



NIGALA

NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
a voice for children



SECTION TWO

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Corporate Governance Report

Directors Report

Our Vision

The Voice for Children and Young People in Family Courts.

Our Mission Statement

To independently represent children and young people's wishes, feelings and best interests in public law and adoption proceedings in order to safeguard and promote their welfare.

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

Our Values

NIGALA has a shared set of values that define our culture:

- Safeguarding the interests of children
- Human Dignity and Respect
- Promoting Diversity and Equality
- Integrity and Honesty
- Empowerment
- Accountability and Transparency

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 overleaf brings together NIGALA's Strategic and Culture Map which sets out the behaviours that are expected when employees are living our values in their everyday work in pursuit of the five strategic themes:

1. Children at the centre of NIGALA decision making processes
2. Valuing Staff and Promoting Learning
3. Delivery of a Quality Services to Agreed Standards
4. Efficient Use of Resources
5. Compliance with Legislation and Guidance

Figure 1: NIGALA Strategic and Culture Map



Role of the Board

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 of Health. 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 re-appointment of the Members for such further period, not exceeding four years, as the Department may determine.

MR BERNARD MITCHELL, CHAIR lives in Belfast. 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. 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 and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland.

MR FRED SMYTH, NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR lives in Belfast. Having qualified with PWC Belfast Mr Smyth is a Fellow of the Institute of 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. Mrs McGaughey is currently the Education and Training Officer at The Bar of Northern Ireland. 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 lives in Belfast 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.

MR PETER REYNOLDS, ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER lives in Belfast. Mr Reynolds has been a social worker since 1980 and qualified from Queen’s University, Belfast in 1987 having completed his Master of Social Work. Throughout his career he has worked primarily in Family and Childcare, moving from North & West Belfast Health Trust as a senior social worker to NIGALA in 1998, where he took up the post of Guardian Ad Litem. Since 2003, Mr Reynolds has had a number of roles including Quality Assurance & Training Manager and Assistant Director. Since October 2015 Mr Reynolds has been Acting Chief Executive Officer.

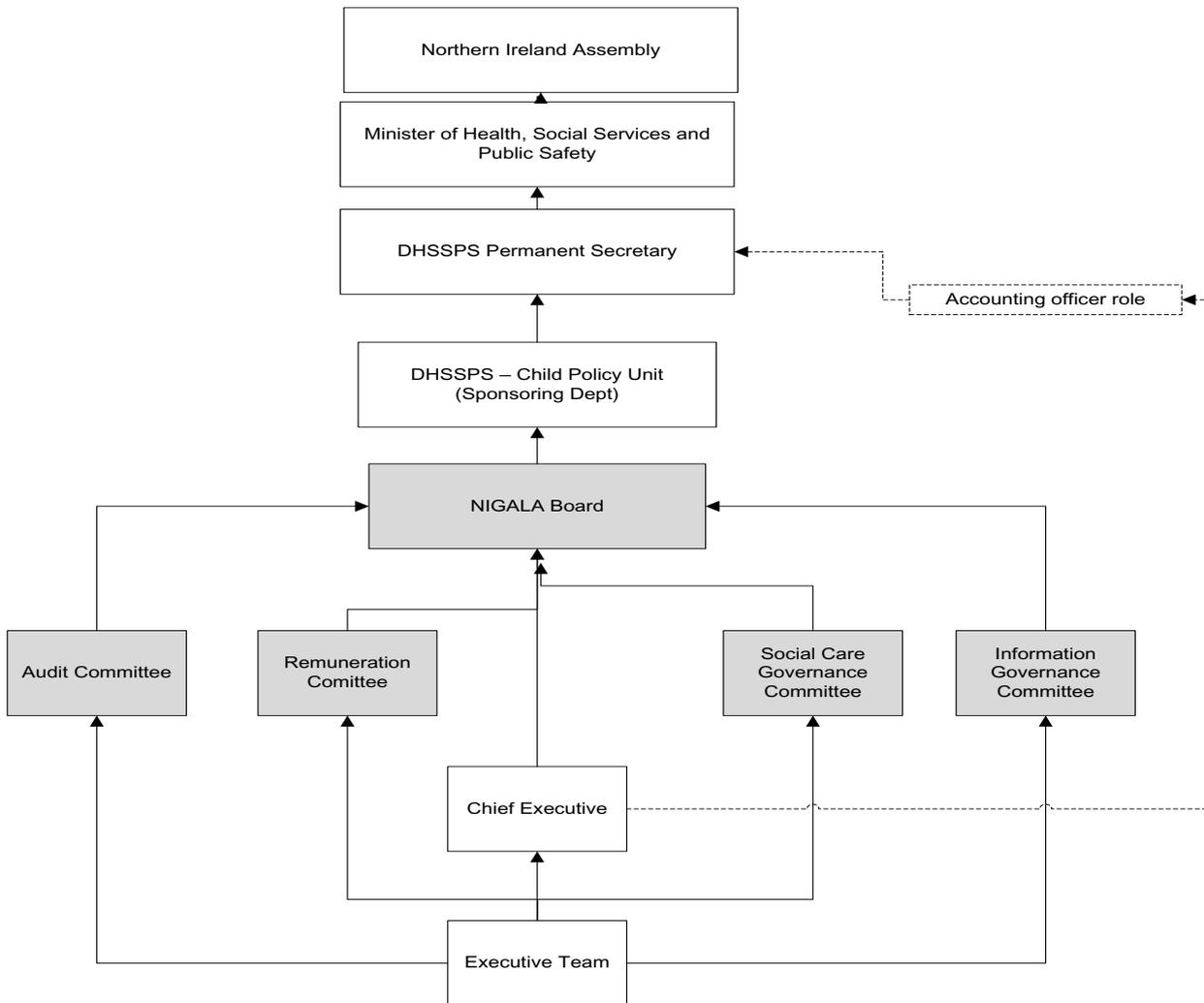
Board Members’ Interests

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 • Non-Executive Member - Audit and Risk Committee, NI Assembly • Non-Executive Member - Audit and Risk Committee, PONI • Chair of Board - Strand Arts Centre (<i>unremunerated</i>)
Mrs Gillian McGaughey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director/Company Secretary - St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast • Director/Company Secretary - Belfast Cathedral Enterprises Ltd
Mr Fred Smyth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chair - Simon Community NI
Mr David Watters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman - Belfast Charitable Society • Managing Partner/Owner - RSM McClure Watters • Chairman/Owner - RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) Ltd
Dr Karen Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Advisory Committee - Fostering Network NI
Mr Peter Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee member of the Central Belfast Contact Centre

Board Committee Structure and Composition

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



P. Reynolds

Mr Peter Reynolds
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

Date: 6 July 2016

Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities

Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2016

Under 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.
- 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, Mr Peter Reynolds 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.

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

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 101 to 137) 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.

P. Reynolds

Chief Executive

6 July 2016

Date

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 101 to 137) as prepared in accordance with the above requirements have been submitted to and duly approved by the Board.

J. Mitchell

Chairman

6 July 2016

Date

P. Reynolds

Chief Executive

6 July 2016

Date

Governance Statement 2015-16

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 (BSO). NIGALA is also represented on the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), 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 Family Court Business Committees and meets regularly with NI Courts and Tribunals Service and the Directorate of Legal Services.

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 Unit.

NIGALA has a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum in place which sets out the strategic control framework within which NIGALA is required to operate and the conditions under which Government funds are provided as detailed in Government Accounting Northern Ireland. The Accounting Officer and the Chair of NIGALA appraises 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 throughout the year.

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 2 overleaf;
- > 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 2014-15 was progressed throughout the year and the NIGALA Board completed a further self-assessment for year ended 31 March 2016 and developed a revised action plan which it will review on a bi-annual basis at Board Level to ensure continual improvement in governance and best practice.

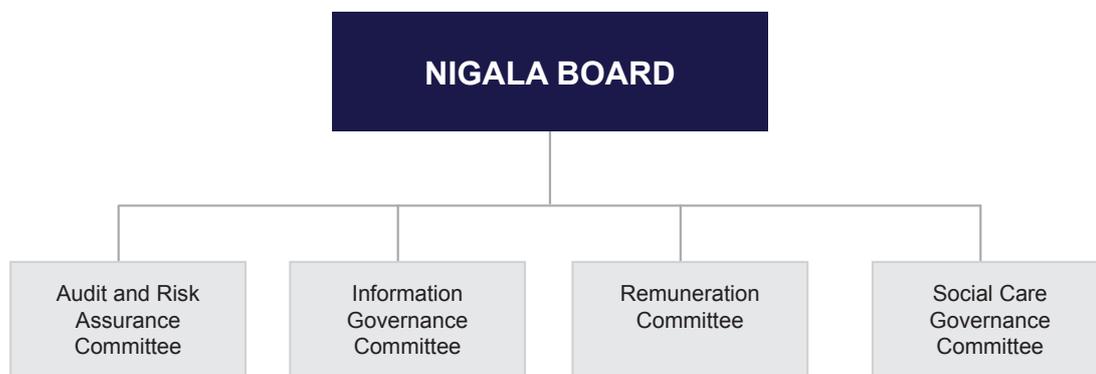
The summary assessment for NIGALA was RAG rated green and this includes the section on data quality and information received by the Board. There were no RAG rated red compliance areas.

