

2017/2021



NIGALA Corporate Plan  
2017/2021 including the  
Business Plan for 2017/18

The Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency (The Agency) 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 1<sup>st</sup> December 1995 making provision for the constitution of the Agency and appointment of the Agency Board. On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1996 the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency became operational.

### Head Office - Centre House, Belfast

Centre House  
79 Chichester Street  
BELFAST  
BT1 4JE  
Tel: 028 90 316550  
Fax: 028 90 319811  
Text: 028 90 329674

Spencer House  
14-22 Spencer Road  
LONDONDERRY  
BT47 6QA  
Tel: 028 71 329909  
Fax: 028 71 322908  
Text: 028 71 343461

Dobbin Centre  
Dobbin Street  
ARMAGH  
BT61 7QL  
Tel: 028 37 528840  
Fax: 028 37 518357  
Text: 028 37 518640

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## Foreword

The Corporate and Business Plan 2017-21 of the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) has been prepared in keeping with the Northern Ireland Assembly budget period for 2017/21.

The Corporate and Business Plan has been the subject of stakeholder consideration, engagement with the Department of Health (DoH) Sponsoring Unit and approved by the NIGALA Board. It sets out our strategic vision and values, and identifies the outcomes, which we hope to achieve over the course of this Corporate Plan.

NIGALA's core purpose is to represent the wishes and feelings of children and young people in the family courts in Northern Ireland, in Public Law and Adoption proceedings. The face of social work and family justice has been the subject of careful review and change<sup>1</sup> and in this changing context this plan strives

to build on the work and successes of 2016/2017 which focused on five strategic themes;

1. Compliance with legislation and guidance;
2. Efficient use of resources;
3. Children at the centre of NIGALA decision making processes;
4. Valuing staff and promoting learning;
5. Delivery of a quality service to agreed standards.

In setting out our '*vision*' for the next 4 years, NIGALA's commitment is to strengthen the '*voice of children and young people in the Family Courts*' by building on the distinctive experience and skills of its workforce thereby improving outcomes for children. By continuing to improve the quality and effectiveness of our work we will ensure that Guardians, as frontline professionals, will become more connected to and be part of the Government's strategy for Social Work; to-

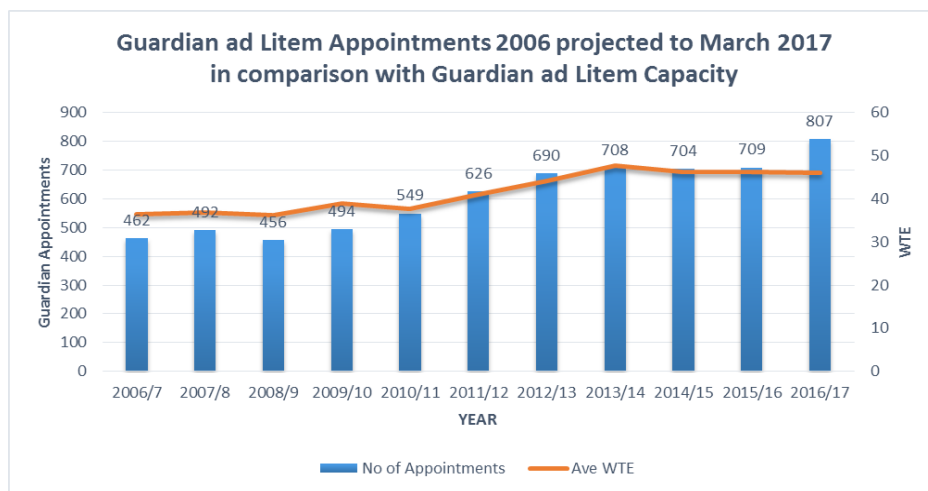
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<sup>1</sup> Care Proceedings Pilot (2016), Review of Civil and Family Justice (2016), A Strategy For Social Work in Northern Ireland (2012 - 2022) (DoH)



*‘improve and safeguard the social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities by promoting their independence, supporting their social inclusion and participation in society, empowering them to take control of their lives and helping them to keep safe’<sup>2</sup>*

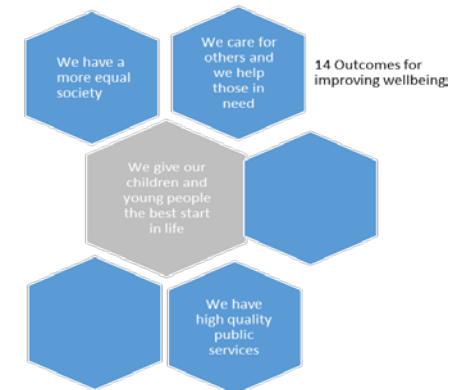
As a regional organisation NIGALA continues to witness significant demand whilst operating in a climate of financial austerity and workforce limitations. In a period of financial reductions over the last two years NIGALA has experienced a total rise in case demand of 12% at the end of December 2016 and is projecting a 14% increase in new cases by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 as detailed in Chart 1 below.



<sup>2</sup> Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing - A Strategy for Social Work in Northern Ireland

The new financial year shows no letting up of case demand and NIGALA is showing a similar case trend for 2017/18. Reflective of the current climate and culture in which the organisation operates, a review of the organisation’s structure is underway internally to ensure sustainability of service delivery in a fast changing strategic context. The implementation plan for the structure review is due by December 2017

The Programme for Government (PFG) which is still in consultation phase sets out 14 outcomes as identified by the NI Executive, which represents a vision for our society. The outcomes are supported by 42 indicators which are clear statements of change. The PFG contains two indicators which can be linked to the statutory responsibilities of the Guardian Ad Litem:



1. *to improve support for looked after children (Indicator 10);*
2. *Increase the effectiveness of the Justice System (indicator 38).*



The identified outcomes include;

- We are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential;
- We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other;
- We care for others and we help those in need;
- We have high quality public services;
- We give our children and young people the best start in life.

