Action against Medical Accidents

Minutes of the board meeting

held on **Tuesday 24 June 2025** at 13:00

at 82 Tanner Street, London SE1 3GN

Present	Mike Andersson (MA)**,** Jocelyn Cornwell (JC) (Chair), Agnelo Fernandes (AF), Stephanie Howden (SH), Carol Jones (CJ), Amrat Khorana (AK), Bill Kilvington (BK), Harriet Leyland (HL) (Associate Trustee), Michele Salter (MS) (Treasurer)
In attendance	Nathan Bacon (NB) (Operations Director), Anna Devine (AD) (Director of Fundraising, Marketing and Comms) **(left after item 15)**, Ed Maycock (EM) (Head of Events), Lisa O'Dwyer (LOD) (Director of Medico-legal Services), Tim Hammond (TH) (Head of Finance), Paul Whiteing (PWh) (CEO), Rachel Wright (minutes)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Caroline Browne (CB), Janine Collier (JCo) and Farrah Pradhan (FP).

2. Declarations of interest

AK had been appointed to the boards of Social Work England and the Association of Child Psychotherapists as a non-executive director.

3. Minutes of board meeting on 18th March 2025

The chair presented the minutes of a board meeting on 18th March 2025 for approval whereupon they were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

<u>Matters arising</u>: There was a discussion about the pros and cons of AvMA being on social media platforms (action C0223 on the board's action log). The board agreed the charity needed to be on these platforms, noting that the level of risk of a platform as well as AvMA's interactions on it would need to be managed and this would be a challenge.

The CEO advised that action C0237 ("new trustees to consider volunteering for at least one trustee committee") needed finalisation.

MA flagged there was little reporting on the CRM as a strategic project in the meeting's papers.

C0245: JC to finalise on which trustee committees AF, SH and HL would sit.

4. Chair's report and update

Trustees asked how staff felt about the extra work associated with having four, not three, trustee committees. LOD and EM reported there had been no complaints, adding that the attention to detail given by committees to the recommendations they made to the board was a good use of time. The chair reminded the board not to spend time overly scrutinising anything that had already been thoroughly examined by a committee. At the board's request, greater use of should be made of SharePoint between board/committee meetings to share important items.

The CEO, reflecting on the new trustee committees, said he thought: i) some of the agendas were too full; ii) timed agendas would be useful to stop meetings overrunning; iii) online meetings should be no longer than two hours; iv) board meetings should be three hours maximum; and v) the meeting structure would be reviewed at the end of the calendar year. PWh would investigate using AI (Copilot) for committee-meeting minute taking.

C0246: PWh to make greater use of SharePoint for trustees to comment on ahead of board/committee meetings.
C0247: PWh to review committee-meeting agendas and timings with the committees' chairs.
C0248: PWh to investigate using AI (Copilot) for committee-meeting minute taking.

5. CEO report

The CEO's report to trustees had been circulated with the meeting's papers. He was delighted to report that he had recently been notified of a significant legacy (approx. £200,000) bequeathed to AvMA.

The CEO explained the recent setback to the Harmed Patient Pathway (HPP), adding that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care had since re-iterated his commitment to a restorative programme across maternity services and had asked AvMA to talk to the chief midwifery officer for England. The HPP's commitments were near finalisation and legal advice on protecting the intellectual property of the HPP had been sought. Trustees were pleased the phrase 'restorative practice' had begun to appear in the language of the NHS. They encouraged keeping the dialogue going with individual Trusts. SH suggested a simple method to stop Trusts from claiming ownership of/altering the HPP document.

Trustees praised the CEO's briefing for the National Audit Office that gave AvMA's views on the cost of resolving clinical negligence claims in the NHS.

Other CEO updates included: i) a digital fundraiser had been recruited; ii) staff had been given project management training and had also attended a session on GDPR and a helpful discussion on AvMA's messaging/tone of voice; and iii) the NHS 10-year plan and Dash Review would be published in early July 2025.

The board was sorry to hear of the deaths of former staff member Paula Sparkes and former trustee Jean Robinson.

6. Trustee awayday and plan and priorities for 2025/26

The CEO's follow-up paper to the recent trustee/managers' awayday had been circulated with the meeting's papers. He ran through parts A and B of his paper, explaining what he had done and what he had tried to do.

