

MINUTES: BOARD MEETING
20 October 2025, 10.00am, Online

Present

Dr Geraldine O'Hare – Convener
Mr Jim Farish
Mr James Maybee
Mr Stephen McAllister
Dr Alain Zysset

In Attendance

Mr Mark McSherry, Chief Executive
Mr Paul Keoghan, Director Corporate Services
Mr Geoff Tordzro-Taylor, Head of Research & Development
Ms Lauren McClintock, OLR Team Manager
Mrs Sophie Farnell, Finance and Governance Lead (Minute Taker)
Ms Elaine Ferguson, Policy Lead (point 14)

Welcome

1. The Convener called the meeting to order at 10:00am and welcomed all present.
2. The Convener noted a heartfelt thanks to the entire RMA team for a super seminar held on 8 October 2025. The massive team effort was evident in the presentations, the warm welcome, the photography, and the fabulous opportunity to catch up with colleagues and friends across the sector. This was reiterated by other Board members who extended a well done to all involved. The Chief Executive reported the positive feedback received from many attendees.

Apologies

3. The Convener noted apologies from Prof Kieran McCartan and Mr Eddie Kotrys.

Declarations of Interest

4. The Board noted no declarations of interest.

Approval of Previous Minutes

5. The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from 1 August 2025 as a fair and accurate reflection of the meeting.
6. The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from 8 October 2025 as a fair and accurate reflection of the meeting.

Matters Arising

7. The Board received an update on action 8.2 (04/25) regarding participation as an oversight body to the CJ Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Bill which was noted as complete.
8. The Board noted progress on action 12.2 (04/25) regarding Parole Board discussions in the context of the OLR statutory regime. This is ongoing with a meeting arranged.
9. Action 16.3 (06/24) regarding the Scheme of Delegation is subject to possible delay until internal structures are verified and linked to the Business Continuity Plan. Three positions are under review. Conclusion expected in February 2026.

Agenda Items

10. Chief Executive Update – Verbal

- 10.1. The Chief Executive (CE) reported on Public Sector Reform (PSR) following attendance at an operational summit last week. One focus was on a shared services strategy to include Finance, Governance and HR. This will be explored further at the upcoming NDPB Chief Exec Forum. Another focus was automation and use of AI to improve service delivery with examples from Finland where this area is more advanced. Ultimately, there is likely to be an £80k budget pressure by 2028/29 therefore further work is required on efficiencies. The Board suggested the number of workstreams around this seems excessive and recommended focus on core products and outputs with appropriate resource at the appropriate level and queried the timescales for delivery of end products. The Board also reiterated importance of focus on statutory responsibilities. The CE confirmed it is an ongoing project with particular emphasis on efficiencies from use of AI.
- 10.2. The CE reported upcoming cabinet discussions regarding the spending review with meetings booked with Scottish Government later in the year. The outcome is likely to be later than usual due to delays to the UK Government budget.
- 10.3. The CE recently met with the Director General regarding the prison population and advised that an announcement is due on emergency release taken over the next six months. The prison population was at 8,450 last week which is at red status. This critical level impacts upon service delivery and there will be weekly update sessions between now and April related to the RMA's provision of risk assessment information.
- 10.4. The CE updated the Board on the passing of the Domestic Abuse Bill which is part of the Domestic Homicide Review process. This is being looked at to determine the resources needed. The process will be tested next week. Engagement is planned with the Victims' Advocates Group. The Board recommended preparing for the time these reviews take and be mindful of over commitment.
- 10.5. The CE also advised that recruitment is underway for the roles of OLR Team Manager and OLR Lead. Interviews will be held next month with a view to starting appointees as soon as possible to ease pressure on workloads.
- 10.6. The CE informed the Board of the upcoming internal audit of organisational wellbeing and resilience.
- 10.7. The CE reported the outcome of a meeting with the Scottish Human Rights Commission

(SHRC) regarding the OLR review. This resulted in acknowledgement to consider lessons learned. A meeting is planned with legal advisors, and this area will continue to be monitored including potential need to meet with Criminal Justice Committee and possibly Scottish Government. This has been entered on the corporate risk register with agreed actions (score to be confirmed). The Board requested engagement on this and will email the CE regarding attendance at the next meeting.