The importance of NIGALA as an enabler to actively assist in the delivery of these outcomes can be considered in the following terms;

1. NIGALA will play a vital role in the lives of children and young people, ensuring their **best interests** are met in accordance with effective care planning which is **relevant to their needs** and gives them **the best start in life**;
2. NIGALA will be **proactive** in ensuring that **proceedings are timely** and **outcomes** are relevant to children and young people's **time-lines**;

3. As a regional organisation, NIGALA will play its role in **connecting with the five HSC Trusts, the Courts and other related organisations** to ensure that **issues concerning children** and young people who are subject of public law and adoption proceedings are prioritised strengthening best outcomes based on need.

Over the course of this strategy NIGALA will take cognisance of the DoH Strategic Vision for Health and Social Care set out in Quality 2020 and engage with the Northern Ireland Court Service in their plans for the management of family law work over the period of the Programme for Government.

NIGALA is a learning organisation and we will continue to maintain the high standards as set out in achieving Investors in People (IIP) '*Bronze Award*' in 2016. To be a high performing organisation, developing and engaging with our staff in order to ensure continuous improvement in our service delivery and processes, remains a high priority. Our Culture and Climate survey action plan will progress alongside our personal and public involvement strategy working closely with our stakeholders and the public to ensure openness and transparency in decisions



taken to shape our service to support the best interests of children in the family courts.

The Agency's overriding goal is to deliver a high quality service to children and young people particularly in times of financial austerity. NIGALA will make the best use of its resources, continually looking to innovate and deliver a service which is also value for money.

Feedback from children and stakeholders has established NIGALA as an organisation which provides a service that attracts a high level of satisfaction. During the course of this strategy we intend to build on this reputation by strengthening our mechanisms for promoting children's participation in the core business of the Service. This is our commitment to valuing and *'listening'* to those who have experience of working with Guardians ad Litem in our Family Justice system. Over the next year we will be striving to provide internal and external assurance to the delivery of our five strategic themes.

This Corporate and Business Plan for 2017-21 is premised on the words and strategic vision of the former Health Minister, when she says that *'Change is quite simply essential'* and

delivering a world class service is about having a collective responsibility where working in partnership is critical to such a strategy.



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT



## 1.1 Strategic Context

NIGALA provides a service for children and young people where there are concerns about neglect and abuse and whose futures are being decided by the courts in the respective arenas of public law and adoption. These children represent some of the most vulnerable in our society and Guardians ad Litem endeavour to ensure that their needs remain the focus of court proceedings and in the context of a new ‘outcomes’ based approach, the best that can be achieved, is achieved.

### (i) Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together

A key priority for NIGALA is to respond positively to the key themes as outlined by the Minister of Health in her strategic vision for change in Northern Ireland’s Health and Social Care system. For children and young people subject of public law and adoption proceedings, this will require delivery of a ‘quality’ service based on;

- Working with the Courts to secure permanence for children and young people more quickly, improving outcomes relevant to their mental and emotional wellbeing, education and health;
- Providing opportunities for staff development to ensure that children and young people receive a specialist, personalised and compassionate service;
- In keeping with an ‘outcomes’ based approach, moving to a service where working closer and collectively with relevant stakeholders is the norm;
- Working to deliver a ‘person-centre’ service, characterised by ‘trust’, ‘partnership’ and ‘collaboration’.





**(ii) Demand for the Service**

In the last six years there has been a steady increasing growth in the number of appointments of Guardians ad Litem in public law cases. In the financial year 2008-2009 NIGALA managed 456 case appointments involving 700 children. By 2015-2016 these figures had increased to 709 case appointments involving 1056 children; an increase of 56%. 2016/17 is currently witnessing a further 11% increase at December 2016. With appointments in adoption proceedings remaining relatively stable over recent years, it is clear that it is the public law sector, in particular care proceedings, which is placing the greatest pressure on Agency resources with the figures for care applications in 2016/17 showing an increase of 24% when compared with the same time period in 2014/15. Overall NIGALA is projecting a 2016/17 year end figure of 807 appointments (14% higher than 2015/16) and for the purposes of planning we have to assume that the current rate of care application appointments will be maintained over the period 2017-2018.

**(iii) Financial Constraints**

It is against a severe economic backdrop that the Agency's Corporate and Business Plan 2017-2021 has been prepared. A continuing risk to the delivery of an effective, timely and efficient service will be the high demand at a time of continuing financial constraint. The Agency has been required to deliver efficiency savings over the last two years with its budget being reduced by 6% (£255,000) over that period. At a time of increasing demand and more children coming before the courts NIGALA will be engaging with the Department of Health to ensure an appropriate funding stream is in place which will ensure the delivery of a high quality service to children during the period of this corporate plan.



#### (iv) Developments in the Family Courts

One of the key indicators in the Programme for Government is linked to improving the effectiveness of the Justice system. From 2015 onwards a number of ‘*justice*’ centred reviews have taken place. Each has the common aim of developing and delivering more effective and efficient systems of justice and health.

Building on the report of ‘*Access to Justice*’ (2015) a review of the Civil and Family Justice, led by Lord Justice Gillen, was commissioned in 2015. This review sought to look fundamentally at current procedures for the administration of civil and family justice in Northern Ireland, with a view to:

- improving access to justice;
- achieving better outcomes for court users, particularly for children and young people;
- creating a more responsive and proportionate system; and
- making better use of available resources, including through the use of new technologies and greater opportunities for digital working.

NIGALA is an active stakeholder in the ‘*Care Proceedings Pilot – Improving Children’s Lives*’, jointly sponsored by the DOH/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. The focus of the pilot is concentrated on good decision making and minimising unnecessary, prejudicial 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 Pilot is also intended to assist in determining whether legislative changes are required similar to those introduced in England and Wales under the Children and Families Act 2014.



