

Action against Medical Accidents

Minutes of the board meeting

held on **Tuesday 18 March 2025** at 14:00

at Fieldfisher LLP, Riverbank House, 2 Swan Lane, London EC4R 3TT

Present	Mike Andersson (MA), Caroline Browne (CB), Jocelyn Cornwell (JC) (Chair), Agnelo Fernades (AF) (joined during item 4), Stephanie Howden (SH) (joined during item 4), Carol Jones (CJ), Amrat Khorana (AK), Bill Kilvington (BK), Harriet Leyland (HL) (Associate Trustee) (joined during item 4), Farrah Pradhan (FP)
In attendance	Nathan Bacon (NB) (Operations Director), Anna Devine (AD) (Director of Fundraising, Marketing and Comms), Lisa O'Dwyer (LOD) (Director of Medico-legal Services), Rebecca Ross (RR) (interim Head of Finance), Paul Whiteing (PWh) (CEO), Rachel Wright (minutes)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Janine Collier (JCo), Michele Salter (MS) and Ed Maycock (ED).

2. Declarations of interest

JC had resigned as a governor of Tavistock NHS Foundation Trust.

3. Minutes of board meeting on 12th December 2024

The chair presented the minutes of a board meeting on 12th December 2024 for approval whereupon they were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Regarding action C0110 on the board's action log ("Consider whether AvMA's social media handles can be better used in response to the Letby case/ Government's response to FRC"), it was agreed that: i) AvMA should respond to events such as these when it could; ii) a written social media policy was needed; and iii) the outside perspective offered by trustees would be useful when deciding which social media platforms the charity should be on.

In response to a trustee question, the CEO said trustees still had until the end of the week to comment on the proposals for the board's awayday on May 6th.

C0223: AD to write a social media policy, as part of the marketing strategy, and lead on extending AvMA's reach via a wider range of social media channels

4. Chair's report on recruitment of new trustees

The chair briefly reported on the outcome of the recruitment for new trustees, having previously advised the board in writing of the recruitment process/outcome. The board unanimously approved the trustee appointments recommended by the interview panel, namely, Dr Agnelo Fernandes and Dr Stephanie Howden, and Dr Harriet Leyland as an associate trustee. The three successful candidates joined the meeting where introductions were made.

AF, SH and HL joined the meeting.

5. CEO report

The CEO's report to trustees had been circulated with the meeting's papers. He highlighted: the project looking at GDPR compliance was underway; the next all-staff-in-person day would look at upskilling staff in the basics of project management; the Dash Review had requested AvMA case studies; and AvMA was unable to respond to short-notice requests by the media for good case studies because it did not have a pool of such people to draw on. This needed rectifying, it was agreed.

AvMA should be proud of the results of the staff survey included in the board's papers, he said, adding that remote working was going well. He summarised the credentials of the incoming Head of Finance.

The APPG continued to be active. Involvement in this group needed to go on the risk register because it brought AvMA closer to politicians who could raise reputational risks on account of their party-political allegiances.

The Harmed Patient Pathway (HPP) continued to make good progress. The many helpful comments/responses made to the consultation would be taken as accepted unless anyone disagreed with them in the next two weeks.

The CEO reported favourably on AvMA's involvement with the end corridor care coalition, led by the RCN, to stop hospital corridor care becoming routine.

There was a discussion about the possible impact of the disbandment of NHS England on AvMA's strategy. Concerns in the short-term included the further reduction in staff at ICB level (where patient safety sits) and the difficulty of getting Trusts to focus on the HPP.

Any trustee who wished to give feedback about the presentation of the CEO's report was encouraged to do so.

C0224: PWh to compile a pool of AvMA service -users upon which to draw in response to short-notice requests for interviews by the media

C0225: PWh to add APPG/working with politicians to the risk register

6. Staff annual cost-of-living and pension considerations

The CEO summarised his paper circulated with the meeting's papers. Following a brief discussion, the board approved his recommendation, supported by the finance and investment committee (FIC), that staff receive an annual-cost-of-living pay increase of 2.5% from 1st April 2025 for the reasons given in the meeting's papers. The board also approved his recommendation, again supported by FIC, that employer pension contributions for all staff rise by 1%, from 3% to 4%, on qualifying earnings, not on a matched-contribution basis. In response to a question from the chair, the executive team said they thought both decisions would be a welcome surprise for staff, adding that education for staff about pensions would be a good idea. The CEO would offer guidance about

pensions to staff when informing them of their pay and pension uplifts.

