



## Extraordinary General Meeting

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Monday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023  
Virtual Platform  
MINUTES

### **WELCOME**

Mary Jordan, National Chairperson, opened the meeting at 20.05pm. Mary thanked everyone for attending.

Mary explained that the reason the EGM had been called is to formally adopt the new Article of Association. The Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) has approved the changes that we were required to make. This would then be followed by an update on the recent PDC poll and a discussion about the proposed CEO role.

### **APOLOGIES and CORRESPONDENCE**

Apologies received from Liz Given, Wicklow branch and Claire Nee, Midland's branch.

Correspondence received from the Mayo branch in regards to the items on tonight's agenda. This will be discussed in full during the meeting.

### **IGPNEA EGM MOTION**

An overview of the NEC Motion was given by Mary Jordan.

The NEC proposes that the new Articles of Association emailed to all members prior to this AGM be formally adopted.

### **N.E.C. Motion No. 1 Motion Rationale**

Each time we change our Articles of Association we are required to submit a copy to the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) for approval. After the AGM in 2022 we submitted the changes for the Motions passed. The CRA rejected the submissions based on the following:

*" Thank you for taking my call, I confirm that the constitution cannot be approved in its current format, due to the issues outlined to you in our call. In this regard I would draw your attention in particular to the two conflicting clauses, clause 8 and 17 in relation to 8. ADDITIONS, ALTERATIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO THE MEMORANDUM OF THE ASSOCIATION.*

*I will be sending a copy of our 'Model Constitution (Rules) for Unincorporated Entities' to you through your email, admin@irishpracticenurses.ie which I strongly advise you look at and consider using to replace the governing document you have in place.*

*I note you are in the processing of drafting a new constitution and ask that you submit a new form when it is completed in the new year. "*

Upon receipt of this the NEC Officers worked with the NEC Reps to translate our existing Articles into the template sent by the CRA. The NEC Reps approved the final version earlier this year. This was then submitted to the CRA.

The CRA asked for a few minor additional changes once the new Articles were submitted. These changes were made.

They have now approved this version; however, the CRA requires minutes from an EGM where these have been formally adopted by the Association.

No Articles have been changed in this process; therefore, no rules of the Association have changed. This is purely a change of the format of the document.

A full copy of the new Articles of Association was sent to all members of IGPNEA prior to the EGM.

The Motion was proposed by Patricia Leonard and seconded by Roisin Doogue.

A POLL WAS TAKEN AND THE EGM MOTION WAS PASSED BY 100 %

Poll question: Do you agree to adopt the new Articles of Association. Yes/No

## **PDC VOTE**

### **PDC Membership Vote Rationale**

Following on from the motion at the AGM in October 2022 regarding PDC membership of the Association only 2 of the 4 PDCs in post are currently members.

It was discussed at previous NEC REPs meetings that the Association should adopt a policy that all PDC's be members of the Association, or none be members.

It was collectively agreed that the PDCs are valuable in providing education and information for our GPN role, but removing them as IGPNEA members, should not have any repercussions as their role is a HSE role and they provide the same information and education to IGPNEA and non IGPNEA members.

The PDCs will still have full access to write in and update members via our journal.

No one will miss out on information from the PDCs. The Association will continue to lobby for the filling of vacant PDC posts where they are viewed as invaluable to support GPNs and that areas without a current PDC are discriminated against.

All members of the Association have the opportunity to determine how we proceed.

The Poll was run on the IGPNEA website, from 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May.

Poll question: Do you agree that ALL PDC's are members of the Association, or none are members, should we adopt an 'all or all out' policy?

Yes, we should have an 'all or none' policy on PDC membership/No, we should not have an 'all in

or none' policy on PDC membership.

The results of the vote were shared with all members via our messaging platform on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May.

The original vote was 119 NO, 93 Yes.

Two members contacted admin to inform them that they had voted yes incorrectly and wanted to vote no. Therefore the final vote is 121 NO, 91 Yes.

Mary informed that the majority had voted no, we do not adopt an 'all or none' policy and this provides clarity on the issue. Mary thanked everyone for taking the time to vote.

### **NEW PDC**

Mary added that the next part of the EGM is to discuss the PDCs, although an addition has been made to the slides due to a situation in CH07 that the PDC's have asked to be shared.

*Dear colleagues,*

*Can I ask that you circulate the following information to GP Nursing colleagues in CHO 7 please?*

*As you all know our colleague Rita Lawlor retired from her PDC post in CHO7 last year. We (the PDC group) have been in regular contact with the Head of Primary care in that area advocating for her post to be filled.*

*We have been made aware in the past fortnight that a PDC for GPNs has been inserted into the post from another service. As no open competition has taken place and the position has been filled by someone with no GP Nursing experience the matter has been referred to the INMO. As such we may not currently support or engage with the post holder.*

*You are as always welcome to call or email any PDC for information or support should you need the same. If the situation changes, we will let you know.*

*Kind regards,*

*Marie Cantwell*

Mary explained that this now means IGPNEA has a situation that a new PDC has been employed by the HSE. They now have a right to be an IGPNEA member because of their post, even though they have no General Practice background and their fellow PDC colleagues do not want to engage with them until the issue has been resolved via INMO.