Aligning the recommendations from each of these reviews is a key strategic objective for NIGALA. It is recognised by NIGALA that much of the improvement for children and young people will have to come from changes in the way people choose to work and from changes in the culture of family justice, such as addressing the issue of delay thereby prioritising improved outcomes. The decisions made by the Health & Social Care Trusts and the Courts in response to family disruption and breakdown have fundamental long term consequences for children and families alike. This overall plan sets out our vision of strengthening the voice and participation of children and young people in the family court process.

#### **(iv) Child Demographics and Definitions**

Over the next decade the population of children and young people in Northern Ireland will gradually increase. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) projects that the number of children aged 0 – 18 years will increase from 458,000 to a peak of 472,000 in 2023. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as every person below the age of 18 “unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”. It was ratified by the UK in 1991.

The age of consent in Northern Ireland was lowered in 2008 from 17 years to 16 years but remains at 17 in the Republic of Ireland. The age of criminal responsibility is 10 in Northern Ireland, England and Wales, 8 in Scotland and 12 in the Republic of Ireland.

The 2011 Census indicates children and young people aged between 0-17 years represented 23.9 per cent of the total usual population in Northern Ireland. Of this cohort, 2.4 per cent were from the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) populations, a statistic that is increasing year on year. In total, BME children and young people represent only 0.6 per cent of the usual resident population (10,870 children). The most common ethnic backgrounds were White (97.6 per cent) and Asian (1.2 per cent) and the least common were those from an Irish Travelling background and other, both at 0.1 per cent.



The Guardian ad Litem is solely appointed to cases in the civil system and may be appointed to represent children up to the age of 18 years. With the increasing numbers of children and those from different ethnic and minority backgrounds, there is an increasing complexity of issues and matters which come before the family courts in Northern Ireland.



## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

### 2.1 Our Vision, Purpose and Values

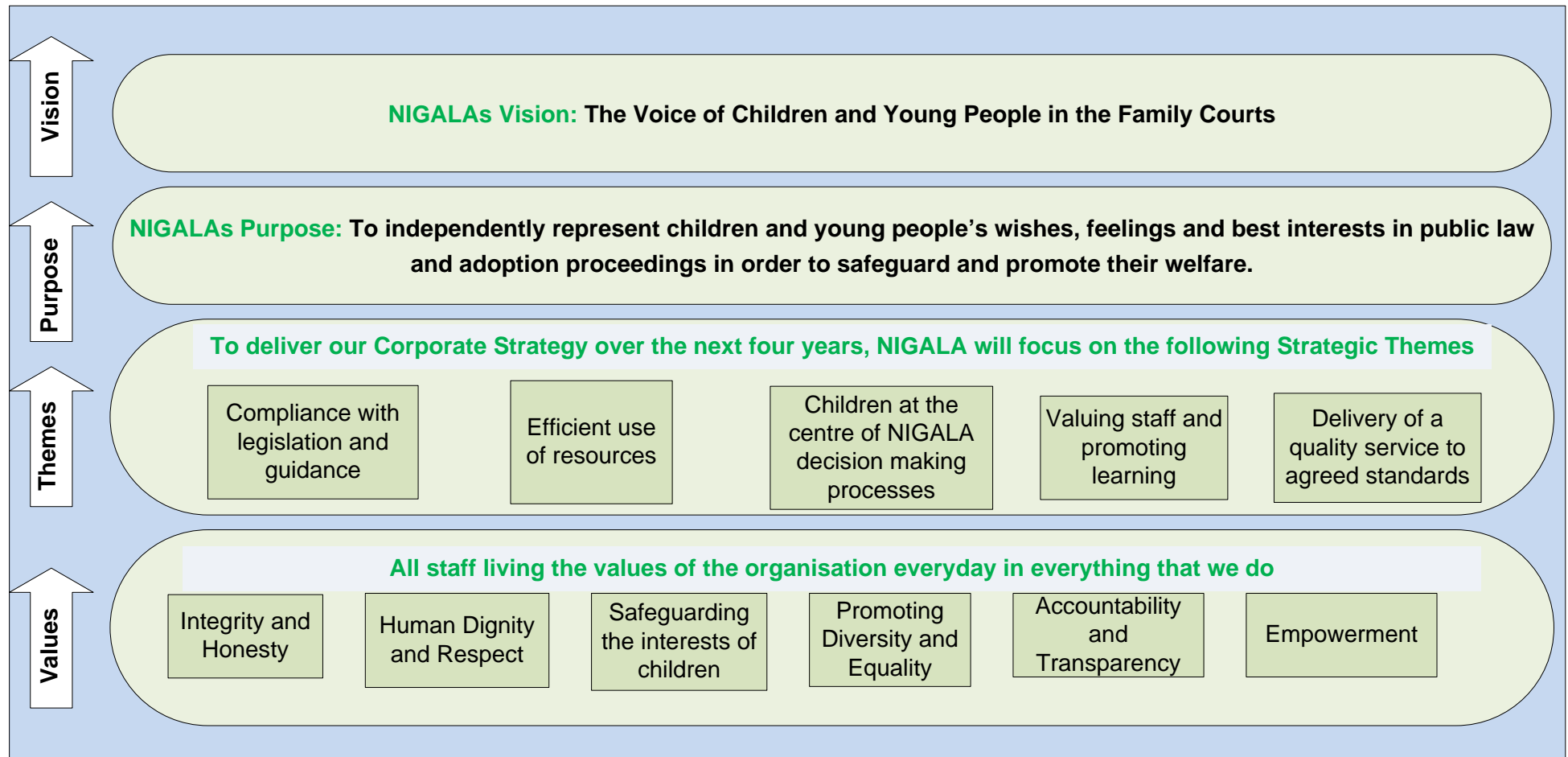
<b>OUR VISION</b>	The Voice for Children and Young People in Family Courts.
<b>OUR PURPOSE</b>	To independently represent children and young people's wishes, feelings and best interests in public law and adoption proceedings in order to safeguard and promote their welfare.
<b>OUR VALUES</b>	<p>NIGALA has a shared set of values that define our culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding the interests of children</li> <li>• Human Dignity and Respect</li> <li>• Promoting Diversity and Equality</li> <li>• Integrity and Honesty</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Accountability and Transparency</li> </ul>

These come together in NIGALA's Strategic and Culture Map which sets out the behaviours that are expected when employees are living our values in their everyday work.