C0226: PWh to offer guidance about pensions to staff when informing them of their pay and pension uplifts

7. Budget 2025/26 for approval

CEO talked through the main points of the proposed 2025/26 budget that had been circulated with the meeting's papers. Overall, the news was good in terms of working towards eliminating the budget deficit in accordance with the five-year plan. Regarding the projections for fundraising income, AD was confident these were realistic, he said. He was pleased to report the projected income from legacies (£7,000; based on previous years) was prudent and had been eclipsed by the £50,000 received in the current financial year.

The budgeting for ongoing development of the CRM, as advised by FIC, was explained to trustees.

RR, who had had no part in preparing the budget, was impressed with its presentation; however, the chair repeated her longstanding concern that the presentation of some information could be further improved and that consideration be given to graphics/visual representations in the budget to better show what the forecast looked like and AvMA's position in relation to the five-year plan.

The budget, commended to trustees by FIC, was approved by the board.

C0227: RR or her successor to make the budget easier to read by incorporating graphics/visual representations of AvMA's position to show where things stand in relation to the five-year plan and what the forecast will look like.

8. Website and digital strategy business case for approval

NB presented the business case for the first two (of three) stages of a digital strategy and new website project.

In response to trustees concerns about the ambitiousness of the indicative timelines, he would bring timelines advised by the consultant selected to conduct the initial stages of the project to the next board meeting.

Trustees liked BK's suggestion of applying a separate contingency of, say, 20% on top of the allocated funding for the project and identifying a methodology for signing off the contingency. They flagged the need to factor in internal costs, i.e. staff time, and to consider possible ongoing-support costs. CJ would talk offline with NB about adding more detail to the mitigations.

The executive team assured trustees that the consultant selected to help with the project would assist with, not lead, part two of the project: decisions about the tender process and who to appoint to deliver the project would rest with AvMA.

MA stressed the importance of introducing a strategy for information and IT as there was no formal joining up of the new systems coming onboard, i.e. the new website, implementation of the CRM, fundraising and, potentially, a new financial system. Trustees recognised the importance of joined-up oversight of all these projects: the governance of the new website, for example, would need to be shared between the information, IT, risk and compliance committee and the income generation, comms and marketing committee. At a trustee's request, the executive would draw up a diagram showing where all the different systems connected, to aid oversight.

There was a brief discussion about rebranding; no actions were identified.

The business case for stages one and two of the digital strategy and new website project, up to a financial limit of £10,000, was approved by the board.

C0228: NB to bring a revised-website timelines, as advised by the selected consultant, to June's board meeting

C0229: NB to factor internal costs, i.e. staff time, into the new website project as well as a contingency budget and a suggestion for how its use would be approved

C0230: NB to give trustees more detail around mitigation after talking with CJ

C0231: NB/PWh to draw up a diagram showing where the new website and other new systems connect

9. Deep dive into strategic objective one

This item was dropped due to time pressures. PWh would email his presentation to trustees.

C0232: PWh to email his presentation to trustees

10. Year One plan update and draft performance indicators

The CEO summarised the three key components of his paper circulated with the meeting's papers.

Trustees congratulated the executive team on the progress made over the past 12 months. In response to a trustee question, the CEO replied that if he had to RAG rate AvMA's progress, Objective One would be amber and the other three objectives green.

Regarding Year Two, there was a discussion about whether to focus on scoping out other areas in which AvMA would like to work - maternity safety being the current priority – or doing a deep dive into one area and building out from that, using the learning acquired. In AD's experience, she said, the latter approach worked better from a funding point of view. CB felt that by the end of Year Two AvMA needed to be clear how it would want to prioritise its activities in Year Three; consequently, scoping out of communities/areas and the work around data (Objective One, point 6) needed to be done during Year Two.

SH would put the CEO in touch with the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership. AF would put the CEO in touch with BME forums including Black Mothers.

In response to a trustee question, LOD explained how the work on complaints and resolution could come together. Project management capability should be picked up in Objective Four, point 6, advised the chair.

At the CEO's request, the board considered at length how he might define the proposed performance-and-impact measures circulated with the meeting's papers. Suggestions included separating out the measures for strategic objectives from those for governance objectives; benchmarking from 1 April 2024; distinguishing between long-term- and short-term impact; collecting case studies/qualitative data that showed compound harm had been reduced. The board recognised the impossibility of creating a perfect suite of measures and agreed the goal was to create a 'good-enough' set of progress trackers. PWh would review the measures considering the discussion and come back to JC, CB, AK and CJ before the trustee awayday on May 6.