### **CORRESPONDENCE FROM MAYO BRANCH**

All branches were invited to submit observations, questions, comments, suggestions for discussion at this meeting. One branch made a submission. Mary thanked the branch for the submission and taking the time to meet as a branch to discuss this.

Mary read out the correspondence in full and then went back over the points with responses.

(Mayo's observations in black, Mary's responses in red).

### **Observations**

1 Timing of EGM is unsuitable when most branches may have finished their meetings for the summer break. *EMG Emergency General Meeting. CRA requested the meeting to adopt the changes to our Articles. Having already incurred the wrath and attention of the CRA due to a previous issue we felt it important to comply with their request. We feel we voted on this at the AGM and wonder why we need a Poll vote now. You are confusing the purpose of the EGM. The EGM is required to adopt the Articles amendments from Oct 2022 and at the request of the CRA. The results of the poll will be discussed at the EGM on the 29th May'. To disseminate the result to the members - it is usual practice everywhere to feed back the results of a poll.*

2 What is the official position of IGPNEA on the purpose of Polls? Does the association propose that they facilitate a full and frank discussion of the issues at hand? *Due to the record low numbers of members who attend AGM it is seen as a better way to engage discussion on matters for the Association. Just like Mayo branch has done right now. You give a great example about the name change to IGPNEA.*

3 Members expressed confusion & dissatisfaction regarding the wording & clarity of what was proposed in the PDC 'poll' *The question was asked clearly and concisely.*

### **PDC**

#### **Question for EGM**

1 Why was there no reply given to an email sent by a PDC to NEC in April 2023, inviting discussion of their membership of the IGPNEA? *No reply could be made without prior consultation with the members to ascertain their view on the matter. Hence it being placed on the agenda for an NEC REPs meeting, to then be fed back to the branch members for discussion. Done in the interest of transparency. Otherwise members would complain that they were not consulted on the response.*

2 How is the option for membership of IGPNEA available to PDCs causing harm to our association? *This is an Association of general practice nurses. PDCs are not general practice nurses. They are HSE employees. They should not have access to the internal workings of the Association. They certainly should not be sharing information gained by being members of this Association with others who are not members of this Association.*

3 Does the NEC *this is not an NEC policy, full open discussion was undertaken by NEC in conjunction with the branch REPs* foresee that any of the other eligible categories of membership may potentially have to adopt an 'all or none policy' to membership? Are we setting a dangerous, discriminatory *the only discrimination being undertaken here is against those GPNs who do not have a HSE employed PDC in their area* precedent to selected members who are legally part of our association and protected by our articles of association?

### **Conclusion of discussion**

*Our members have expressed overwhelming support that our PDC's must continue to have the option to be members of IGPNEA. I agree. This was already decided upon at the last AGM. The issue is some PDCs are members and some are not. One has made it clear that they will never be a member. But all have access to the workings/information of the Association. That is the issue. A PDC is a HSE employee for the purpose of coordinating professional development of **ALL** GPNs, not just those members of the IGPNEA. Your support of a PDC is not dependent upon them being members of the Association. Your support does depend on there being a PDC in place in your area.*

*'It was collectively agreed that the PDCs are valuable in providing education and information for our GPN role. Our local PDC is a valued member of our branch, contributing & engaging in meetings **are you saying that PDCs use branch meetings to disseminate their information and carry out their role as PDCs? They are using IGPNEA branch funds to do their HSE work?,** listening to concerns, problem solving, **that is what they are paid to do as a PDC** and helping in the organisation of our conferences.**What help does your PDC give in organising an IGPNEA conference?** Our PDC suggested that the networking and personal contacts established through branch membership helped them carry out their role more effectively. **Exactly. Doing HSE work at IGPNEA expense** These "Grassroots" contacts ensure PDC's are familiar with the current concerns of GPNs and enable PDC advocacy on behalf of GPNs. We have had nothing but positive experiences over many years of PDCs as members of our branch." **How do they engage with non IGPNEA GPNs? At whose expense do they engage with those GPNs ?***

### **Some comments from our members over the past few days**

*- 'Can't believe we have to have a conversation about this' - 'Hard to believe we are to vote on this issue, thank you to our PDC for attending our meetings and for all the wonderful*

*supports/knowledge you share which is really appreciated' - 'Thank you so much, much appreciated' - 'Thanks so much for all you do'*