10.8. The CE informed the Board of the review of the parole consultation. A response is required by 11 November.

10.9. The Board noted the CE's verbal update.

11. Convener Update – Verbal

11.1. The Convener updated the Board further on the SHRC meeting attended with the CE on 30 September. The points concerning the RMA were acknowledged and the need to keep momentum was evident. The Convener thanked Michelle for her service to the Board from November 2018 to June 2025.

11.2. The Convener advised that interviews for vacant Board member positions will take place in the new year. There are to be three appointments, two with focus on generic criminology and one focussed on psychology or psychiatry. The Convener suggested advertising these vacancies by word of mouth and on the RMA website.

11.3. The Board noted the Convener's verbal update.

12. Head of OLR Update - Verbal

12.1. The Head of OLR (HOLR) provided an update on recruitment. Applications for two posts close on 26 October 2025. The recent addition of three new case workers has made a big difference and has created capacity for assessor recruitment. There followed a discussion around evidence of certification for future assessors, particularly those who have been certified for many years. The CE mentioned future pathway work likely to be a long-term approach to accreditation and review of standards. The Board noted this action is being considered by the Accreditation Committee.

12.2. The HOLR also updated the Board on the continuation of the close working relationship with the recovery team at the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) despite them having gaps in their team. The strain on resources means the relationships with SPS psychologists remains difficult, however the oversight of the recovery team has improved the case management of OLRs. The allocation of treatments to a national waiting list and clarity of timescales has the potential to drift therefore the HOLR is scoping this out with SPS. The Convener is pleased to hear these relationships are strengthening.

12.3. The Board raised the issue of prisoners not accessing programmes and the backlog of cases getting to the parole board and queried whether this was an issue from an OLR perspective. The HOLR is aware of this and the impact on progression cases if there is a delay. Lack of panel alignment is causing some difficulty. Following the judicial review changes, when the cases are up for review, the rationale of the lead authority will be noted to check the stance and work out our engagement with SPS.

12.4. The Board noted the update from HOLR.

13. Head of Effective Practice Update – Verbal

- 13.1. The CE updated the Board on ongoing Effective Practice Team projects reporting the impact of numbers on HDC.
- 13.2. Ongoing assurance work across MAPPA has focussed on the quality of Risk Management plans.
- 13.3. Members were also updated on advice to the MAPPA strategy group around reviewing the position on counter terrorism and how to adopt this.
- 13.4. The team continues to develop the relationship with the Sex Offender Policing Unit through collaboration with MAPPA.
- 13.5. Work with Police Scotland regarding management of RSOs in the system is ongoing.
- 13.6. The Head of Effective Practice is on the Prisoner Pathway Group in an advisory role and has recently attended an initial session.
- 13.7. The Board noted the update from the CE.

14. Passing of the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill – Board Paper 1143

- 14.1. The Policy Lead joined the meeting.
- 14.2. The PL informed Members that Stage 3 proceedings commenced in the Scottish Parliament's main chamber on 15 September 2025 with a vote on final amendments and concluded with Decision Time on 17 September 2025. The Bill passed with 71 votes for, 41 against and 1 abstention.
- 14.3. The PL advised Board Members of the passing of the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill, in which the RMA has an interest, and presented a brief overview particularly focussing on Part 5 which relates to the Sexual Offences Court. The PL informed Member this is expected to operate on a more trauma informed basis and the judicial body could order an OLR which may impact on the number of OLRs given.
- 14.4. Members discussed the increased reporting of sexual crime, the influence of judges and the new sexual offence court as reasons for a potential increase in the ordering of OLRs. The Board noted the RMA could provide more training on trauma informed practice and guidance on OLR and sentencing to judiciary in readiness for the courts becoming operational.
- 14.5. The Board noted the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill.
- 14.6. The PL left the meeting.

15. Head of Research and Development Update – Verbal

- 15.1. The Head of Research and Development (HRD) reported on the audit report of the fifty cases and confirmed the report is fully drafted and will be reviewed by SMT. Once complete the report will be sent to the Board which may require the scheduling of an extraordinary meeting as the implications of the findings and the management of this will need some thought. The HRD also informed Members that the team is working on coding the whole cohort following review of the fifty cases for example, autism or mental health.
- 15.2. The report on Psychopathy and Personality Disorders is with the PCLR. The Board requested they be kept updated on the long-term impact of the Psychopathy paper and its journey within the justice population. The recommendations must lead to development of individual pathways.
- 15.3. The HRD confirmed the recently appointed temporary researchers are working on SAFERR entities such as body worn cameras, HDC and PIPES. They are also looking at RATED with a view to learning from SAFERR on collation of information.
- 15.4. The HRD will be facilitating formulation training in Dundee next week and is also looking at the potential use of 'Articulate' software for e-Learning. This is under discussion with the Comms Lead. There will also be 'Inputs and Guidelines' training in Glasgow on Friday.
- 15.5. The HRD also reported working with the Police on the role of the custody officer and decision making.
- 15.6. The Board noted the update from the HRD.

