

Public minutes of the meeting of the UKPHR Board held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 via Teams at 14:00 hours

Present: Andrew Jones (AJ) (UKPHR Chair)
Jessica Lichtenstein (JL) (Chief Executive)
James Sandy (JS) (Chair)
Marianne Coward (MC)
Linda Smith (LS)
Gill Jones (GJ) (Registrar)
David Evans (DE)
Duncan Vernon (DV)
Benjamin Humphrey (BH)
Ranjit Khutan (RK)
Anisah Ali (AA)

Apologies: Jenny Douglas (JD)
Joanna Dowd (JD)
Rachel Flowers (RF)

1. Welcome, apologies for absence and new declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted as above. There were no new declarations made.

2. Minutes of Board meeting held on 30 September 2025

The public and private minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record with the addition of BH and DV as attendees.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	Update and publish the 30 September 2025 public Board minutes on website	ASAP

3. Actions and matters arising

Board members noted progress on recruiting to the vacant specialty registrar and specialist board positions. Two registrar applications have been received via the Faculty Specialty Registrar Committee, and three specialist candidates have applied following targeted outreach through Wales representatives. Interviews are scheduled, with specialists on the 11th and trainees on the 16th December with DV and LS support JL and AJ in the appointment process.

On governance actions, the company accounts have now been signed off by the external examiner and successfully filed with Companies House, and a finance-related reputational risk item has been added to the risk register. JL still needs to amend GJ's contract to reflect the open-ended term and is awaiting the updated scheme of delegation from HF, while minutes from the last meeting have been published on the website. AJ closed by thanking colleagues for their help with the Companies House requirements and confirmed that all related information has now been provided and registered.

4. Governance forward planner – 2026

The Chair introduced the governance forward planner before moving into decision items on the agenda, asking JL for key points. JL explained that the team will complete operational planning in January–February 2026, which will firm up when items such as accounts, fees, budgets and revisions to fitness to practise processes will come to the board for approval. It was highlighted

that the planner currently captures the standard financial cycle and governance work, with more precise timing to follow once planning is finished in the new year.

AJ then noted a possible clash affecting the February board date and that JL may propose a minor adjustment to the date.

It was noted that the forward planner is a working document and subject to updates, providing members with an overview of upcoming issues and activities.

5. For decision

The UKPHR office

The Board received a report on options for a new serviced office accommodation in Birmingham and the associated dilapidation costs arising from the expiry of the current lease at the McLaren Building. JL introduced the paper, noting that, following the Board's discussion at an extraordinary meeting in August, the team had explored serviced office options across Birmingham on the basis of securing flexible, good-quality space at a reasonable cost.

Three offices had been shortlisted (i) the Lewis Building; (ii) Bennett's Hill; and (iii) serviced office space within the current McLaren Building. The team had assessed each option's costs, terms, facilities and broader benefits, and conducted an anonymous staff survey on their preferred option. Staff were unanimously in favour of the Lewis Building, which offered competitive pricing, a three-year term, good quality office accommodation, and discounted meeting rooms and suitable private spaces for calls and meetings. It also offers staff additional benefits such as an annual BUPA health check and gym membership,

In discussion, the Board noted that Bennett's Hill offered attractive space at a similar initial cost but could only provide one-year contracts due to its own lease arrangements, creating material uncertainty over costs and tenure from year two onwards. By contrast, the Lewis Building was able to offer a three-year contract, providing an appropriate balance between security and flexibility. Serviced space in the McLaren Building, while acceptable in quality, was quoted at a higher overall cost than the Lewis Building. Board members agreed that, given the Lewis Building was both staff-preferred and presented as the cheapest of the three options on a like-for-like comparison, it was the preferred option in principle.

The Board discussed in detail the dilapidation obligations associated with exiting the current McLaren lease. JL explained that under the lease terms the organisation is required to return the office to open-plan, basic specification. An initial contractor quotation of approximately £36,500 had been extensively challenged through a detailed, itemised spreadsheet and line-by-line negotiation. Through this process the indicative cost had been reduced to around £29,000, with the internal target of achieving c.£25,000 if possible. The works primarily involve removal of internal fit-out, reinstatement of fabric and services (e.g. fire alarms), and associated fees.

The Board expressed concern about the apparent wastefulness and sustainability implications of stripping out a good-quality fit-out (including a nearly new kitchen, carpets and other fixtures) only for a subsequent tenant to refit the same space. JL confirmed that the team had queried the landlord's sustainability policy and, while legal advice had not been taken (in light of the standard nature of the lease and the likely cost-benefit balance), significant effort had been made to benchmark the contractor's fees and negotiate them down. The Board noted that the current dilapidation estimate had not been specifically budgeted for and could create short-term cash-flow pressure and a notable draw on reserves, but that it was expected to be manageable within the context of the organisation's overall financial forecasts, subject to appropriate treatment in the accounts.