3. Governance Framework

3.1 Role and Performance of Committees

The Board's committee structure is outlined in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2



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. 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;
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. Revised the Terms of Reference for the Board sub-committees
10. Overseen the Social Care Governance Action Plan

The NIGALA Board met on 5 occasions during 2015-16. Attendance of members at the Board committee is set out in the table below:

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 5 meetings
Bernard Mitchell	100%	5
Peter Reynolds (Appointed wef 21/10/2015)	50% ²	1
Patricia Nicholl (On secondment from 01/03/2016)	100%	2
David Watters	100%	5
Gillian McGaughey	100%	5
Karen Winter	60%	3
Fred Smyth	100%	5

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 4 occasions during 2015-16 and provides an annual written report to the Board on Committee work and actions taken during 2015-16. Key highlights from the Committee include the reporting of breakeven during 2015-16 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 2015.

Committee Attendance:

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 4 meetings
David Watters	100%	4
Fred Smyth	100%	4
Karen Winter	100%	4

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 1 occasion during 2015-16 and provides an annual written report to the Board on Committee work and actions taken during 2015-16. 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 review of the Self-Employed Guardian ad Litem fees.

² There were only two meetings held in the period of Mr Peter Reynolds Appointment

Committee Attendance:

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 1 meeting
Bernard Mitchell	100%	1
Fred Smyth	100%	1
David Watters	100%	1

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 3 occasions during 2015-16. 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 3 meetings
Karen Winter	100%	3
Gillian McGaughey	67%	2

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 4 occasions during 2015-16. The Committee has overseen the Agency Action Plan for delivery of the Information Commissioner's (ICO) recommendations following an information security breach report in December 2014. NIGALA has completed an evaluation of the Committee's effectiveness for 2015-16 and an associated action plan is in place.

Committee Attendance:

Name	% Attendance	Meetings attended out of 4 meetings
Fred Smyth	100%	4
Gillian McGaughey	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 2015-16, 95% of Business Plan Objectives were met in accordance with an agreed strategic direction. One business objective for 2015-16 has been transferred to the 2016-17 Business Plan.

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 Branch. The system of business planning involves the following:

- Taking cognisance of independent assurance reports and recommendations on the NIGALA internal control framework;
- DHSSPS Sponsoring Department Priorities as discussed with 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 bi-annual basis with progress updates submitted to DHSSPS Sponsoring Branch bi-annually in accordance with the Business Plan monitoring arrangements set out in the DHSSPS letter dated 16 March 2016.

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.
- Assess Risk Appetite on the basis that where NIGALA is willing to accept an amount of risk to meet greater reward it will identify the risk appetite as 'Risk Open'. Where NIGALA is not willing to tolerate increased risks it will identify that risk as "Risk Averse"

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 2015-16 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 bi-annual 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 2016, 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 9 October 2015 which updated progress on the continuing effectiveness of the system of internal control to the Permanent Secretary of the DHSSPS.

5. Information Risk

In terms of information risk, the Agency deals directly with sensitive personal client information. During 2015-16 the ICO completed their review on a reported near miss information loss event in December 2014. NIGALA has progressed all the recommendations from the ICO as part of the internal Information Governance Action Plan for 2015-16. This has included the development of a range of records management policies, the continued monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the management of the return of case files on discharge and the delivery of mandatory training for all staff on Information Governance. An additional information loss incident has been reported in February 2016 and is currently under investigation.

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 (SIRO) and Information Asset Owner (IAO);
- 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.

6. Public Stakeholder Involvement

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

In 2015-16 from a total number of 522 children represented within the relevant age ranges a total of 289 children agreed they would complete feedback. NIGALA obtained feedback from 80 of these children subject to Court proceedings using a range of mechanisms which included an on line questionnaire, a paper questionnaire and a face to face interview facilitated by the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC). There were a number of respondents who did not answer all questions.

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

The Agency identified in 2015-16 a KPI of 75% of respondents giving a satisfaction rating of “good” or “excellent”. The table overleaf demonstrates results achieved over the last three years.

Satisfaction Group	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
Children and Young People (8 years+)	78%	78%	78%
Judiciary	100%	100%	100%
Accredited Solicitors	100%	100%	100%

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 2015-16 on behalf of the Introduction of the Care Proceedings Pilot; and
- Has considered liaison and engagement arrangements between NIGALA and HSC Trusts.
- Developed benchmarking mechanisms with CAFCASS.
- Undertaken a consultation on the revised Guardian ad Litem Court Report template.

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 2015-16. 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 2015-16.

Controls Assurance Standard	NIGALA Compliance % Rating 2015-16	DHSSPS Indicator 2015-16	Internal Auditor Assessments
Risk Management (core standard)	93%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	NIGALA's assessment verified by Internal Audit 15/16
Governance (core standard)	94%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Financial Management (core standard)	90%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Information Management	81%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Research Governance	94%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Buildings, Land, Plant and non medical equipment	86%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Purchasing and Supply	90%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	Not Reviewed by Internal Audit in 15/16
Information, Communication and Technology	81%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Health and Safety	88%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Human Resources	92%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Environmental Management	81%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Security Management	94%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Emergency Planning	80%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Waste Management	91%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	
Fire Safety	93%	75% - 99% (Substantive)	

0: Negligible
 1-29: Minimal
 30-74: Moderate
 75-99: Substantive
 100: Full

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

Internal Audit have confirmed that actions plans which have been put in place to improve compliance against all the applicable standards are reasonable.

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 2015-16, the Internal Auditor reviewed the following systems: Financial Management, Records Management, Performance Management and Complaints, Risk Management and Staff Supervisions and Appraisals. Follow up reviews were conducted on previous actions with reports provided at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in October 2015 and February 2016. The Internal Auditor provided satisfactory assurance for all audits except for Supervision which was given a limited assurance. Three priority one audit findings were noted as follows;

- Two Agency staff payment rates were not in line with the Agency Contract Framework;
- A number of unreturned Guardian ad Litem case files were outside the KPI for return; and
- The Guardian ad Litem supervision process required attention with additional controls required in relation to monitoring and frequency of meetings

Actions plans are now in place to mitigate the issues raised by Internal Audit and in particular NIGALA has now secured the return of all Guardian ad Litem case files outside KPI at 31 March 2016.

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 2016 with all services receiving satisfactory assurance with the exception of Payroll Shared Services which received limited assurance and Recruitment Shared Services which received unacceptable assurance. BSO have given an assurance that they have accepted all of the recommendations in the 2015-16 Internal Audit Reports issued to date and recommendations to address these control weaknesses including a formal recovery plan for Recruitment Shared Services has been or are being implemented.

External Audit

The Financial Statements of NIGALA are audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) 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 Committee 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 2015. Recommendations have all been progressed.

Investors in People (IiP)

Investors in People conducted a post recognition review of the NIGALA in July 2015 and reported that the findings indicate there are gaps in the evidence requirements within the Core Standard; therefore it is not possible to confirm Investors in People re-accreditation at this time and that the Agency is in a process of Retaining Recognition. The priority areas for focus relate to leadership effectiveness, recognition for contribution and continuous improvement. NIGALA has put in place a Board approved action plan to ensure a return to the Standard which will be reviewed by IiP in June 2016.

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.

10. Internal Governance Divergences – Current and New for 2015-16

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 2015-16, the Agency continued to experience a high level of case workload demand from the Courts which has resulted in a 1% increase for the year when compared with 2014-15. Issue updates are as follows:

- NIGALA was granted non-recurrent funding of £360k for 2015-16. This has enabled the risks to service delivery to be managed with a composite number of employed and self-employed Guardians ad Litem.
- NIGALA successfully secured the agreement of the Minister to the recurrent allocation of £360K in September 2014. However the decision continues to remain subject to wider financial considerations.
- NIGALA has maintained the absence of a waiting list throughout 2015-16 (see Figure 3)
- NIGALA is an active participant in the joint DHSSPS/DOJ Care Proceedings Pilot which commenced in January 2016.

In the Mid-Year Assurance Statement I highlighted the progress in the reconstitution of the NIGALA Solicitor Panel which has now become operational from the 1 December 2015. Following a potential judicial review NIGALA completed an internal review of the process and took the decision to put in place a new interview panel with all unsuccessful applicants invited to be re-interviewed. This action has mitigated any possible judicial review process.

With respect to the internal project to review case referral and allocation practice designed to improve KPIs in respect of case allocation, a revised Caseload Weighting Pilot has been deployed with significant improvement witnessed with respect to KPIs in respect of case allocation waiting times. This is subject to review and change where necessary. These are reviewed on a monthly basis at SMT and reported at each Board meeting.