## 2.2 NIGALA's Strategic Map

The development of the NIGALA strategic map below which connects our vision, values and purpose to the strategic themes has been informed by engagement with our users and stakeholders and staff having the opportunity to review and oversee its development.



## 2.3 Our Board and Executive Team

<u>BOARD MEMBERS</u>	<u>EXECUTIVE TEAM</u>
<p>Mr Bernard Mitchell (Chair)            Mr David Watters (Non-Executive Director)            Mr Fred Smyth (Non-Executive Director)            Mrs Gillian McGaughey (Non-Executive Director)            Dr Karen Winter (Non-Executive Director)            Mr Peter Reynolds (Chief Executive)</p>	<p>Mr Peter Reynolds (Chief Executive)            Mr Declan McAllister (Corporate Services Manager)            Miss Patricia O’Kane (Assistant Director)            Ms Teresa Fallon (Assistant Director)            Mr John Sheldon (Quality Assurance &amp; Training Manager)</p>
<p><b>The Executive Team are in attendance at all Board meetings.</b></p>	

### **Principles of Good Governance adopted by the NIGALA Board:**

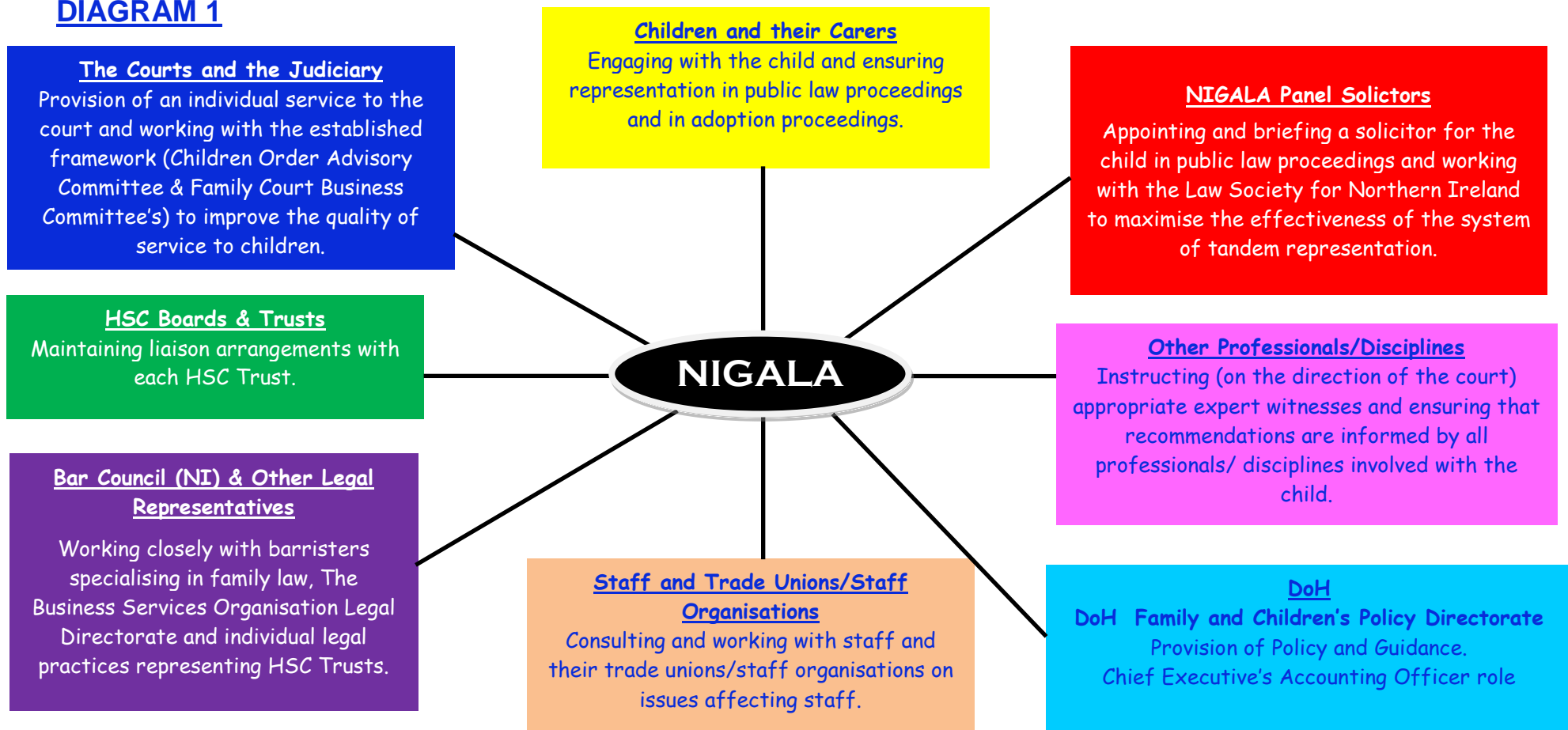
1. Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real.
2. Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles.
3. Promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating good governance through behaviour.
4. Focusing on the organisation’s purpose and outcomes for citizens and service users.
5. Developing the capacity and capability of the board to promote effective governance.
6. Taking informed, transparent decisions supported by robust financial controls and an effective risk management system.



## 2.4 Our Service Users and Stakeholders

The recipients, or users, of the Guardian ad Litem service are **the children** who are the subjects of proceedings and who are represented by our Guardian ad Litem workforce and **the courts** which appoint the Guardians ad Litem. Our main stakeholders are the carers of the children; Health & Social Care Trusts; the Northern Ireland Court Service; NIGALA Solicitor Panel Members, Family Law Barristers and the Department of Health (DoH). See Diagram 1 below.