The Board discussed the extent to which the dilapidation cost should be factored into the true "year 1" cost of moving to any new building, and whether this rendered the move unaffordable. JL advised that while the combined first-year impact would be significant and would reduce reserves,

over the medium term the move to a serviced option (particularly the Lewis Building) was expected to generate material savings relative to remaining in the current leased premises, especially once inclusive utilities and other running costs were taken into account.

The Board further noted that annual expenses (including utilities, internet, and other associated costs) for the current office at McLaren is more than £60K, compared to £22K per year at the Lewis Building.. Even with the dilapidation costs, overall savings will be made within a year of the move.

The Chair emphasised that, for decision-making clarity, the Board should see side-by-side figures for: (i) the projected total three-year cost of staying in the McLaren Building on current terms; (ii) the three-year costs of the shortlisted serviced options figured into the overall financial projections; and (iii) the one-off dilapidation costs. JL and AJ undertook to provide a short supplementary note setting out these comparative costs and the impact on reserves, including the “true” first-year cost of moving once dilapidations are included, and the point at which the move is expected to break even and then deliver savings.

DV asked that the break-even point be clearly modelled and presented, as this would assist the Board in understanding when the upfront costs of moving are outweighed by lower on-going accommodation costs. He also highlighted that the proposed three-year Lewis Building contract appeared to strike an appropriate balance between the risk of short-term, insecure one-year arrangements and the risk of being “locked in” to a longer conventional lease. The Board agreed that this analysis should be included in the follow-up paper.

DV also queried ownership and disposal of existing office assets (furniture, carpets etc.). JL confirmed these were owned by the organisation and that options for sale or removal were being explored, but that any resale values were likely to be modest and that free removal or donation might represent the best outcome once transport and disposal costs were taken into account. AJ asked that options for donating furniture through recycling or charitable schemes also be considered.

The Board considered the accounting treatment of dilapidation costs. AJ queried whether these should be treated as capital rather than revenue expenditure, given they relate to physical works on a building rather than purchase of services. HF advised that the costs would in any event need to be recognised in the period in which they fall (expected around March of the current financial year) and that the accountant should be asked to confirm the correct classification and presentation in the accounts. JL undertook to discuss this with the accountant, including how best to show any use of reserves so as not to create a misleading picture of an operating deficit. The Board noted that more detailed three-year financial forecasts had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee, showing increasing revenue and growing reserves even after allowing for the dilapidation spend, and took assurance from this position.

After discussion, the Chair sought the Board’s view on proceeding. Subject to receipt of the supplementary financial information described above, the Board agreed in principle that the organisation should move to serviced office accommodation at the Lewis Building in Birmingham on a three-year contract, as the preferred option on value-for-money, staff-experience and risk-management grounds. The Board noted the current working estimate of dilapidation costs for exiting the McLaren Building and the ongoing negotiations to reduce this figure as far as reasonably possible and that the move and associated dilapidation costs will be funded from reserves, and that the detailed treatment and presentation in the accounts will be confirmed with the external accountant.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	To confirm with the accountant the appropriate accounting treatment and presentation of dilapidation and related costs, including any use of reserves.	Next Board meeting

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL & PJ	Provide an update on 3-year financial projections for each office option	ASAP

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL & PJ	Continue negotiations with the surveyors with the aim of reducing dilapidation costs as far as practicable	ASAP

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL & PJ	Explore options for resale, free removal and/or donation of existing furniture and other office assets, taking into account cost and environmental impact	ASAP

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL & PJ	Subject to post meeting confirmation, commence detailed arrangements and negotiations with the Lewis Building provider to secure suitable serviced office space on the terms outlined	ASAP

6. Updated Specialist Registrar Registration policy

The Board reviewed and approved minor updates to the Specialty Registrar Registration Policy to align with current processes and the ongoing recruitment of a registrar board member. No material policy changes were proposed; clarifications focused on plain-English drafting and explicitly linking fitness to practise responsibilities to the Postgraduate Dean in their Responsible Officer capacity, which Deans support. The Board agreed the revision.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	Approve and publish the updated Specialty Registrar registration policy	ASAP

7. Updated flexible working policy

The Board noted a positive pilot of enhanced flexible working and approved tweaks to the Flexible Working Policy, removing core hours and confirming greater scheduling autonomy with safeguards for service cover and wellbeing. No adverse impacts were reported during a pilot, and the Board approved the revised policy.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	Implement the revised flexible working policy	ASAP

To note

8.