*- 'We need our PDC involved to help progress our roles, thank you for all your support, can't believe this is actually an issue' - 'Ridiculous to have a vote on this'*

*- 'I have relied on PDC support for the past 6 years, so grateful for all their support, new to the association' **That is what your PDC is employed to do. Membership of the Association is not required to carry out their role. No wonder the HSE / DOH have so little respect for GPNs.***

*- 'Reluctantly will vote'*

*- 'Very grateful for the support you provide'*

*- 'Thank you PDC's are a great support'*

*- 'You cannot force someone to join an association' **The PDCs fought to retain membership of***

*the Association. The question you should be asking is “why are they not all members?”*

*- ‘Don’t know if I will renew my IGPNEA membership’ you will still have access to the support of your PDC whether you are a member of the Association or not.*

### **CEO POSITION**

***The Mayo branch welcomes discussion on supporting the development of our association, Some of our concerns & questions are outlined below.***

*1 What has been the NEC assessment on the pros and cons of employing a CEO during their discussions prior to proposing the employment of the CEO? Your NEC REP would have fed back to each branch the discussions. Minutes of all NEC REPs meetings are published on our website and available to all members to view.*

*2 Are IGPNEA in a financial position to hire someone, has there been an expert financial analysis of the costing? & Where will the funds come from? These are the items to be discussed. No work could be undertaken on the feasibility of creating the role of CEO until the majority of the membership voted in favour of establishing the role. That is what this meeting is about; to discuss these issues.*

*3 Can the NEC make available a detailed breakdown of the current IGPNEA financial situation, in particular with regard to the administrative costs for the association. This is necessary for members to fully examine the costs involved, what’s available, to make an informed decision. These figures are published in the Annual Report each year, which is available on our website. A financial overview is presented at each quarterly NEC REPs meeting, a copy of which is sent to each branch REP to share with their branch members immediately after the meeting. There is no secrecy here. There is no lack of transparency. Our annual report is also published on the CRA website every year to comply with our status as a charitable Association. You have always had access to this information.*

*4 What impacts will employing a CEO have on our other employees, their hours of work and responsibilities? To be discussed at this meeting and any other meeting that will be needed on this matter. The role of CEO has not been approved yet. The establishment of the role has been voted for in the majority but no decision has been made on the role as of yet. That is why meetings like this are being held.*

*4 Will membership fees be increased? To be discussed at this meeting and any other meeting that will be needed on this matter. The role of CEO has not been approved yet. The establishment of the role has been voted for in the majority but no decision has been made on the role as of yet. That is why meetings like this are being held. €78 membership is the current fee. €25 of which goes back to each branch to fund meetings, education etc. THE HSE makes use of this money by allowing PDCs to use our branch meetings to carry out their role.*

*5 Have other options been discussed e.g. Would it be possible to expand the role of current administrators? You have used the word in the plural here. There is only one administrator. Option to expand their role to be discussed as an option like all other suggestions is open for discussion. Please bear in*

*mind that an administrator is not a GPN.*

*6 What will the role of the National Chairperson & NEC be if a CEO is appointed? As stated previously these roles will need to be reviewed. Will we still need members to volunteer for these positions? **Yes, they will still be required.** If there are no volunteers, will the association have to dissolve regardless of the CEO being in position? **Yes, it will.** But having a CEO in position carrying out the majority of the workload of running the day to day business of the Association will ease the burden placed upon an incoming chair or other NEC officer. Thus making it easier to continually fill the volunteer roles. For example - now that we have a centralised branch bank account the role of branch treasurer is much less daunting and it is easier to recruit a volunteer at branch level to take on the role.*

*Every year it is becoming more and more difficult to recruit a volunteer to NEC Officer positions. The Association has a membership of over 1000 now. Few branches are now facilitating branch education meetings on a regular basis. Most education is being delivered centrally and online, at the request of members. They do not have to leave their homes after a day's work. We all know how difficult it is to get members to turn up at branch meetings in person any more.*

*Sourcing and presenting and moderating these online educational meetings requires the input of a GPN to ensure that they are relevant.*

*Such is the success of the Association in recent years at increasing our visibility and representation with stakeholders that the demands upon a volunteer has grown exponentially. A consistent representation of our Association is required if we are to be taken seriously. The constant change of our representative is confusing to our partners. It is damaging to our Association.*

## **AOB**

**1. IGPNEA NAME** *This is a great example of why polls are a good idea when made open to all members to express their opinions. When the name change was proposed and voted upon only those who actually turned up to the meeting had their voices heard. Likewise at AGMs and EGMs. We are an Association who rely upon others to make decisions for the whole. This is something which the NEC have worked hard to reverse by having the option of a poll to invite participation of as many members as possible.*