Figure 3

Case Allocation Type	KPI	Achievement 2013-14	Achievement 2014-15	Achievement 2015-16
Adoption	90% in 8 working days	94%	98%	98%
Secure	95% in 8 working days	100%	100%	100%
Care	50% in 8 working days	80%	89%	95%

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 Agency 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 high level of demand in adoption and public law applications in the next financial year. The Business Plan for 2016-17 includes a focus on staff engagement and continuous improvement.

In relation to unreturned case files NIGALA has ensured that all case files due by 31 March 2016 were returned. A strategy has been put in place which will continue to monitor the return of completed case files and provide Guardian's ad Litem with early alerts that files are due. A Less Paper Working Group are reviewing the potential for exploration of a strategy by September 2016 that will reduce the amount of hard copy paper being used as part of the Guardian ad Litem service delivery.

With respect to a Whistleblowing incident the NIGALA Board has approved an action plan in response to the findings from the Culture and Climate Survey which reported in July 2015 and the IIP review conducted in July 2015. Progress against this action plan will be monitored by the Executive team and Board during 2016-17. The DHSSPS has been kept fully informed.

NIGALA receives a range of shared services from the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and at the end of 2014-15; the Agency did not achieve its prompt payment target. Following an internal systems review by BSO, NIGALA has achieved the national 30 day prompt payment target and the regional 10 day prompt payment target.

10.3 Identification of new issues in the current year

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 recommendations for action by NIGALA which have resulted in additional controls being put in place. The action plan has been monitored by the Executive Team and the Information Governance Committee and confirmation of action plan delivery was provided at year end.

Following the publication of the Access to Justice Review (II), NIGALA has formally responded as part of a consultation process on a number of recommendations relevant to the Agency, but more specifically to the role of the Guardian ad Litem in Public Law and Adoption proceedings. NIGALA will liaise with the DHSSPS in relation to the out-workings of the recommendations contained in this report.

NIGALA is an active stakeholder in the Care Proceedings Pilot – Improving Children's Lives, jointly sponsored by the DHSSPS/DOJ which commenced in January 2016. The Agency is the central data collection source for the pilot which covers two court areas in the Western and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts. Commitments have been given by NIGALA to reporting on a quarterly basis to the Pilot Steering Group and interfacing in the Pilot Review process. The focus of the Pilot is concentrated on good decision making and minimising unnecessary delay for children and young people subject to Public Law proceedings, thereby improving outcomes for children by achieving permanence for them at the earliest point.

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 Branch; 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.

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.

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 high level of caseload and the requirements 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, any risks to the quality of the Guardian ad Litem service will be brought to the attention of all key stakeholders with a view to appropriate action being taken. NIGALA has already taken action on the Culture and Climate Survey and liP assessment and will address the areas of leadership effectiveness, recognition for contribution and continuous improvement. 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 2015-16.



Date: 6 July 2016

Mr Peter Reynolds
ACCOUNTING OFFICER

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 2015-16:-

- 28th May 2015
- 2nd July 2015
- 8th October 2015
- 29th February 2016

Its membership is as follows:

- Mr David Watters (Chair)
- Mr Fred Smyth
- Dr Karen Winter

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 2015-16:

- 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 utilising the National Audit Office Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist;
- 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.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was satisfied that during 2015-16, based on the information available to it, that:

- The assurances provided to it were comprehensive and reliable, and were of a sufficient standard to inform the decision making of NIGALA and of the Accounting Officer
- The assurances provided to it were suitably reflected in the Risk Management process as necessary
- It was suitably informed of any material issues that were pertinent to the Governance Statement
- Appropriate financial reporting and information was in place
- The work of Internal and External Audit was of a suitable quality and their approach to their responsibilities was appropriate

The Social Care Governance Report

The Social Care Governance Committee which is a sub-committee of the Board oversees how the Guardian Ad Litem service is delivered to children and addresses practice developments and initiatives. The Committee, which is chaired by a Non-Executive Director, meets quarterly and involves the Senior Management team and Guardian representatives.

The Terms of Reference require the Committee to meet a minimum of four times per year.

Membership of the Committee

During 2015-16 there was a change in membership with the appointment of a permanent Assistant Director, and a replacement Guardian. On the Committee Guardians represent staff from Belfast and the North West.

Activities of the Committee

Ensure the Agency meets Social Care Delegated Statutory Functions

In 2015-16 the Committee has continued to review at each meeting, Social Care Delegated Statutory Functions in Adoption and Public Law Proceedings, as well as reviewing risks on the Agency's Risk Register that relate to professional practice such as review of the Agency's Lone Working Policy.

Oversee Practice Developments relating to Children's Participation

In 2015-16 the Social Care Governance Committee has been appraised of the work of the Children's Participation Group. The work of the group had previously comprised of an audit of knowledge and skills within the guardian group. As part of the 2015-16 Action Plan, members of the Children's Participation Group facilitated a workshop for guardians to share and discuss different approaches utilised when working directly with children.

Progress from the workshop is incorporated into the current Social Care Governance Action Plan. This relates to the development of a number of workstreams, the aim of which is to develop and compile sets of resources, tools and templates for guardians to access as part of their assessments. The workstreams include groups of guardians who are:

- progressing a review of resources when working directly with children and young people
- progressing compilation of a collection of resources, tools and skills when assessing attachment relationships and contact
- development of a collection of resources/knowledge relating to child development
- progressing a compilation of resources tools and skills relating to working with children with a disability.

Operationalisation of the Accountability Framework

In 2015-16 there has been an audit of supervision and appraisal processes within the Agency. The Social Care Governance Committee is overseeing an action in the Action Plan which outlines the development of a working group whose aim is to review the role of supervision as previously recommended by RQIA (“review of the role of supervision ...in supporting the maintenance of accountability leading to recommendations for change”). The role of the working group is to review supervision processes within the Agency and to develop additional fora for staff supervision as well as peer support.

PPI Involvement including Stakeholder and User Feedback

In 2015-16 the Social Care Governance Committee reviewed and streamlined the Agency Action Plan for PPI.

A focus of the Plan in 2015-16 has been the development of workstreams to revisit and develop resources used in direct work with children, address methods of obtaining children’s feedback as well as consider proposals for increasing children and young people’s involvement in NIGALA decision making.

In 2015-16 the PPI Action Plan approved by the Social Care Governance Committee incorporated plans to enhance liaison between the Agency and the Trusts.

Stakeholder Events

In 2015-16 the Agency has organised two stakeholder events linked to the Care Proceedings Pilot. These events took place in Belfast and in the North West and were attended by representatives from the Department of Health, Guardians, the Judiciary, Social Workers and Solicitors.

Care Proceedings Pilot - Improving Children's Lives

In 2015-16 the Social Care Governance Committee has reviewed the implementation of the Tackling Delay in Care Proceedings Pilot. The pilot is led by the Department in collaboration with the two Trust areas involved, the Judiciary, Court Service as well as NIGALA. The Social Care Governance Committee routinely oversees developments within NIGALA arising out of the Pilot and monitors/captures professional issues as they arise.

Culture in the Workplace

In 2015-16 the Social Care Governance Committee has reviewed developments in organisational culture, within the workplace and has overseen collaborative exercises taking place between the Executive Team and professional staff. In 2015-16 as a result of staff climate survey reports, the Social Care Governance Committee has incorporated into its Action Plan the progress of a proposal for a Staff Forum for all staff in NIGALA to share/discuss developments within the Agency.

Social Care Governance Forum

In 2015-16 the Social Care Governance Committee has overseen the development of the Social Care Governance Forum.

The Social Care Governance Forum is a sub-committee of the Social Care Governance Committee. The Forum has met on three occasions to date.

The Social Care Governance Forum is constituted by guardians representing the three offices within the Agency and the Assistant Director who is the lead for Social Care Governance.

The role of the Forum is to provide a conduit for communication between guardians, the Social Care Governance Committee and the Board in relation to professional issues. This includes the development and implementation of policies and initiatives and how these can be embedded into the Agency's delivery of their professional service. The Committee has a pivotal role in the consultation and dissemination of policies relating to professional issues and practice developments.