2025-2026 Mid-Year Report

The Board received the 2025-26 mid-year report which provided a six-monthly update on registration data for the first two quarters of the 2025/26 financial year, produced as part of the revised approach to data reporting alongside the annual report. The report confirmed that the overall register continues to grow steadily, with around 1,500 registrants, representing approximately 1.5% growth since the end of the last financial year and around 8% growth year-on-year. Lapsing and attrition remain low and broadly stable, with most specialist lapses linked to retirement.

The Board discussed ongoing questions around the “value” of practitioner registration, including whether some practitioners may primarily view value in monetary/transactional terms rather than public protection, and whether they fully understand the purpose of registration. Members noted that specialist registration is often a contractual requirement for employment, whereas practitioner registration is rarely mandated by employers, which affects incentives. The Board emphasised the importance of engaging with major employers and representative bodies to encourage support for practitioner registration and supported exploring further communication or survey work with registrants to understand perceptions of value more clearly.

The report also highlighted a historical dip in practitioner registration numbers in 2022/23; JL undertook to investigate whether this reflects a data issue and to report back. The Board discussed behaviour around lapses and restorations, noting that many “lapses” are administrative (late renewals) and that the team operates a short grace period followed by targeted chasing, with clear messaging about professional obligations and potential fitness to practise implications of failing to renew. The Board noted the considerable workload created when specialists come off and then restore their registration (e.g. after job changes) and the need to balance proportionality, revenue considerations and not deterring returners.

The Board noted that there is a one-off restoration admin charge and that its application has been tightened over the last year, with scope to strengthen wording and expectations further. It was agreed that fee and charging policy for lapses and restorations, and associated messaging, should be brought into the next Strategy Day discussion on fees and charges. The Board thanked the team for a clear and useful report, confirmed that the six-monthly format meets its needs, and noted that the next major data update will be provided through the annual report, recognising the timing lag created by the renewal cycle.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	Investigate the historical dip in practitioner registration numbers in 2022/23	Next Board meeting

9.

Practitioner conference evaluation

The Board received an evaluation of the recent virtual annual public health practitioner conference. Around 400 people registered, with approximately 250 logging in on the day, an increase on the previous online event. Delegate feedback was positive: 84% of respondents (51 evaluation responses) rated the event as good or excellent, with strong comments on the programme and keynote speaker, despite some technical issues experienced on the Microsoft Teams platform.

The Board noted that technical problems at the start had been handled effectively and that similar issues had arisen with other platforms in previous years. The Board discussed the low uptake of the virtual “community space” intended as an online networking / coffee area and agreed it would be helpful to seek specific feedback from practitioners on what forms of networking or regional interaction they would value at future events, so that unused features are not repeated.

The Board also discussed future format options. It was noted that the current planning assumption is to alternate between in-person and virtual conferences, with financial projections

already built on an in-person event next year followed by a virtual event the year after. External conference organisers will develop specifications and costed options in the new year to support a further Board discussion on format and budget. The Board welcomed the positive evaluation, thanked the team and organisers for their work, and noted the planned follow-up on attendance analysis (including potential regional breakdown) and on options for future conference formats.

10. Update on Fitness to Practise review

The Board received an update on the planned overhaul of fitness to practise (FtP) processes, noting that current FtP rules (last revised in early 2021) are viewed by the team as difficult to work with and not well aligned to clear workflows, communication, or decision thresholds. Work is underway, led by Zaira Ejaz with strong input from the Registrar and the Education and Standards Committee to benchmark against statutory regulators and other accredited registers identified by the PSA as having good practice, and to adapt proven elements into a revised UKPHR framework rather than “reinventing the wheel”.

A key proposed change is the introduction of a formal triage stage to set clear thresholds for taking a complaint forward, so that low-level or employer-only matters do not proceed unnecessarily as FtP cases. The Committee has reviewed anonymised case data over the past five years (noting a small but noticeable increase from zero to around two cases per year) and supports the move to clearer thresholds, improved guidance for complainants, employers and registrants, and more user-friendly processes to protect both the public and registrants.

The Registrar and Board members emphasised the importance of distinguishing employer issues from true FtP matters, avoiding over-reach while fulfilling the duty to protect the reputation of the register and the public. Examples were given of complex and vexatious cases where early dialogue with both registrant and employer had enabled proportionate, timely resolution and reassurance for the registrant, and it was noted that the complex case panel remains available to support independent review and governance assurance, though it is rarely needed.

The Board discussed interim orders and panel arrangements, confirming that, given the very low volume of serious cases and the fact that UKPHR has never yet imposed an interim order, ad-hoc recruitment and training of panel members remains the most proportionate model, supported where necessary by legal advice. It was noted that employer investigations and registrants’ annual self-declarations feed into the overall system, and that any case involving clear, immediate risk to the public the Registrar can escalate directly to FtP proceedings. If required, an interim order and rapid panel hearing can be put in place.