### DIAGRAM 1





## DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN

### 3.1 How our Corporate Plan was developed

In September 2016, NIGALA conducted 6 workshop sessions with all staff based on a SWOT analysis approach to the future delivery of the Guardian ad Litem service in Northern Ireland at a time of increasing case load demand and continued financial austerity. We asked everyone to identify the key strengths and opportunities for NIGALA and in contrast agreed collectively the weaknesses and threats which have to be managed within this corporate plan period. Alongside the staff engagements workshops NIGALA has stakeholder engagement forums with the NIGALA Solicitor Panel, the Judiciary in particular the Head of the Family Court and with the HSC Trusts.

A follow up workshop with all staff and the NIGALA Board was conducted on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 where we profiled our SWOT analysis work. Staff groups provided feedback under each of the strategic themed areas on what priorities should be identified for delivery within the 1 year business plan and what should be included within a higher level four year plan.

An engagement workshop with the DoH Sponsoring unit took place with the NIGALA Board and SMT on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 where a review of strategic directives was discussed alongside the strategic themes within the NIGALA Corporate and Business Plan. A final workshop with the Board and SMT was completed on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017 where a final draft plan was reviewed for delivery to the DoH.

### 3.2 NIGALA's Priorities under each Strategic Theme

Under the five strategic themes in our strategy map at section 2.2 and based on what you told us, NIGALA will focus on the following priorities.



## **Putting Children at the Centre of NIGALA Decision Making**

### ***Strategic Priorities – NIGALA as an Enabler***

- NIGALA has a unique role in representing the voice of the children in adoption/specified proceedings;
- NIGALA captures children’s feedback to inform performance and shape practice through the use of feedback and children/young person’s participation;
- NIGALA will participate and respond innovatively to any reform legislation in Health and Social Care and the Administration of Justice;
- NIGALA will inform and influence Policy through research, consultation and evaluation;
- NIGALA will proactively develop positive/co-production working relationships with other partner organisations.

### **Objectives – 2017/18**

- Promote the use of the co-designed practitioner resources for engagement with children and young people into the work of Guardians ad Litem;
- Develop practice models/frameworks/ tools and materials to strengthen the effectiveness and the impact of the Guardian in promoting a stronger voice for children and young people in the Family Courts ;
- Review the mechanisms for children’s feedback and participation - in line with delivering a service where children and young people feel they have been treated with respect, listened to and supported;
- Design a Pilot project with children and young people to develop a Children and Young Person’s Forum as a means of involving children and young people in NIGALA decision making;



## **Objectives – Longer Term**

- Develop an innovative and interactive on line application based means of feedback;
- Engage with local and regional services and stakeholders in order to co-produce and co design improved services for and with children and young people who are service users.

## **Outcomes – What we expect to see**

- Increased level of participation of children in decision making within NIGALA
- Increased level of children’s and young people’s views being incorporated into practice and policy developments in NIGALA
- A functioning Children’s forum which has met on at least two occasions and produced a number of key outputs which have improved service delivery within NIGALA

## **Efficient Use of NIGALA’s Resources**

### ***Strategic Priorities – NIGALA as an Enabler***

- Reconfiguration and review of the NIGALA structure to protect front line staff and support future sustainable service delivery.
- Continue to deliver savings including the annual review of estate assets and where possible identify other sources of funding including income generation;
- Enhance information Governance Systems and Frameworks to ensure the secure access, sharing and management of children’s information which supports decision making;



### **Objectives – 2017/18**

- Complete the work into a review of the NIGALA workforce to provide an efficient and fit for purpose structure to deliver the service;
- Integration of the less paper working strategy supported by information management skills development, digital development, training and support;

### **Objectives – Longer Term**

- Implementation of the workforce plan in line with the mission and values of the organisation to ensure a sustainable guardian ad litem service working to maintain a relevant and flexible organisation responding to the needs of looked after children
- To have NIGALA recognised as a key source of regional information in children's services within family court processes which would inform long term policy and strategy;
- NIGALA staff appropriately skilled to interface with the e-courts strategy and HSC Trust ICT developments;

### **Outcomes – What we expect to see**

- A sustainable organisational structure providing quality service delivery and direct facilitation and support to all staff
- A highly skilled workforce able to react quickly to changing modes of service delivery.



- An organisation which continues to manage personal sensitive information about children and families in line with the Data Protection Act

## **Valuing Staff and Promoting Learning**

### ***Strategic Priorities – NIGALA as an Enabler***

- Promote and enhance current partnership working arrangements and critically review opportunities for sharing ideas and thinking about children and families
- Promote a positive culture and climate throughout the Agency with regard to working relationships and as a regional organisation, increase influence to promote shared - multidisciplinary training
- Promote the role of all staff to act as ambassadors for the organisation, who respect each other in challenging and difficult situations, who promote peer learning and capacity building and who prioritise improvement', 'co-production' and 'better outcomes for children';

### **Objectives – 2017/18**

- Develop and strengthen our management and leadership capacity, promoting trust and stability throughout the organisation through the delivery of the Culture & Climate Survey and Investors in People Action Plan;
- Develop our internal communication and engagement systems and processes between the Board, Management and Staff so that there is clear understanding of the respective roles; communication and engagement in achievement of the NIGALA priorities;



- Deliver a comprehensive training programme which disseminates the learning from our activities and research which informs our continuous professional development framework leading to better outcomes for children.
- Establish a regional legal issues forum to ensure mechanisms for knowledge exchange;

### **Objectives – Longer Term**

- Develop a competency framework for the organisation which links behaviours directly to individual roles;
- Delivery of a professional training programme aligned to the competencies within the guardian ad litem role

### **Outcomes – What we expect to see**

- An increased level of influence by NIGALA into training, development and resource planning across the region
- An increase in NIGALA's reputation as an employer of choice and providing a wealth of expertise in the area of representation of children in the family courts.