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 2015-16:-

- 5th May 2015
- 19th August 2015
- 8th December 2015
- 8th March 2016

Its membership is as follows:

- Mr Fred Smyth, Chair
- Mrs Gillian McGaughey
- Ms Peter Reynolds (Chief Executive Acting)
- Mrs Teresa Fallon (Assistant Director)
- Mr Declan McAllister (Corporate Services Manager)
- Mr James Lawne (Information and Records Officer)

The following activities were undertaken by the Information Governance Committee:

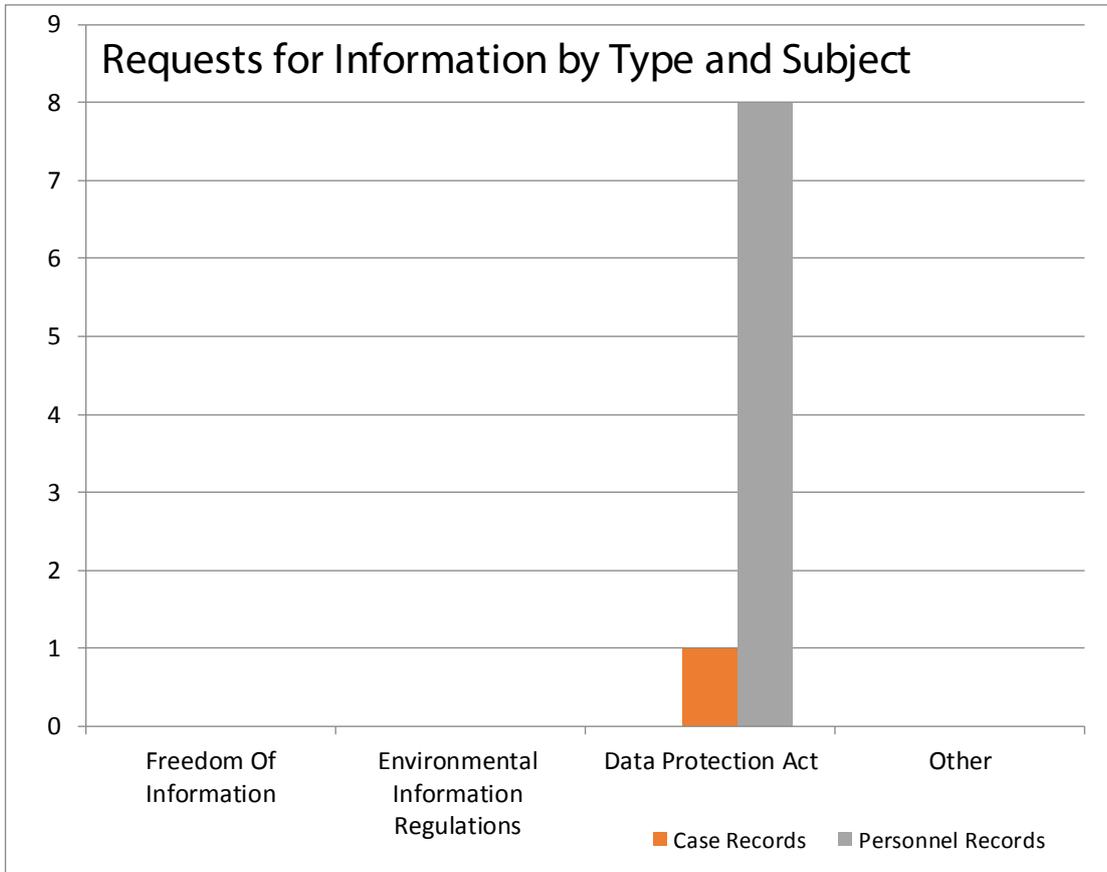
- Review of the Information Governance Risks and Assurances impacting on the delivery of the NIGALA objectives.
- Review of Information Governance Committee Terms of Reference
- Review of the NIGALA Information Governance Action Plan incorporating the monitoring of the Information Commissioners Recommendations following an Information Loss Incident and the current report on the ICO loss.
- Progress and assurance on the implementation and monitoring of the Unreturned case files strategy
- Overview of changes and amendments to information governance policies ensuring oversight and implementation e.g. Clear Desk Policy and Closed Case Files Policy.
- Review of progress on the transfer of technology and data project from NIGALA to BSO ITS.
- Oversight and progress of re-introduction of the RFID case file tracking system
- Review of progress on the development of the Guardian Case Information System (GCIS).

- Monitoring and review of the appraisal of historical records held in long term storage
- Completion of an Annual Report by the Chair of the Committee which provides assurance to the NIGALA Board on the work of the Committee.
- Oversight and review of information requests received during 2015-16 as outlined in the table below

Request type	Number received	Number responded to within timescales	Notes
Freedom of Information – corporate records	0	0	
Environmental Information Regulations	0	0	
Data Protection Act – Case Records	1	1	All requests were responded to within timescale and no further correspondence was received in relation to this request.
Data Protection Act – Personnel records	8	8	All requests were responded to within timescale and no further correspondence was received in relation to this request.

Requests for Information

NIGALA received 9 information requests in the 2015-16 year as illustrated below:



Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

Scope of the Report

The Remuneration Report summarises the Remuneration Policy of NIGALA and particularly its application in connection with senior executives. The Report also describes how NIGALA applies the principles of good corporate governance in relation to senior executives' remuneration in accordance with HSS(SM) 3/2001 and subsequent supplements issued by the DHSSPS.

Remuneration Committee

NIGALA, as set out in its Standing Orders, has delegated certain functions to the Remuneration Committee. The Remuneration Committee; a subcommittee of the NIGALA Board exists to advise the full Board on:

- a) The performance, development, succession planning and appropriate remuneration and terms of service for the Chief Executive.
- b) The setting of robust objectives, performance measures and evaluation processes for the Chief Executive.
- c) 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.
- d) 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 Chair 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. This is submitted to the Board for approval.

Remuneration Committee Membership

The Remuneration Committee membership is as follows:

- Mr Bernard Mitchell – Committee Chair (Board Chair)
- Mr David Watters
- 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 2015-16:

- 19th May 2015

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 Arrangement

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
- there will be progression through the pay range subject to fully acceptable performance

Contacts

HSC appointments are made on the basis of the merit principle in fair and open competition and in accordance with all relevant legislation and Circular HSS (SM) 3/2001. Unless otherwise stated, the employee/s covered by this Report are appointed on a permanent basis, subject to satisfactory performance.

The date of appointment for the NIGALA Executive and Non-Executive Directors, and the Chair are set out overleaf.

CHAIR

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Bernard Mitchell	Chair	3 November 2011 (re-appointed 3 November 2015)

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
David Watters	Non-Executive Director	1 January 2014
Dr Karen Winter	Non-Executive Director	17 July 2014
Gillian McGaughey	Non-Executive Director	18 January 2014
Fred Smyth	Non-Executive Director	18 January 2014

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Ms Patricia Nicholl	Chief Executive	15 April 2013 (On secondment from 1 st March 2016)
Mr Peter Reynolds	Chief Executive (acting)	21 October 2015

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.

Retirement Age

Currently, employees are required to retire at age 65 years and occupational pensions are normally effective from age 60 years. With effect from 1 October 2006, with the introduction of the Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, employees are able to request to work beyond age 65 years.

Compensation for Premature Retirement

In accordance with DHSSPSNI circular HSS (S) 11/83 and subsequent supplements, there is provision within the HSC Superannuation Scheme for premature retirement with immediate payment of superannuation benefits and compensation for eligible employees on the grounds of:-

- Efficiency of the service
- Redundancy
- Organisational change

Section 16 of the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions Handbook (issued on 14 February 2007 under cover of the Department's Guidance Circular HSS (AfC) (4) 2007) sets out the arrangements for early retirement on the grounds of redundancy and in the interest of the service. Further Circulars were issued by the Department HSS (AfC) (6) 2007 and HSS (AfC) (5) 2008 setting out changes to the timescale for the operation of the transitional protection under these arrangements.

Under the terms of Section 16 of the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions Handbook individuals who were members of the HSC Superannuation Scheme prior to 1 October 2006, are over 50 years of age and have at least 5 years membership of the HSC Superannuation Scheme qualify for transitional protection. Staff who qualify for transitional protection are entitled to receive what they would have received by way of pension and redundancy payment had they taken redundancy retirement on 30 September 2006. This includes enhancement of up to 10 years additional service (reduced by the number of years between September 2006 and the actual date of retirement) and a lump sum redundancy payment of up to 30 weeks pay (reduced by 30% for each year of additional service over 6 2/3 years)

Alternatively, staff made redundant who are members of the HSC Pension Scheme, have at least two years "continuous service" and two years "qualifying membership" and have reached the minimum pension age currently 50 years can opt to retire early without a reduction in their pension as an alternative to a lump sum redundancy payment of up to 24 months. In this case the cost of the early payment of the pension is paid from the lump sum redundancy payment. However if the redundancy payment is not sufficient to meet the early payment of pension cost, the employer is required to meet the additional cost.

Reporting of Early Retirement and Other COmpensation Scheme - Exit Packages

Comparative data for the previous year is also shown

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory		Number of other departures		Total number of exit packages by cost	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
<£10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£10,000 - £25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£25,001 - £50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£50,001 - £100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£100,001- £150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£150,001- £200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£200,001-£250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£250,001-£300,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£300,001-£350,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
£350,001-£400,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of exit packages by type	0	0	0	0	0	0
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Total resource cost	0	0	0	0	0	0

Redundancy and other departure costs have been paid in accordance with the provisions of the HSC Pension Scheme Regulations and the Compensation for Premature Retirement Regulations, statutory provisions made under the Superannuation Act 1972. Exit costs are accounted for in full in the year in which the exit package is approved and agreed and are included as operating expenses at note 4. Where early retirements have been agreed, the additional costs are met by the employing authority and not by the HSC pension scheme. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in the table.

Staff Report for the Year Ended 31st March 2016

The average number of Whole Time Equivalent persons employed by NIGALA during 2015-16 is 68. The cumulative sickness and absenteeism rate for the NIGALA for 2015-16 was 4.46% which was below NIGALA's corporate target to maintain absences at 5%. NIGALA will continue to ensure there are robust processes in place to monitor sickness absence as the target for 2016-17 is now set at 4.46%.