Part A was an excellent summary, agreed trustees, and they found the overarching plan for Year Two – *Year Two Plan on a Page* – helpful.

In response to a trustee question about *Year Two Plan on a Page*, the CEO explained that the board could expect to see more detail in the next iteration of this paper, i.e., who was driving which parts of the plan and what would happen by when.

In response to the CEO asking trustees what they would expect to see in the Year Three road map, HL suggested taking a rolling approach, moving objectives from a broad, future state (as in *Year Two Plan on a Page*) into a highly specified one. MA repeated his concern about programme management, asking how joined-up oversight of all the various projects would be managed; would AvMA be overstretching itself, he asked. In response, the CEO pointed out that some of Year Two's actions were already underway; not everything was a new project for which resources had to be found. The executive team would report back to the board if any of the projects planned could not go ahead.

The board approved the Year Two priorities and Year Three road map (Part B of the circulated paper).

The chair reminded the board that it had yet to identify which areas/groups**,** beyond maternity safety**,** AvMA wanted to work with. A decision was needed by Year Three. She suggested identifying these groups in the autumn or winter of Year Two.

In response to Part C of the CEO's paper, there was a lengthy discussion about whether AvMA's constitution was limiting: its charitable objectives had been written by lawyers 40 years earlier when a phrase like 'patient safety' was not common terminology. Some trustees had concerns about the use of certain words ('accident', 'victims'); however, because the charity continued to work within its remit and had not drifted in terms of its delivery, and since charities were free to interpret their objectives in a liberal way, the consensus was not to seek legal advice about the constitution. The board endorsed the CEO's interpretation of AvMA's charitable objectives as stated in Part C of his paper.

There was a long, wide-ranging discussion about clarifying and strengthening AvMA's brand. All agreed this was the right time to carry out any rebranding so that the new website might reflect the outcome. Most trustees were broadly supportive of keeping AvMA as the primary name, as proposed by the CEO in Part D of his paper, and of developing an inclusive, non-adversarial, meaningful strapline that would take prominence over "action against medical accidents"; however, some felt more exploration was needed into exactly what it was about the existing branding that was a problem. A few trustees suggested co-branding, which could include a new, catchy company name for patient-facing communications. AD and her team had yet to focus on a possible name change, she said; their focus had been on AvMA's messaging – how the charity spoke to its difference audiences and how to build value and trust.

The board asked for a more detailed analysis of the proposal to re-brand with a stronger justification as why this was necessary and justified, before proceeding. This would be produced before the next board meeting and circulated online. PWh and AD would also repeat with trustees the exercise they had done with staff on how AvMA communicated with its different audiences and then develop some options and strapline suggestions.

C0249: PWh to produce a more detailed justification for re-branding and circulate online to trustees. PWh and AD to also repeat with trustees the exercise done with staff on how AvMA communicated with its different audiences.

7. Website and digital strategy update

NB presented his update on the digital strategy and new website project. In response to trustee questions, he explained that: i) AvMA had best-practice cyber security measures in place, and cyber security was to become a standing agenda item at IIRC meetings; and ii) the agency appointed to design the new website had signed off on the costs so there was no need for concern if the breakdown of those costs seemed a bit light/unrealistic; the agency was keen to work for AvMA.

Trustees stressed the importance of having everything in place before the agency needed it to avoid slippage. They were happy with the membership of the project steering group - MA and HL were the right trustees for this group, they agreed.

Trustees approved the proposed revision to the budget (increased to £12,000) and noted the governance arrangements proposed in NB's board paper.

8. Service review proposal from the service delivery, quality and outcomes committee (SDQOC)

The CEO introduced his paper on reviewing AvMA's services.

At trustees' request, the following wording highlighted in italics would be added to the review's terms of reference:

- Recommending improvements: Proposing enhancements that will elevate user experience and support *and recommending a framework for monitoring and continuous improvement*. (Objectives, section 4, page 43 of the meeting's papers)

- *Positive impact on staff: measured through staff surveys.* (Success Metrics, section 9, page 44 of the meeting's papers).