16. IIOC Research – Board Paper 1144

- 16.1. The HRD presented the final versions of the 3 reports related to the Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) project to the Board. The 3 reports are:
 - 16.1.1. Inter-rater study: exploring the inter-rater reliability of the CPORT and CASIC used within the assessment framework.
 - 16.1.2. Views of practitioners: analysis of focus groups conducted with assessors using the framework.
 - 16.1.3. Evaluation report: an overview of the progress of the pilot, the current evidence base regarding assessment of individuals with IIOC offences, risks and barriers during the pilot, and recommendations following the pilot.
- 16.2. The HRD reported that the inter-rater study found that the consistency of application of the risk tools was consistent with CPORT but more varied with CASIC.
- 16.3. The HRD summarised the focus group study which was well received and obtained the views of assessors. More specific thought is needed regarding internet offending and practice across Local Authorities.
- 16.4. The HRD highlighted that the evaluation report evaluated a lower number of assessments than planned and was not rolled out nationally. There are issues to be acknowledged including social work practice recommending supervision to avoid long term registration and differences of application in different LAs. The SG are drafting a governance

agreement and the HRD has spoken with agencies and subgroups to discuss and train on roles and responsibilities. The Members advised caution and reiterated the RMA's role as oversight and reporting rather than solution.

16.5. The CE advised that the CARE Inspectorate is key and the need for practice to be reviewed. A crucial meeting with the Chief Social Work Advisor in SG will open potential opportunities for standing on future committees. The Corporate Plan states that research leads to advice. The findings will be reported to MAPPA with recommendations and actions to be taken in November.

16.6. The Convener thanked the HRD and team for their work on this.

16.7. The Board noted the IIOC Research paper.

17. Corporate Risk Register – Board Paper 1145

17.1. The Director Corporate Services (DCS) presented the Corporate Risk Register to Members advising that the register was last reviewed by the Audit and Assurance Committee in September 2025. The Committee noted movements in the following 3 risks:

17.1.1. Failure to Implement Risk Management Plans

17.1.2. Lack of Accredited Assessors

17.1.3. Cyber Security

17.2. The Board discussed the 'Failure to Implement Risk Management Plans' reducing to medium risk and the rationale behind this. The DCS explained that the LLO performing functions of the case managers has allowed the system to operate as it should albeit temporarily. The other factor influencing the change was the negligible change on the number of plans.

17.3. The DCS advised that the risk level for lack of accredited assessors remains unchanged. Whilst there has been one appointment, the number of RAOs and the possible impact of the new Sexual Offences Court means the risk level remains unchanged. The members discussed the number of assessments per assessor and the potential for burnout. This is monitored by the OLR team and will be considered in the recruitment of future assessors.

17.4. The DCS explained the progress on the cyber security risk centred around the Business Impact Assessment and the Business Continuity Plan. Work continues including a move to the new SG format over the next quarter. The Board noted that the roll out will inform the risk but in the current climate it is likely to remain at least a medium risk.

17.5. The Board noted the update on the Corporate Risk Register.

Other Competent Business

18. The DCS provided an update on the outcome of the PCS meeting regarding the staff pay award. The PCS is largely accepting of the proposals but are asking for consideration of an increase in paternity leave from 2 weeks to 5 weeks in line with Scottish Government. The CE also noted a change to policy to include sharing of maternity and paternity leave which will be reflected in RMA policy going forward. The members noted while there may be opportunity cost of lost output they agreed to the increase to paternity leave.

19. The Convener suggested a thematic development day at the November Board meeting. The members agreed that time for review and reflection would be useful and the CE would like particular focus on delivery of corporate strategy with an update from the SMT.

Date of next meeting

20. The Board members noted the next meeting is scheduled for 17 November 2025.

The Convener thanked everyone for attending and drew the meeting to a close at 12:30.