Staff Compensation

NIGALA has 68 WTE staff – 20% of whom work part-time or compressed hours. It also has a higher percentage of females in the workforce (87% are female). NIGALA staff composition, in terms of pay band and gender is set out below –

Pay Band	% of Workforce	%Male	%Female
Band 2-3	10%	-	10%
Band's 4-6	14%	1%	13%
Band 8a	71%	9%	62%
Band 8b	6%	1%	3%
Senior Exec	1%	1%	-

Staff Policies

A number of staff policies were reviewed during the year 2015-16:

- Storage and Retention of Records Policy
- Trade Union Recognition Policy
- Asset Register Policy
- Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Environmental Management Policy
- Purchasing and Finance Authorisation Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

These policies have been consulted on, including with the Trade Unions.

Staff Costs

	2016		2015	
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs comprise:				
Wages and salaries	2,498,603	68,499	2,567,102	2,649,013
Social security costs	211,024		211,024	220,533
Other pension costs	394,923		394,923	333,730
Sub-Total	3,104,550	68,499	3,173,049	3,203,276
Capitalised staff costs			0	
Total staff costs reported in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure	3,104,550	68,499	3,173,049	3,203,276
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments			(6,141)	0
Total net costs			3,166,908	3,203,276

Staff Costs exclude £Nil K charged to capital projects during the year (2015 £Nil K)

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 as at 31 March 2012 was certified in February 2015 and is used in the 2015-16 accounts.

Average number of persons employed

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

	2016		³ Restated 2015	
	Permanently employed staff No.	Others No.	Total No.	Total No.
Administrative and Clerical	24	3	27	29
Social Services	40	0	40	40
Less average staff number relating to capitalised staff costs	0	0	0	0
Less average staff number in respect of outward secondments	1	0	1	0
Total net average number of persons employed	65	3	68	69

³ When calculating average staff numbers Recruitment agency staff numbers had not been included in previous years figures and should be in accordance with the HSC Account Manual for this year, therefore the figures were restated for 2015 to include these and allow figures to be more comparable.

Salary and Pension Entitlements (Audited)

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 overleaf. (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 Management Remuneration (Audited)

The salary, pension entitlements and the value of any taxable benefits in kind of the most senior members of the NIGALA were as follows:

Name	2015-16				2014-15					
	Salary £000s	⁴ Bonus / Performance pay £000	Benefits in Kind (Rounded to nearest £100)	Pension Benefit £000s	Total £000s	Salary £000s	Bonus / Performance pay £000	Benefits in Kind (Rounded to nearest £100)	Pension Benefit £000s	Total £000s
Non-Executive Members										
Bernard Mitchell	5-10	-	-	-	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	5-10
David Watters	0-5	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	0-5
Gillian McCaughey	0-5	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	0-5
Fred Smyth	0-5	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	0-5
Karen Winter	0-5	-	-	-	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	0-5
Executive Members										
Patricia Nicholl (<i>On secondment from 1 March 2016</i>)	55-60	-	100	24	80-85	55-60	-	500	19	75-80
Peter Reynolds (<i>Acting CEO from 21 October 2015</i>)	55-60	-	400	16	70-75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

⁴ Performance related pay for 2014-15 (relating to assessed performance in 13-14) and 2015-16 (relating to assessed performance in 14-15) in respect of the Chief Executive was approved by the NIGALA Board and accrued, but not paid by the 31st March 2016, and under accounting regulations is required to be included in the remuneration report 2016-17.

Pensions of Senior Management (Audited)

	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £000s	Total accrued pension at age 60 and related lump sum £000s	CETV at 31/03/15 £000s	CETV at 31/03/16 £000s	Real increase in CETV in CETV £000s
Non-Executive Members					
Bernard Mitchell	-	-	-	-	-
David Watters	-	-	-	-	-
Gillian McCaughey	-	-	-	-	-
Fred Smyth	-	-	-	-	-
Karen Winter	-	-	-	-	-
Executive Members					
Patricia Nicholl (On secondment from 1 March 2016)	0-2.5 plus lump sum of 2.5-5	20-25 plus lump sum of 65-70	446	491	29
Peter Reynolds (Acting CEO from 21 October 2015)	0-2.5 plus lump sum of 2.5-5	20-25 plus lump sum of 70-75	478	516	21

HSC Superannuation, Pension Scheme 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:

	2015-16	2014-15
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration:	55-60	55-60
Median Total Remuneration	47,088	47,088
Ratio	1	1

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



Accounting Officer

Date: 6 July 2016

Staff Learning and Development and Quality Assurance

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 know what we are doing well and to improve the areas where we could do better.

Staff Development

Each year a series of training events are run for staff, largely driven by the need for Guardians to be kept up to date with developments in child protection, family support and adoption as well as in non-social work areas relevant to all staff. At the beginning of each business year, the Quality Assurance and Training Manager (QA&TM) collates an annual *Learning and Development Plan*. It is the responsibility of the QA&TM to oversee the plan and to report to the *Social Care Governance Committee* on its progress and effectiveness.

The *Learning and Development Plan* 2015-16 was developed in line with the priorities of the Agency for the year. The Assistant Directors and QA&TM prioritised areas of professional social work practice

that came to their attention via supervision and appraisal and, where there was clear demand and need for training, these areas of practice were included. In addition the *Training Reference Group*, the *Social Care Governance Committee*, the Corporate Services Manager, the Administration Manager, the Facilities & Complaints Officer and the Records Officer all contributed to the Plan to ensure that training with regard to ICT, Information Governance, E-Learning and Health and Safety were all included.

A full programme of training was delivered within the Agency during 2015-16 for all staff including guardians, administration, management and non-executive directors with the vast majority of training planned for 2015-16 delivered in year.

Effectiveness of the Learning and Development Programme

Training is evaluated at the end of the event. On some occasions events are evaluated both in house and by the training provider. Experience has shown that obtaining evaluation at the end of the training event is much more successful than seeking it afterwards, for example via electronic means.

With regard to training where significant time and resources were invested, the Agency ran a series of training events on *Substance Abuse*, *Mindfulness* and *Growing a Culture of Continual Improvement*. Each of these events were

run at least twice in the Belfast office as well as the Armagh and Derry offices.

The Substance Abuse training was run by Rebecca Roberts from FASA and catered for Panel Solicitors as well as Guardians. Four sessions were run with two in June 2015 and two in October 2015. The events catered for around 90 guardians and solicitors. Most who attended the training rated it overall as very good or excellent and the following comment was typical of many of the comments made –

‘Very engaging speaker, very knowledgeable, excellent delivery, good structure and overall engagement’.

Mental Health Awareness Week in May 2015 highlighted *mindfulness* as the topic of focus. In line with this, NIGALA commissioned *Carecall* to provide mindfulness training and they in turn appointed Anne Costello to carry out the awareness raising sessions. Ms Costello subsequently provided four sessions – two in Belfast and one in each of the Derry and Armagh offices. This training was for all staff, guardian and administration, and was well attended and strongly evaluated.

In March 2016, David Shemmings returned to the Agency to provide two days of training. Professor David Shemmings, OBE, PhD, is the Director of the Attachment and Relationship-based Practice programme, Co-Director of the University of Kent’s Centre for Child

Protection and Visiting Professor of Child Protection Research at Royal Holloway College, University of London. He is the author of more than 60 articles, books and chapters on relational-based social work practice, theory and research.

The two day training objectives were around the following areas –

- Introduction on disorganised attachment and child protection
- Contact – looking at the theory in the context of observation, tools and observation of contact
- Guardian’s court report – utilising the theory in the context of court reports.

The turnout at this training was excellent with more than 50 guardians and managers attending. Evaluation was very positive with 38 evaluations received. With regard to the overall assessment of the training, 34 rated it as very good or excellent.

Whilst Professor Shemmings was with us, initial discussions took place about follow up ‘surgeries’ where guardians could meet again with him and discuss the practical implications for practice. It is planned to develop a proforma for observing contact and this will be led by the NIGALA *Children’s Participation Group* in consultation with their guardian colleagues and Professor Shemmings.



Professor Shemmings with Deidre Allen (left) & Anne McKeown, Guardians & Teresa Fallon, Assistant Director (far right)

Peer support and knowledge exchange are an important aspect of learning and development in any organisation and this is an area that NIGALA has been keen to develop in recent years and made some inroads in 2015-16. Niamh Shiells from *Advance Coaching*, who had provided introductory coaching training last year, assisted in the development of Professional Development Groups (PDGs) in late 2015.

There are now five separate PDGs meeting throughout the Agency's three offices. This has been an exciting development for the Agency and one which was recommended directly by *Investors in People* and indirectly by *Regulation and Quality Improvement Agency (RQIA)*. NIGALA recognises that it is fortunate to have some of the most experienced child care social work practitioners in Northern Ireland who have a combined wealth of knowledge. The

PDGs allow Guardians to share their knowledge and expertise and also to be accountable to be another and the Agency with its Professional Standards and Code of Conduct.