C0233: SH to put PWh in touch with the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership

C0234: AF to put PWh in touch with BME forums including Black Mothers

C0235: PWh to include project management capability in Objective Four, point 6

C0236: PWh to review his proposed performance and impact measures and come back to JC, CB, AK and CJ before the trustee awayday

11. Delegation framework update for approval

The CEO highlighted the changes made to the framework and received praise for his paper. Fine-tuning of committee terms of reference would be done at the committees' first meetings. Committee membership was as follows:

Information, IT, risk & compliance committee: MA, AK

Service delivery, quality & outreach committee: JCo, CB, AK

Resources committee: MS, BK, MA, CJ

Income generation, marketing, fundraising, events & communications committee: CJ, JC, MS

New trustees would consider volunteering for at least one of the committees. It was noted that the information, IT, risk & compliance committee needed another trustee member and HL volunteered to join it. PWh would arrange for the dates of committee meetings to be sent to trustees.

C0237: AF, SH & HL to consider volunteering for at least one of the trustee committees

C0238: PWh to ask VN to send out the updated list of committee meeting dates

12. Project- and risk registers for review

The CEO reported on the progress of key strategic projects and updates to the risk register.

Project register

At trustees' request, large strategic projects that had not yet started, such as the IT strategy, would be included on the project register. It was noted that the CRM was showing against the revised targets, not the original targets. In response to a new trustee querying why some projects were registered as "on target" yet had no confirmed due date, the CEO explained why, at this stage, the project register had to be taken as a work in progress that needed improvement. He would reconsider the presentation of the register (green was a misleading colour to use, observed one trustee).

Risk register

For the benefit of new trustees, the CEO confirmed each committee looks at the risk register from its perspective, as does the board at each board meeting. Trustees wanting an AvMA email address would contact NB. The risk of missed helpline calls would need to be part of the upcoming service review, advised one trustee, adding that this risk needed to be captured, and the mitigation noted somewhere.

The risk register was accepted by the board.

C0239: PWh to include the IT strategy, and other large strategic projects that had not yet started, on the register

C0240: PWh to reconsider the presentation of the project register

C0241: Trustees to contact NB if wanting an AvMA email address

13. Finance and investment committee report

Draft minutes of the meeting on 25th February 2025, the Q3 management accounts report, and the latest management accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting for information.

14. Quality and outcomes committee report

Draft minutes of the meeting on 19th February 2025 and a helpline update had been circulated prior to the meeting for information. Trustees found the helpline update particularly informative and helpful and asked the CEO to pass on their thanks to its authors, Gill and Zeina.

C0242: PWh to thank Gill and Zeina on behalf of the board for the helpline update and this issue to the risk register

15. IT and digital working group report

Draft notes of the meeting on 4th March 2025 had been circulated with the meeting's papers for information. MA flagged that AvMA collected a great deal of data with which it could/should be doing a lot more, particularly once it started using AI.

16. Staff and helpline-volunteers surveys

The executive team should be proud of the staff survey feedback, trustees said. In response to a question about staff workload management, the CEO said that any concerns would be picked up in staff appraisals and reported back to the board.

17. Managers' departmental reports

The managers' departmental reports had been circulated with the meeting's papers for information. Trustees were impressed by the amount of work that had been completed.

When asked, AD confirmed that both the digital fundraiser role and that of the grant and corporate fundraiser would be fixed-term contracts, the former, 18 months; the latter, six months. She would be able to recruit for these roles in time to meet the next year's targets, she said.

In response to a trustee's query about the broader implications around resources suggested by the backlog of solicitor panel accreditation/reaccreditation applications, the CEO said, yes, there was a resource issue in that particular area, which would be addressed.

Trustees who wished to respond to consultations would be invited to do so – consultations documents to be published on SharePoint with tight deadlines by which to comment.

A trustee asked about the executive team's wellbeing; there were no issues to report. The new HR committee would help with the monitoring of staff wellbeing, NB said.

C0243: PWh to ask Eleanor Riches to notify trustees of consultations - consultation documents to be published on SharePoint

Trustees would email any further questions they might have to the appropriate manager.

A two-minute video launching AvMA's first fundraising challenge event was shown to trustees. They were interested to hear AF's view that the video's messaging was unlikely to sit well with clinicians. There followed a conversation about the importance of getting the right tone for AvMA's different audiences and the benefit of being on a wider range of social media platforms and having the

support of internet celebrities/influencers. Extending AvMA's reach via a wider range of social media channels was under consideration as part of AD's role, she said. The trustee marketing committee would also be focusing on amplifying AvMA's voice.

18. AOB

Trustees were asked to send the chair any feedback they might have about the meeting.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting ended at 17:25.

C0244: Trustees to email JC any feedback they might have about the meeting

19. Dates of 2025 meetings

Board awayday: May 6th

Board meetings: 24th June, 23rd September, 9th December (includes AGM)