## **Delivery of a Quality Service to agreed standards**

### ***Strategic Priorities – NIGALA as an Enabler***

- Develop a culture of High Performance, Quality Improvement and partnership working underpinned by a new approach to collective and system leadership leading to better outcomes for children;
- Strengthen our focus on quality improvement through developing new mechanisms for staff supervision and peer review;
- Develop mechanisms for greater dissemination of information to staff, focusing on demand, performance and meeting KPIs;
- Work towards a more effective system of regional specialist services, operationally and strategically and improving access;

### **Objectives – 2017/18**

- Strengthen our links and develop opportunities for co-production with HSC organisations, Court services, Judiciary, Solicitors and the voluntary sector via COAC, solicitors, strategy for LAC to include the provision of capacity for measuring regional performance and outcomes;
- Ensure the delivery of all actions to support the annual quality review process in conjunction with all other relevant HSC Organisations specifically directed to the representation of Children in the family court;
- Develop staff skills in group supervision, risk sharing, peer review, reflective practice, critical challenge and professional support;
- Develop awareness and engagement within the Social work strategy for all Guardian ad Litem staff;
- Devise a schedule of professional audits in line with the revised Quality Assurance Plan.



## Objectives – Longer Term

- Regional Recognition for innovation and achievement by NIGALA;
- Continue to carry out the professional audits in line with the 4 year audit plan.

## Outcomes – What we expect to see

- An increase in quality assurance mechanisms which informs the development in practice leading to improvements in service delivery.
- An increase in co-produced practice developments across the family law service

## Compliance with Legislation and Guidance

### *Strategic Priorities – NIGALA as an Enabler*

- As a regional organisation NIGALA will facilitate data sharing and knowledge exchange to inform and influence strategic planning and service development initiatives in respect of LAC and family and childcare.
- Work collaboratively with HSCTs, Courts, Judiciary and relevant stakeholders to achieve timely proceedings and secure outcomes relative to children and young people's time-lines and assessed needs.
- Ensure that NIGALA has the necessary links and influence in promoting the voice of the child and young person through key Government initiatives such as the Programme for Government and LAC Strategy.





- Ensure that compliance with all statutory obligations i.e. PPI, Equality, Quality is aligned to the Agency's vision and purpose and supported by relevant staff engagement and awareness raising inputs.
- As a regional organisation/service increase the opportunities to promote NIGALA's position on key practice issues through our interfaces with stakeholders i.e. NIGALA Solicitor Panel;

### **Objectives – 2017/18**

- Engage collaboratively with key stakeholders in legislative and strategic consultation exercises and service development initiatives
- Promote staff involvement in relevant consultations and co-design awareness raising sessions/dissemination of information

### **Objectives – Longer Term**

- NIGALA is actively involved in relevant regional fora related to practice developments, guidance and legislation within child and family care ;

### **Outcomes – What we expect to see**

- NIGALA recognised as having relevance and influence informing legislative and practice initiatives in family and childcare
- NIGALA positioned as a regional organisation at the interface of socio-legal practice with capacity to inform strategic change aligned to DOH initiatives i.e. Programme for Government, LAC Strategy and Adoption and Children legislation



## Delivering the Corporate Plan

### 4.1 Infrastructure and Leadership

To support the delivery of this Corporate Plan over the next four years, NIGALA will ensure it has the right infrastructure and leadership in place in the following areas –

- People
- Resources
- Governance
- Quality
- Systems

#### **People**

*NIGALA will ensure it is an employer of choice, and will employ, develop and retain hard working skilled staff who are committed to delivering quality services.*

#### **Resources**

*NIGALA will deploy its resources within robust and accountable governance frameworks to ensure it delivers value for money, achieves financial breakeven within DoH guidelines and is capable of delivering its commitments over the next 4 years.*



### **Governance**

*NIGALA will deliver all its business against good governance best practice to meet its statutory, legal and professional obligations to ensure it provides safe and effective representation of children and young people in the family courts.*

### **Quality**

*NIGALA will develop and demonstrate a strong position on quality improvement through the Quality 2020 Attributes Framework to ensure quality improvement is fully integrated in all aspects of its business.*

### **Systems**

*NIGALA will make better use of technology to develop and invigorate systems, including IT systems that are focused on those who use its services and can enable staff to focus on front line services.*

## **4.2 Governance and Accountability**

In the period 2017 – 2018, NIGALA looks forward to working with the DoH within the context of its Assurance and Accountability Framework in order to contribute towards the achievement of the NI Executive's Programme for Government.

There will be regular monitoring of this strategy at the Executive Team and Board levels, however success of this strategy is dependent on:

- The retention and recruitment of skilled and dedicated staff providing a high quality service to children
- The annual review of savings and efficiency and the availability of adequate funding



- Continual engagement with users and stakeholders in the shaping of the NIGALA service
- The oversight and monitoring of robust performance data to ensure fairness and equity of workload

Should there be a shortfall in resources, the implementation of this strategy will be adjusted accordingly as part of the annual delivery of the business plan to the DoH for their review. Each year NIGALA will develop an annual business plan which encompasses a set of robust and measureable objectives that support the delivery of the five strategic themes. Performance against these objectives will be monitored, every six months by the NIGALA board and reported to the DoH.



## NIGALA's Business Plan 2017/18

### 5.1 Assumptions for the Business Plan 2017-2018

The following planning assumptions have been developed in consultation with the NIGALA staff group, Management Team and Board and reflect the forecasted outlook for the Guardian ad Litem service during 2017/18.