In February this year a 'Swap Shop' event was held run by Guardians for Guardians, initiated by Teresa Fallon and Patricia O'Kane, both Assistant Directors, in collaboration with the *Children's Participation Group*. The idea was that a number of practitioners set up stalls around a large room and demonstrated their own way of working when engaging with children and young people. This was an excellent event which was highly evaluated with a desire to have similar events in the future.



Staff engaging with the various stalls at the Swap Shop

As well as providing a programme of internal training Guardians, Managers and Administration 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 –

- Institute of Directors, Ian Robson – How to eliminate silo mentality and develop joined up organisations, services and projects
- NICON 2015 Conference – A Call to Action - People, Place and Partnership
- BASPCAN Conference - Beautiful Minds: Nurturing and Promoting Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People
- Queens University Belfast/NSPCC NI - The Mental Health of Looked after Children
- Adoption UK – Overcoming Aggression in Children and Young People – Dr. Peter Jakob
- 9th BASPCAN Congress – New Directions in Child Protection and Wellbeing – Making a real difference to children’s lives

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 *Care Proceedings Pilot 2016* 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 Guardian’s professional independence.

During the year work continued on the development of the overarching *NIGALA Assurance Framework* that supports accountability arrangements, tracking the Guardian’s input in a case from allocation to case closure to evidence compliance to quality standards. Work also continued on the revision of *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 whilst they remained fit for purpose they needed to better reflect service user outcomes and evidence of meeting the standards. Following consultation with staff it is planned that the revised standards will be implemented in 2016-17.

Evaluation of Black Minority Ethnic Practice

An evaluation of working practices within NIGALA in working with children and families from Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities was undertaken in 2014-15 and reported on in last's year's annual report.

Since then the dissemination of this work has continued. Patricia Devine, Research Officer, and John Sheldon, QA&TM were invited to the 9th *BASPCAN International Congress* in April 2015, held at the University of Edinburgh. Later that same month they repeated this exercise at the NICON annual conference during the 'café conversations' series. This allowed for an interesting discussion with other members of the HSC family around the challenges of working within an increasing diversified community where the number of ethnic minorities has more than doubled between 2001 and 2011.



Dr Patricia Devine, NIGALA Research Officer & Declan McAllister, Corporate Services Manager, at the NICON Annual Conference, 2015

The evaluation of the work on BME practice was submitted and subsequently accepted for publication in the academic journal *Child Care in Practice* and this will be published in the autumn of 2016. To coincide with this publication, NIGALA plans to launch the findings of the research to the Agency's various stakeholders and other interested parties.

NIGALA Disability Study

The Children Order places a requirement on all Trusts to maintain a register of children with disabilities in their area. As part of its strategy in NIGALA's 2014-15 Business Plan, the Agency committed to establishing a system of information sharing, using the improved information within the Guardian Case Information System (GCIS) to review its service and inform practice. Following on from this the Agency committed itself to a further piece of evaluation of Guardian practice when working with families with a disability.

A questionnaire was circulated to staff towards the end of 2015-16 with the purpose of gathering the views of Guardians concerning their experiences of working with families where the child/ children or parent(s) have a disability. This work is ongoing and a report will be compiled and shared when completed later in 2016.

Administration Staff Training

NIGALA fully recognises the pivotal role of administrative staff in the organisation and are committed to ensuring their ongoing development. Throughout 2015-16 the administrative staff have attended various training events held in the Agency and also attended their own annual Away Day at Malone House. Every year we aim to try something a little different and this year we selected 'Positive Programmes' by the 'The Sunshine Project'. Our day was broken down into two elements of training:-

1. ***Confidence Building & Motivation***
- learning powerful techniques on how to build better self-confidence, self-esteem and self-motivation, and
2. ***Be Happy Now!*** - exploring the key ingredients to creating a more positive and happier life - mindfulness, positive thinking, positive affirmations, relaxation, laughter therapy, and gratitude.

The whole day was led by Michelle Major, founder of The Sunshine Project and proved to be an excellent opportunity for the whole administration team to enjoy training together.

NIGALA

NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
a voice for children



SECTION THREE

FINANCIAL STATEMENT & AUDIT REPORT

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

FOREWORD

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 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 the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT of COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2016

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which includes changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

	NOTE	2016 £	2015 £
Income			
Income from activities	4.1	-	-
Other Income (Excluding interest)	4.2	6,141	11,346
Deferred income	4.3	-	-
Total operating income		6,141	11,346
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3.1	(3,173,049)	(3,203,276)
Purchase of goods and services	3.2	(10,643)	(9,854)
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment charges	3.2	(74,859)	(69,391)
Provision expense	3.2	-	-
Other expenditure	3.2	(1,022,287)	(997,249)
Total operating expenditure		(4,280,838)	(4,279,770)
Net Expenditure		(4,274,697)	(4,268,424)
Finance income	4.2	-	-
Finance expense	3.2	-	-
Net expenditure for the year		(4,274,697)	(4,268,424)
Revenue Resource Limit (RRL) received from DHSSPS	24.1	4,284,488	4,278,509
Surplus/(Deficit) against RRL		9,791	10,085
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE			
	NOTE	2016 £	2015 £
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of property, plant & equipment	5.1/8/5.2/8	2,570	3,004
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of intangibles	6.1/8/6.2/8	(651)	-
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of financial instruments	7/8	-	-
Items that may be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of investments		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2016		(4,272,778)	(4,265,420)

The notes on pages 105 to 137 form part of these accounts.

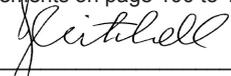
NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

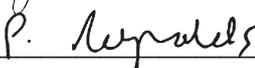
STATEMENT of FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 March 2016

This statement presents the financial position of the NIGALA. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

	NOTE	2016		2015	
		£	£	£	£
Non Current Assets					
Property, plant and equipment	5.1/5.2	93,082		111,744	
Intangible assets	6.1/6.2	153,508		128,438	
Financial assets	7	-		-	
Trade and other receivables	12	-		-	
Other current assets	12	-		-	
Total Non Current Assets			246,590		240,182
Current Assets					
Assets classified as held for sale	9	-		-	
Inventories	10	500		500	
Trade and other receivables	12	35,714		49,326	
Other current assets	12	61,708		47,531	
Intangible current assets	12	-		-	
Financial assets	7	-		-	
Cash and cash equivalents	11	23,174		24,268	
Total Current Assets			121,096		121,625
Total Assets			367,686		361,807
Current Liabilities					
Trade and other payables	13	(407,301)		(480,744)	
Other liabilities	13	-		-	
Intangible current liabilities	13	-		-	
Financial liabilities	7	-		-	
Provisions	15	-		-	
Total Current Liabilities			(407,301)		(480,744)
Total assets less current liabilities			(39,615)		(118,937)
Non Current Liabilities					
Provisions	15	-		-	
Other payables > 1 yr	13	-		-	
Financial liabilities	7	-		-	
Total Non Current Liabilities			-		-
Total assets less total liabilities			(39,615)		(118,937)
Taxpayers' Equity and other reserves					
Revaluation reserve		15,573		13,654	
SoCNE Reserve		(55,188)		(132,591)	
Total equity			(39,615)		(118,937)

The financial statements on page 100 to 104 were approved by the Board on 6 July 2016 and were signed on its behalf;

Signed  (Chairman) Date 6 July 2016

Signed  (Chief Executive) Date 6 July 2016

The notes on pages 105 to 137 form part of these accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT of CASHFLOWS for the year ended 31 March 2016

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the NIGALA during the reporting period. The statement shows how the NIGALA generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the NIGALA. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the NIGALA's future public service delivery.

	NOTE	2016 £	2015 £
Cashflows from operating activities			
Net surplus after interest/Net operating cost		(4,274,697)	(4,268,424)
Adjustments for non cash costs		84,344	78,491
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		(565)	(46,518)
<i>Less movements in receivables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in receivables relating to the sale of property, plant & 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		(73,443)	92,125
<i>Less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of property, plant & equipment		32,169	(46,308)
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of intangibles		(54,726)	(4,350)
Movements in payables relating to finance leases		-	-
Movements on payables relating to PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts		-	-
Use of provisions	15	-	-
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(4,286,918)	(4,194,984)
Cashflows from investing activities			
(Purchase of property, plant & equipment)	5	(52,826)	-
(Purchase of intangible assets)	6	(4,350)	(66,500)
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		(57,176)	(66,500)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in aid		4,343,000	4,261,000
Cap element of payments - finance leases and on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements		-	-
Net financing		4,343,000	4,261,000
Net increase (decrease) in cash & cash equivalents in the period		(1,094)	(484)
Cash & cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	11	24,268	24,752
Cash & cash equivalents at the end of the period	11	23,174	24,268

The notes on pages 105 to 137 form part of these accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

STATEMENT OF CHANGES in TAXPAYERS EQUITY for the year ended 31 March 2016

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by NIGALA, analysed into 'Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve (SoCNE Reserve) represents the total assets less liabilities of the NIGALA, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	NOTE	SoCNE Reserve £	Revaluation Reserve £	Total £
Balance at 31 March 2014		(134,267)	10,650	(123,617)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 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	3.2	9,100	-	9,100
Balance at 31 March 2015		(132,591)	13,654	(118,937)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 2015-16				
Grant from DHSSPS		4,343,000	-	4,343,000
Transfers between reserves		-	-	-
(Comprehensive expenditure for the year)		(4,274,697)	1,919	(4,272,778)
Transfer of asset ownership		-	-	-
Non cash charges - auditors remuneration	3.2	9,100	-	9,100
Balance at 31 March 2016		(55,188)	15,573	(39,615)

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

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 "NIGALA"). 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 NIGALA for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The NIGALA'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 (Statement of Asset Valuation Practice) Appraisal and Valuation Standards in so far as these are consistent with the specific needs of the HSC.