In response to trustees' questions and observations, the executive team explained that: i) lawyers' services had been reviewed in detail four years previously and as little had changed in the meantime a further review was not necessary; and ii) the service review would be appropriately powered to assess unmet need.

The board approved the scope of the terms of reference for a review of AvMA's services subject to inclusion of the italicised wording above.

There was a discussion about how the review might be funded. If external funding had not been found by the next board meeting, the CEO would bring to that meeting a business case for using legacy-money or Freedman House reserves for the review.

C0250: PWh to add trustees' rewrites to sections 4 and 9 of his service-review paper (pgs 43 & 44 of the board meeting's papers).
C0251: AD/PWh to seek external funding for a service review.

9. Policies for approval

The investment policy circulated with the meeting's papers was approved by the board.

10. Project- and risk registers for review

<u>Risk register</u>

The CEO flagged that the risk register had been reviewed at each of the most recent trustee-committee meetings and no changes had been recommended other than those reported in the meeting's papers.

Project register

Trustees agreed it was helpful to have a register of strategic projects; however, further work was needed on progress reporting and the direction of travel - the register did not give a clear picture of whether a project was on track, they said. NB would devise a more user-friendly register giving an indication of how long a project should be taking and costing and its progress relative to that. Trend would be RAG rated and indicated by arrows and the paused symbol.

In response to a concern voiced by MA, the leadership team would alert committees and/or the board to bottlenecks/issues with small projects.

C0252: NB to amend the project register to show more clearly whether a project was on track, how long it should be taking and costing and its progress in relation to that.

11. Approval of committees' terms of reference

Trustees were concerned that data for monitoring and continuous improvement was not being picked up: the worry was it would fall between two committees. At the board's request, PWh would amend SDQOC's terms of reference to include responsibility for overseeing the collection of service-activity data to analyse the quality of services provided.

All four committees' terms of reference were approved subject to the amendment recorded above.

MA again flagged the need for a strategy for managing AvMA's data. CJ would message PWh about editorial errors in the terms of reference.

C0253: PWh to amend SDQOC's terms of reference to include responsibility for overseeing the collection of service-activity data to analyse the quality of services provided.
C0254: CJ to message PWh about editorial errors in the committees' terms of reference.

12. Resources committee

Draft minutes of the meeting on 3rd June 2025 and the management accounts report for Q4 24/25 had been circulated prior to the meeting for information. The treasurer reminded trustees to read the minutes of resources committee meetings as finance was a board responsibility. Reporting would become monthly and be available on Sharepoint, she said. Human resources had been moved to the top of the committee's agenda. TH said the planned dashboard/more graphic reporting would make it easier for the board to recognise concerns.

13. Service delivery, quality and outcomes committee

Draft minutes of the meeting on 4th June 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting for information. The committee had unanimously agreed that AvMA should not be an England-only charity. Research would be done into the possibility of extending the charity's reach into all nations of the UK and the Republic of Ireland as well.

14. Income generation and marketing/comms committee

Draft minutes of the meeting on 15th May 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting for information. CJ summarised the meeting's main discussions; key points of interest included: i) the grant-officer role was proving challenging to fill; ii) the 50 Miles in May fundraiser had netted £9,800 excluding tax relief from Gift Aid; iii) two open online sessions for volunteers were upcoming; iv) the legacy strategy had yet to start; and v) SH had found it hard to raise sponsorship for the 50 Miles in May challenge because of a lack of awareness of the AvMA brand.

15. Information, IT, risk and compliance committee

Draft minutes of the meeting on 14th May 2025 had been circulated with the meeting's papers for information. MA summarised the main discussions. He thanked the three new trustees who had attended the meeting and made excellent contributions. He also thanked the CEO for his hard work, adding there was a lot more for him and PWh to do offline.

Regarding the CRM, NB reported the helpline and portal for events bookings would go live on 14th July and 28th July respectively. By the end of June, the casework would be fully built out. The board congratulated NB for pushing the CRM project through, recognising it had been a difficult project.

AD left the meeting.

16. Managers' departmental reports

The managers' departmental reports had been circulated with the meeting's papers for information. Trustees were impressed by the excellent level of reporting.

17. AOB

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting ended at 16:35.

Dates of 2025 board meetings

23rd September and 9th December (includes AGM)