- ✚ The status of NIGALA to remain as a Special Agency of the DoH
- ✚ The Agency will retain functional responsibility in the areas of public law and adoption
- ✚ The number of new Guardian ad Litem appointments directed by the family courts will continue to rise in 2017-18 based on increasing trends over the last 3 years. A forecasted figure for new appointments has been set at 787 appointments
- ✚ NIGALA will be allocated a revenue resource limit to maintain its services at the current level of performance and quality



## 5.2 Key Performance Indicators for 2017-2018

4.5%	Definitions	Target
<b>KPI 1: Case Load Productivity</b>	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 2016-2017	Average of 11 'live' cases per wte gal
<b>KPI 2a: Allocation of Secure Accommodation Cases</b>	95% of Secure Accommodation cases allocated within 8 working days following court request	95%
<b>KPI 2b; Allocation of Emergency Protection Cases</b>	95% of Emergency Protection Order cases allocated within 3 working days following court request	95%
<b>KPI 2c: Allocation of Care Proceedings Cases</b>	80% of all Care <sup>3</sup> Type cases allocated within 8 working days of court request	80%
<b>KPI 3: Allocation of Adoption Cases</b>	90% of Case appointments by work day 8 following court request	90%
<b>KPI 4: Children Satisfaction Rating</b>	75% of responses to our survey <sup>4</sup> from children (8 yrs +) by means of paper questionnaire or Viewpoint to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	75%
<b>KPI 5: Judiciary Satisfaction Rating</b>	75% of responses to our survey from the judiciary to give a satisfaction rating of 'good' or 'excellent'	75%
<b>KPI 6: Positive Solicitor Feedback through Reciprocal Feedback at Case Closure</b>	80% of Solicitors provided positive evaluation of the Guardian's role linked to expectations informed by "The Protocol for the Working Relationship Between NIGALA Panel Solicitors and Guardians ad Litem" (December 2015 – 2020)	80%

<sup>3</sup> Care type cases include Article 56 investigations, Contact, Supervision and Care applications.

<sup>4</sup> Survey in part conducted by NIGALA and by the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) on behalf of NIGALA.



<b>KPI 7: Corporate Appraisals</b>	90% of appraisals as required under Agenda for Change completed for all eligible staff	90%
<b>KPI 8: Financial Breakeven</b>	NIGALA achieves a financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20,000 (whichever is the greater) of revenue allocation for 2017/18	0.25% or £20,000
<b>KPI 9: Absence</b>	NIGALA absence target set at 4.5%	4.5%

In addition to the key performance indicators the NIGALA Board has instigated a schedule of reports to cover performance in a range of additional business areas

### **5.3 NIGALA's Objectives for 2017/18**

The NIGALA operational objectives to support the delivery of the five strategy themes in 2017/18 are categorised under each of the theme headings.



## CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE OF THE NIGALA DECISION MAKING PROCESS

NIGALA recognises the significant role of PPI in our service. In 2017 – 2018 NIGALA will be incorporating measures to embed a culture where PPI can be further developed and promoted, as well as contribute to informing policy and practice through a programme of engagement with users and stakeholders.

Operational Objectives/Priorities	Deliverables/Targets	Target Date	Whom [grade]	Co-Production Initiatives to achieve targets
1. Develop mechanisms/opportunities for children and young people to be at the centre of NIGALA decision making.	1. Implement practitioner's resources for guardians which are co-designed by children and young people in order to promote children's and young people's participation in the court process. ;	March 2018	AD_PPI	Co-produce design and delivery of the Pilot with children and young people , NICCY , Local Courts service VOYPIC
	2. Co Design a pilot NIGALA Children's Forum with children and young people with an action plan of work approved by the SCG.	July 2017	AD_PPI	







## EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES

In a time of increasing financial austerity it is important that NIGALA ensures its budget is spent efficiently and effectively to support the delivery of the objectives in this business plan. Work will continue to review any savings measures that can be highlighted during 2017/18 and the continuous improvement in efficiency through innovation and engagement with staff.

Objectives	Deliverables/Targets	Target Date	Whom [grade]	Co-Production Initiatives to achieve targets
3 Strengthen financial governance through the delivery of relevant assurance to the DoH and the achievement of key Departmental and Executive financial commitments/requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieve prompt payment of invoices within the statutory targets for 30 days and 10 days approved by the Board</li> <li>2. Achieve a financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is the greater) of revenue allocation by March 2018</li> <li>3. Annual Report and Accounts for 2016/17 to be certified by the C&amp;AG and laid in the Assembly before the 2017 summer recess</li> </ol>	<p>March 2018</p> <p>March 2018</p> <p>August 2017</p>	CSM	Work completed in conjunction with BSO Finance under service level agreement
4 Ensure regular monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness to highlight financial pressures and savings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Complete an annual savings plan for Board approval in line with DoH guidance</li> <li>5. Provide quarterly updates on the savings plan implementation for Board approval</li> </ol>	November 2017	CSM	Work completed in conjunction with BSO Finance under service level agreement and approval from SMT.



<p>5 Review NIGALA structures for the sustainable delivery of a managed service to ensure continuous improvement in performance and the quality of our work</p>	<p>6. NIGALA Structure plan consulted upon with staff and the trade unions and approved by the NIGALA Board for Implementation</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	<p>CEO and CSM</p>	<p>Work completed in conjunction with BSO HR, Staff and Trade Unions</p>
<p>6 Strengthen the delivery of efficient information management within NIGALA in accordance with recommendations from the External IG Review and ICO for 2016/17;</p>	<p>7. Delivery of the Information Governance Action plan with progress reported quarterly to the Information Governance Committee</p>	<p>May 2017        August 2017        November 2017        February 2018</p>	<p>CSM</p>	<p>Work completed in conjunction with SMT and Staff</p>
<p>7 NIGALA will continue to work towards the objectives of the Executive approved Asset Management Strategy;        a) to reduce the net cost of service delivery through the efficient use of public assets and        b) to promote effective asset management processes that unlocks value</p>	<p>8. Prepare and delivery the Property Asset Management Plan for SMT approval and DoH review</p>	<p>June 2017</p>	<p>CSM</p>	<p>Work completed in conjunction with BSO and SMT.</p>



## VALUING STAFF AND PROMOTING LEARNING

NIGALA recognises that its staff are its greatest resource and the promotion of a fair, equitable, safe working environment where all staff are treated with respect and dignity is paramount in ensuring the delivery of individual objectives which support the achievement of the organisation’s annual objectives. The Agency is committed to encouraging the professional development of all staff by promoting a culture of learning linked to its overall mission statement, directly related to the achievement of its objectives and relevant to the individual’s present or foreseeable work responsibilities.