The last valuation was carried out on 31 January 2015 by Land and Property Services (LPS) which is an independent executive body within 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 Arms Length Body (ALB) 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; and
- Properties surplus to requirements – the lower of open market value less any material directly attributable selling costs, or book value at 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)

Properties 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 ALB 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, licences, 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; and
- 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 ALB'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 ALB 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.

The NIGALA as lessee

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases are initially recognised, at the inception of the lease, at fair value or, if lower, at the present value of the minimum lease payments, with a matching liability for the lease obligation to the lessor. Lease payments are apportioned between finance charges and reduction of the lease obligation so as to achieve a constant rate on interest on the remaining balance of the liability. Finance charges are recognised in calculating the ALB's surplus/deficit.

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.

Where a lease is for land and buildings, the land and building components are separated. Leased land may be either an operating lease or a finance lease depending on the conditions in the lease agreement and following the general guidance set out in IAS 17. Leased buildings are assessed as to whether they are operating or finance leases.

The NIGALA as lessor

Amounts due from lessees under finance leases are recorded as receivables at the amount of the ALB's net investment in the leases. Finance lease income is allocated to accounting periods so as to reflect a constant periodic rate of return on the ALB's net investment outstanding in respect of the leases.

Rental income from operating leases is recognised on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease. Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging an operating lease are added to the carrying amount of the leased asset and recognised on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

1.15 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transactions

The NIGALA has had no PFI transactions during the year.

1.16 Financial instruments

- Financial assets

Financial assets are recognised on the balance sheet when the NIGALA 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 balance sheet when the NIGALA 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 ALBs are not exposed to the degree of financial risk faced by business entities.

ALBs have 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 ALBs in undertaking activities. Therefore the HSC is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

- Currency risk

The ALB 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 had no provisions in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

1.18 Contingencies

The NIGALA had no contingent assets or liabilities in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

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 organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave that has been earned at the year end. This cost has been determined

using individual's salary costs applied to their unused leave balances determined from a report of the unused annual leave balance as at 31 March 2016. 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

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the HSC Superannuation Scheme.

The ALB participates in the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the ALB 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 2015-16 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

Assets belonging to third parties (such as money held on behalf of patients) are not recognised in the accounts since the ALB has no beneficial interest in them. Details of third party assets are given in Note 23 to the accounts.

1.23 Government Grants

Government assistance for capital projects whether from UK, or Europe, were treated as a Government grant even where there were no conditions specifically relating to the operating activities of the entity other than the requirement to operate in certain regions or industry sectors. Such grants (does not include grant-in-aid) were previously credited to a government grant reserve and were released to income over the useful life of the asset.

DFP issued new guidance effective from 1 April 2011. Government grant reserves are no longer permitted. Income is generally recognised when it is received. In exceptional cases where there are conditions attached to the use of the grant, which, if not met, would mean the grant is repayable, the income should be deferred and released when obligations are met. This is a change in accounting policy and the 2010-11 Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and Statement of Financial Position were restated.

The note to the financial statements distinguishes between grants from UK government entities and grants from European Union.

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 HSC bodies 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 1st 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 of 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 2016

NOTE 2 ANALYSIS OF NET EXPENDITURE BY SEGMENT

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 2016

NOTE 3.1 STAFF COSTS

	2016		2015	
	Permanently employed staff £	Others £	Total £	Total £
Staff costs comprise:				
Wages and salaries	2,498,603	68,499	2,567,102	2,649,013
Social security costs	211,024	-	211,024	220,533
Other pension costs	394,923	-	394,923	333,730
Sub-Total	3,104,550	68,499	3,173,049	3,203,276
Capitalised staff costs	-	-	-	-
Total staff costs reported in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure	3,104,550	68,499	3,173,049	3,203,276
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments			(6,141)	-
Total net costs			3,166,908	3,203,276

Staff Costs exclude £Nil charged to capital projects during the year (2015: £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 as at 31 March 2012 was certified in February 2015 and is used in the 2015-16 accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 3.2 OPERATING EXPENSES

	2016	2015
	£	£
Fees - Self Employed Guardian	275,374	255,557
Recharges from other HSC organisations	108,827	99,852
Supplies and services – general	10,643	9,854
Establishment	369,960	432,294
Transport	-	-
Premises	257,465	196,393
Bad debts	-	(12,000)
Miscellaneous	1,176	16,053
Total Operating Expenses	<u>1,023,445</u>	<u>998,003</u>
Non cash items		
Depreciation	41,504	38,519
Amortisation	33,355	30,872
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)	385	-
Loss on disposal of intangibles	-	-
Provisions provided for in year	-	-
Cost of borrowing provisions (unwinding of discount on provisions)	-	-
Auditors remuneration	9,100	9,100
Total non cash items	<u>84,344</u>	<u>78,491</u>
Total	<u><u>1,107,789</u></u>	<u><u>1,076,494</u></u>

During the year the NIGALA purchased no non audit services from its external auditor (NIAO) (2015: £nil).

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 4 INCOME

4.1 Income from Activities

The NIGALA had no income from activities in 2015-16 and 2014-15.

4.2 Other Operating Income

	2016	2015
	£	£
Other income from non-patient services	-	11,346
Seconded staff	6,141	-
Charitable and other contributions to expenditure	-	-
Donations / Government Grant / Lottery Funding for non current assets	-	-
Profit on disposal of land	-	-
Interest receivable	-	-
TOTAL INCOME	6,141	11,346

4.3 Deferred income

The NIGALA had no income released from conditional grants in 2015-16 and 2014-15.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 5.1 Property, plant & equipment - year ended 31 March 2016

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 2015	-	453,517	-	-	44,339	-	161,440	8,484	667,780
Indexation	-	40,430	-	-	-	-	-	44	40,474
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,657	-	20,657
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(999)	-	(19,175)	-	(20,174)
At 31 March 2016	-	493,947	-	-	43,340	-	162,922	8,528	708,737

Depreciation	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
At 1 April 2015	-	417,365	-	-	44,339	-	93,120	1,212	556,036
Indexation	-	37,893	-	-	-	-	-	11	37,904
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(999)	-	(18,790)	-	(19,789)
Provided during the year	-	10,405	-	-	-	-	29,885	1,214	41,504
At 31 March 2016	-	465,663	-	-	43,340	-	104,215	2,437	615,655

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016
NOTE 5.1 (continued) Property, plant & equipment- year ended 31 March 2016

	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 2016	-	28,284	-	-	-	-	58,707	6,091	93,082
At 31 March 2015	-	36,152	-	-	-	-	68,320	7,272	111,744

Asset financing

Owned	-	28,284	-	-	-	-	58,707	6,091	93,082
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2016	-	28,284	-	-	-	-	58,707	6,091	93,082

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

The total amount of depreciation charged in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Account in respect of assets held under finance leases and hire purchase contracts is £Nil (2015: £Nil).