The Education and Standards Committee will retain FtP as a standing agenda item to monitor implementation and provide ongoing support and scrutiny. The Board took assurance that revised processes are being developed, that they are intended to be proportionate, timely and robust, and that UKPHR is better placed to act quickly should a serious case arise, while avoiding unnecessary escalation of employer-level matters.

11. Registration reports

The Board received an update from the Registrar on Registration Panel and moderation activity, noting that overall governance is operating effectively, with particular thanks recorded to the new Registration Panel Chair, Julie Bishop and panel members for their work. The Registrar reported a small number of unusual issues, including pre-applications being approved but followed by unassessable portfolios, and some challenges around how moderation decisions are carried out and reported in a timely way.

The Board was assured that the Registration Panel and RAC are working closely with the office team to investigate these issues, clarify processes and strengthen guidance, with a focus on improving support for assessors and moderators in managing complex or problematic applications. It was noted that assessors in some instances might spend 30–40 hours on individual portfolios, and that clearer expectations are needed on when to escalate unassessable

or problematic portfolios, but that, overall, the assessment and sign-off processes are functioning well and benefitting from significant commitment from volunteers.

12. **Audit, Risk and Remuneration Committee report – including Risk Register**

The Board received a verbal report from DV, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee on recent business. The Committee had considered financial forecasting, and the financial implications of the planned office move and confirmed that these discussions underpinned the assurance provided in the paper. It was noted that quarterly financial reports will continue to be prepared on a pragmatic, non-accruals basis to keep the process simple, with year-end reconciliation handled separately.

The Chair highlighted the importance of language used in committee minutes, including avoiding framing the Register primarily as an “untapped income opportunity” and instead emphasising its regulatory purpose. The Committee confirmed that the majority of “red” risks on the corporate Risk Register relate to the external system environment rather than internal control failings, and that there had been robust discussion of mitigations and how these are recorded.

The Board noted that the Risk Register is reviewed regularly by the Audit and Risk Committee and is ultimately owned by the Board, with all Directors expected to read, understand and question its contents when it appears on the agenda. An action was agreed for DV and JL to review and refine the wording of the Audit and Risk Committee minutes (including risk and income framing) before they are finalised, with any amendments to be confirmed in the private session.

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL & DV	Review and refine the wording of the Audit and Risk Committee minutes	ASAP

13. **Education and Standards Committee report**

The Board received a verbal update on the recent Education and Standards Committee meeting, chaired by MC in the absence of RK. MC and JD were confirmed as new Deputy Co-Chairs of the Committee. No matters of exception were raised beyond those already discussed earlier in the meeting.

The Committee had a discussion on fitness to practise processes and reaffirmed its commitment to retaining FtP as a standing agenda item to provide support and oversight for the executive team. Updates were also noted on the Faculty of Public Health’s (FPH) formal review of curriculum and standards assessment, and on UKPHR data, both of which will remain standing items for ongoing monitoring.

The Chair thanked MC for stepping in and providing the concise update, noting that full minutes were available for reference. The Board took assurance from the positive governance demonstration and the Committee’s proactive approach to key strategic areas.

14. **Chief Executive’s report**

Discussed in private meeting

15. **Any other business**

Discussed in private meeting

16. **Date, time and venue of next meeting**

Wednesday 25th February 2025 at 14.00 via Teams – likely to be rescheduled

Action points from this meeting

ACTION	WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN
	JL	Update and publish the 30 September 2025 public Board minutes on website	ASAP

	JL	To confirm with the accountant the appropriate accounting treatment and presentation of dilapidation and related costs, including any use of reserves.	Next Board meeting
	JL & PJ	Provide an update on 3-year financial projections for each office option	ASAP
	JL & PJ	Continue negotiations with the surveyors with the aim of reducing dilapidation costs as far as practicable	ASAP
	JL & PJ	Explore options for resale, free removal and/or donation of existing furniture and other office assets, taking into account cost and environmental impact	ASAP
	JL & PJ	Subject to post meeting confirmation, commence detailed arrangements and negotiations with the Lewis Building provider to secure suitable serviced office space on the terms outlined	ASAP
	JL	Approve and publish the updated Specialty Registrar registration policy	ASAP
	JL	Implement the revised flexible working policy	ASAP
	JL	Investigate the historical dip in practitioner registration numbers in 2022/23	Next Board meeting
	JL & DV	Review and refine the wording of the Audit and Risk Committee minutes	ASAP

The Chair closed the meeting at 15.56 hours.