Objectives	Deliverables/Targets	Target Date	Whom [grade]	Co-Production Initiatives to achieve targets
8 Continue to promote a positive culture and climate throughout the Agency with regard to the management of staff views, workload pressures and working relationships.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to implement the action plan of the Culture and Climate Survey with monthly final update approved by the Board.</li> <li>Integrate all follow up actions into the Culture and Climate Survey and IIP action plan from all additional audit work completed during 2017</li> </ol>	<p>July 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>QA&amp;TM</p>	<p>Working with staff to develop a Communication Strategy and Staff Forum</p> <p>Benchmarking with other liP high performing organisations such as <i>Inspire</i></p> <p>Liaison with SCG Forum, all staff and Solicitor Panel.</p> <p>Social Work Strategy</p>



<p>9 Establish a regional legal issues forum to ensure mechanisms for knowledge exchange</p>	<p>3. Terms of reference and action plan for the group approved by SMT</p>	<p>December 2017</p>	<p>QA&amp;TM &amp; CEO</p>	<p>Social Work Strategy</p>
<p>10 Prepare a comprehensive annual training programme which is aligned to the core competencies of the guardian whilst meeting the needs of the whole NIGALA workforce. The programme will continue to develop peer learning by way of utilising the skills of the staff group via events such as skills sharing.</p>	<p>4. A comprehensive Training programme aligned to the competencies of the Guardian ad Litem role and compliant with NISSC guidelines; approved by SMT</p>	<p>May 2017</p>	<p>QA&amp;TM</p>	<p>Liaison with SCG Forum, all staff and Solicitor Panel.</p>



## DELIVERY OF A QUALITY SERVICE

In line with the HSC Quality 2020 agenda NIGALA will ensure the delivery of its service is in line with quality standards and its duty of quality.

Objectives	Deliverables/Targets	Target Date	Whom [grade]	Co-Production Initiatives to achieve targets
11 Enhance the effectiveness of communication and engagement with key stakeholders by establishing working arrangements using a ' <i>Local Engagement Partnership</i> ' Framework to achieve results linked to- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-production;</li> <li>• Improvement;</li> <li>• An outcomes focus;</li> <li>• Leadership.</li> </ul>	1. NIGALA Solicitor Panel to provide a minimum of two joint training events per year	March 2018	QA&TM, AD_Adopt	Social Work Strategy, CAFCASS, Legal Issues Workstream, Judiciary (Trust)
	2. Devise an SMT approved protocol with Trusts for improved communication/liaison arrangements	March 2018	CEO, AD_PPI	
	3. Develop liaison arrangements with CAFCASS in line with an SMT approved 'Partners in Practice' contract;	October 2017	CEO, AD_PPI	
	4. Continue liaison arrangements with the Judiciary to ensure a minimum of one meeting a year with agreed actions and outcomes reviewed by SMT.	October 2017	CEO	



<p>12 Develop the existing mechanisms of professional peer support through the introduction of new supervision and appraisal arrangements</p>	<p>5. Provide an implementation progress report to SMT on the training for guardians on how to be a facilitator in group supervision</p> <p>6. Provide a progress report on the new supervision arrangements to SMT for approval.</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>December 2017</p>	<p>QA&amp;TM</p> <p>AD_Adopt</p>	<p>NIGALA SMT working in partnership with guardians ad litem</p>
<p>13 In line with the Reviewed NIGALA Professional Standards and the revised Quality Assurance Plan, devise a schedule of professional audits</p>	<p>7. Complete a minimum of two audits per year with a final report approved by SMT and an Executive response to audit findings approved by SCG</p>	<p>June 2017</p>	<p>QA&amp;TM</p>	<p>NIGALA SMT working in partnership with guardians ad litem</p>



## COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

In a time of increasing financial austerity it is important that NIGALA ensures it meets its basis statutory obligations for service delivery and compliance to all relevant governance responsibilities which it is obligated to achieve.

Objectives	Deliverables/Targets	Target Date	Whom [grade]	Co-Production Initiatives to achieve targets
14 Ensure that compliance with all statutory obligations i.e. PPI, Equality, Quality is supported by relevant staff engagement and awareness raising inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure the screening of all policies and practice initiatives for equality and PPI implications to meet compliance with legislation;</li> <li>2. Put in place staff engagement mechanisms where relevant to ensure the efficient dissemination of relevant information and updates;</li> </ol>	<p>March 2018</p> <p>April 2017</p>	<p>AD_Adopt</p> <p>AD_Adopt &amp; QA&amp;TM</p>	Equality, PPI and Quality leads
15 Establish a working group to: disseminate information in respect of the draft Adoption and Children legislation and submit an Agency response to the consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Complete the Executive Response to DOH consultation on the Adoption and Children (NI) Bill approved by SMT and the SCG Committee.</li> </ol>	April 2017	AD_Adopt	AD and Guardians





16 Utilise the Guardian/Solicitor Reference Group as a mechanism for information sharing and knowledge exchange in respect of relevant legislation and practice initiatives	4. Provide an SMT approved progress report on the work of the group following each meeting.	June, September, December 2017 and March 2018	AD_Adopt	AD, QA&TM, Guardian and Solicitor Representatives
	5. Put in place an SMT approved joint training programme and circulate all relevant information generated within the Reference Group to Guardians and Solicitors	September 2017	AD_Adopt	