The fair value of assets funded from the following sources during the year was:

	2016 £	2015 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery funding	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016
NOTE 5.2 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 £
Cost or Valuation									
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 revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(1,446)	-	-	-	(1,446)
At 31 March 2015	-	453,517	-	-	44,339	-	161,440	8,484	667,780

Depreciation									
At 1 April 2014	-	364,632	-	-	45,785	-	76,394	-	486,811
Indexation	-	32,152	-	-	-	-	-	-	32,152
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	(1,446)	-	-	-	(1,446)
Disposals	-	20,581	-	-	-	-	16,726	1,212	38,519
Provided during the year	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2015	-	417,365	-	-	44,339	-	93,120	1,212	556,036

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 5.2 (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 1 April 2014	-	53,729	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951

Asset financing

Owned	-	36,152	-	-	-	-	68,320	7,272	111,744
Finance leased On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2015	-	36,152	-	-	-	-	68,320	7,272	111,744

Asset financing

Owned	-	53,729	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951
Finance leased On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 1 April 2014	-	53,729	-	-	-	-	38,738	8,484	100,951

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 6.1 Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2016

Cost or Valuation	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks & Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account & Assets under Construction £	Total £
At 1 April 2015	1,895	418,334	-	-	-	-	-	-	420,229
Indexation	-	(809)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(809)
Additions	-	59,076	-	-	-	-	-	-	59,076
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(30,895)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(30,895)
At 31 March 2016	1,895	445,706	-	-	-	-	-	-	447,601

Amortisation	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks & Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account & Assets under Construction £	Total £
At 1 April 2015	1,254	290,537	-	-	-	-	-	-	291,791
Indexation	-	(158)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(158)
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(30,895)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(30,895)
Provided during the year	379	32,976	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,355
At 31 March 2016	1,633	292,460	-	-	-	-	-	-	294,093

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 6.1 (continued) Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2016

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks & Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account & Assets under Construction £	Total £
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2016	262	153,246	-	-	-	-	-	-	153,508
At 31 March 2015	641	127,797	-	-	-	-	-	-	128,438

Asset financing

Owned	262	153,246	-	-	-	-	-	-	153,508
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2016	262	153,246	-	-	-	-	-	-	153,508

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

The fair value of assets funded from the following sources during the year was:

	2016 £	2015 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery funding	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016
NOTE 6.2 Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2015

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks & Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account & Assets under Construction £	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 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

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 6.2 (continued) Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2015

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks & Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account & Assets under Construction £	Total £
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2015	641	127,797	-	-	-	-	-	-	128,438
At 1 April 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 arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2015	641	127,797	-	-	-	-	-	-	128,438

Asset financing

Owned	1,020	87,440	-	-	-	-	-	-	88,460
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 1 April 2014	1,020	87,440	-	-	-	-	-	-	88,460

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 7 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

As the cash requirements of NDPB Green are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body.

The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the NIGALA's expected purchase and usage requirements and the NIGALA is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

NOTE 8 IMPAIRMENTS

The NIGALA had no impairments in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

NOTE 9 ASSETS CLASSIFIED AS HELD FOR SALE

The NIGALA did not hold any assets classified as held for sale in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

NOTE 10 INVENTORIES

	2016	2015
	£	£
Office supplies	500	500
Total	500	500

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 11 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2016	2015
	£	£
Balance at 1 st April	24,268	24,752
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(1,094)	(484)
Balance at 31st March	23,174	24,268

The following balances at 31 March were held at

	2016	2015
	£	£
Commercial Banks and cash in hand	23,174	24,268
Balance at 31st March	23,174	24,268

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 2016

NOTE 12 TRADE RECEIVABLES, FINANCIAL AND OTHER ASSETS

	2016	2015
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade receivables	3,258	19,742
Deposits and advances	-	-
VAT receivable	26,315	29,584
Other receivables – not relating to fixed assets	6,141	-
Other receivables – relating to property, plant and equipment	-	-
Other receivables – relating to intangibles	-	-
Trade and other receivables	<u>35,714</u>	<u>49,326</u>
Prepayments and accrued income	61,708	47,531
Current part of PFI and other service concession arrangements prepayment	-	-
Other current assets	<u>61,708</u>	<u>47,531</u>
Carbon reduction commitment	-	-
Intangible current assets	<u>-</u>	<u>-</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	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES	<u><u>35,714</u></u>	<u><u>49,326</u></u>
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	<u><u>61,708</u></u>	<u><u>47,531</u></u>
TOTAL INTANGIBLE CURRENT ASSETS	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>
TOTAL RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	<u><u>97,422</u></u>	<u><u>96,857</u></u>

The balances are net of a provision for bad debts of £Nil (2015: £Nil).

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 13 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2016	2015
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Other taxation and social security	-	65,277
VAT payable	-	-
Bank overdraft	-	-
Trade capital payables – property, plant and equipment	14,139	46,308
Trade capital payables – intangibles	59,076	4,350
Trade revenue payables	174,730	169,732
Payroll payables	-	95
Clinical Negligence payables	-	-
RPA payables	-	-
BSO payables	347	123
Other payables	1,000	28,659
Accruals and deferred income	158,009	166,200
Accruals and deferred income – relating to property, plant and equipment	-	-
Accruals and deferred income – relating to intangibles	-	-
Trade and other payables	407,301	480,744
Current part of finance leases	-	-
Current part of long term loans	-	-
Current part of imputed finance lease element of on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-
Other current liabilities	-	-
Carbon reduction commitment	-	-
Intangible current liabilities	-	-
Total payables falling due within one year	407,301	480,744
Amounts falling due after more than one year		
Other payables, accruals and deferred income	-	-
Trade and other payables	-	-
Clinical Negligence payables	-	-
Finance leases	-	-
Imputed finance lease element of on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-
Long term loans	-	-
Total non current other payables	-	-
TOTAL TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES	407,301	480,744

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 14 PROMPT PAYMENT POLICY

14.1 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:

	2016 Number	2016 Value £	2015 Number	2015 Value £
Total bills paid	1,001	2,682,256	608	539,023
Total bills paid within 30 day target	978	2,585,019	571	475,579
% of bills paid within 30 day target	98%	96%	94%	88%
Total bills paid within 10 day target	871	2,486,755	458	341,515
% of bills paid within 10 day	87%	93%	75%	63%

14.2 The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002

	£
Amount of compensation paid for payment(s) being late	-
Amount of interest paid for payment(s) being late	-
Total	-

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 15 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

The NIGALA had no provisions for liabilities and charges at either 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 16 CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

The NIGALA had no capital commitments at either 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 17 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES

17.1 Operating Leases

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

	2016	2015
	£	£
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/>
	-	-
Buildings		
Not later than one year	35,575	40,007
Later than one year but not later than five years	28,667	-
Later than five years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	64,242	40,007
Other		
Not later than 1 year	-	-
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-

17.2 Finance Leases

The NIGALA had no finance leases in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

17.3 Operating Leases

The NIGALA did not issue any operating leases in 2015-16 or 2014-15.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 18 COMMITMENTS UNDER PFI AND OTHER SERVICE CONCESSION ARRANGEMENT CONTRACTS

18.1 Off balance sheet PFI and other service concession arrangement schemes.

The NIGALA had no commitments under PFI and other concession arrangement contracts at 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

18.2 On balance sheet (SoFP) PFI Schemes

The NIGALA has no on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements schemes at 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 19 OTHER FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The NIGALA did not have any other financial commitments at 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 20 FINANCIAL GUARANTEES, INDEMNITIES AND LETTERS OF COMFORT

The NIGALA did not have any financial guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort at 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 21 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The NIGALA did not have any quantifiable contingent liabilities at 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015.

NOTE 22 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 NIGALA 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 23 THIRD PARTY ASSETS

The NIGALA held no assets at either 31 March 2016 or 31 March 2015 belonging to third parties.

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 24 Financial Performance Targets

24.1 Revenue Resource Limit

The NIGALA is given a Revenue Resource Limit which it is not permitted to overspend.

The Revenue Resource Limit for NIGALA is calculated as follows:

	2016	2015
	Total	Total
	£	£
DHSSPS (excludes non cash)	4,200,144	4,200,018
Other Government Department	-	-
Non cash RRL (from DHSSPS)	84,344	78,491
Total agreed RRL	4,284,488	4,278,509
Adjustment for income received re Donations / Government grant / Lottery funding for non current assets	-	-
Total Revenue Resource Limit to Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	4,284,488	4,278,509

24.2 Capital Resource Limit

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

	2016	2015
	£	£
Gross Capital Expenditure	79,733	117,158
(Receipts from sales of fixed assets)	-	-
Net capital expenditure	79,733	117,158
Capital Resource Limit	82,955	117,808
Overspend/(Underspend) against CRL	(3,222)	(650)

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

24.3 Financial Performance Targets

The NIGALA is required to ensure that it breaks even on an annual basis by containing its surplus to within 0.25% of RRL or £20,000, whichever is greater.

	2015-16	2014-15
	£	£
Net Expenditure	(4,274,697)	(4,268,424)
RRL	4,284,488	4,278,509
Surplus/(Deficit) against RRL	9,791	10,085
Break Even cumulative position (opening)	30,145	20,060
Break Even Cumulative position (closing)	<u>39,936</u>	<u>30,145</u>

Materiality Test:

	2015-16	2014-15
	%	%
Break Even in year position as % of RRL	<u>0.23%</u>	<u>0.24%</u>
Break Even cumulative position as % of RRL	<u>0.93%</u>	<u>0.70%</u>

NORTHERN IRELAND GUARDIAN AD LITEM AGENCY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

NOTE 25 POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

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

DATE OF AUTHORISED ISSUE

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 9 August 2016.

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 2016 under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) 1972. The financial statements comprise the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity, 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 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) 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 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 Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency's affairs as at 31 March 2016 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) 1972 and Department of Health (formerly 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 directions made under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) 1972; and
- the information given in the Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

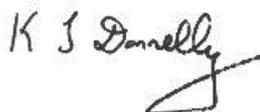
Matters on which I report by exception

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's (formerly Department of Finance and Personnel) 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*

Date 8 July 2016



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SECTION FOUR FEEDBACK

Feedback

The Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency is interested in finding out what our readers think of the 2015-16 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

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.....

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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.**



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NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency

a voice for children

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