*Many people are finding it extremely difficult to say our very long title IGPNEA would it be possible to consider reducing our title to IGPNA please **a difficult and long process was undertaken to change our name to IGPNEA.**(as we are all educated and are involved actively in attending educational meetings without having to mention this in our title). As poll voting is now being used within IGPNEA could a Poll voting system be used for a name change if the committee will consider? (as many members were not in attendance when the voting took place at the virtual AGM). Which is exactly why we opened polls so that all members can have their say and not just the few who turn up at AGM. Please submit a motion for October AGM 2023 regarding changing the name of the Association again where it will then be open for discussion and voting.*

## **2. Branch Education Champion Award (Loyalty Award)**

*Our branch found this new title very confusing. Members were unsure of who would have been suitable for nomination this year. Did a member have to be currently undertaking a third-degree level type of Education or have recently undertaken education. Just wondering when and why the title was changed please. **NO, you were to nominate a branch member who was a champion for education, someone who encouraged, facilitated, promoted education at branch level. For example who organises your branch meetings, who organises the meeting venue, the speakers, interacts with the sponsors, who shares their educational links with colleagues. Last year the award was criticised for being called a loyalty award. Prior to that it was criticised for being called Practice Nurse of the Year award and only awarded to one person when so many members support their branches with educational opportunities.***

## **3. Educational Research Bursary**

*When and why was the Educational Bursary format changed? Previously the successful researcher formally presented their research findings (usually within an allocated time of e.g. 15 minutes) during the IGPNEA annual conference. This has not been done since 2019. Formally presenting research during a national Conference is vital for sharing information and career progression. It is also a valuable learning experience for the membership & conference attendees. **My understanding is that previously the successful research award winner presented to the conference but was so drowned out by talking and noise by the attending delegates that it was moved to the gala dinner in 2019 in order to give it the respect that it deserves. There was no conference in 2020 or 2021. It was presented at the gala dinner in 2022 and again in 2023.***

*Thanking all the National Committee for their continued correspondence, ongoing education and support to all of our members.*

*Kind regards, Mayo Branch Committee*

## **CEO ROLE DISCUSSION**

### **CEO Role Rationale**

The day-to-day running of the Association is carried out by the NEC officers on a voluntary basis, in their own time. This work is augmented by the NEC REPs who also give of their time on a voluntary basis. The workload has increased enormously over recent years. This is due to the success of raising the profile and visibility of the Association. Our education offering has increased, and the time commitment given to sourcing and moderating the online education has also grown. Invitations to represent IGPNEA and be present at stakeholder meetings has increased. Involvement in Expert Advisory Groups (such as HIQA) on matters relating to general practice nursing has grown.

We are experiencing the benefits of this by seeing increased opportunities to accumulate evidence of undertaking our required CPD. We are also seeing the benefits with the introduction of funded, learning opportunities for GPNs that are relevant to GPNs. More and more of our



education is being delivered online at national level, at members' request, thus reducing the onus upon local branch committees to organise educational meetings.

The Association now has 1010 members. To properly represent the members requires commitment and time and energy. It has become increasingly difficult to find a member who is willing to take up the role of National Chair each year at AGM. Should all positions on the NEC not be filled each year the Association would have no option but to disband, as per the CRA and our Articles of Association (see Article 7.1) It is not feasible to continue to run the Association like this. Consistency and certainty are required. We can no longer expect a volunteer member to take annual leave from their paid employment to represent the Association with our stakeholders. We can no longer expect proper engagement with other stakeholders if our representative keeps changing. It takes time to build relationships and to be able to understand the needs of the Association to best represent our members.

Mary explained that the vote had previously taken place asking members if they agreed to the IGPNEA pursuing the idea of a paid CEO.

305 members voted; this is 30.5% of our membership.

292 voted in favour and 13 voted against.

The next step is to discuss and decide on the elements of the role. These are the areas that now need to be discussed:

- Job description
- CEO role to be defined
- Reporting structure
- New role description for National Chair
- New role description for administrator
- Hours required
- Rate of remuneration
- Funding of role
- Employment contract
- Interview panel – proposed 2 internal (NEC officer x 1 NEC REP x 1) and 2 external (HR x 1 Accountant x 1)
- Advertising of role must be on a public platform to comply with legislation.
- If any sitting NEC Officer or sitting NEC Rep are interested in the role, they will have to step down from their role prior to the role being advertised to avoid the accusation of gaining insider knowledge. They can have no access to information on other interested candidates.

## QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Mary invited anyone that would like to speak or make a comment to either raise their hand to speak or put the question in the chat function.

**Liz Kinane:** from what area of HSE has the new PDC come from? What is her/his prior experience? Do we even know this ??????

Mary explained that we do not know, the only thing we know is they are not a former GPN

**Jennifer Fitzgerald:** I feel there has been a little bit of scaremongering going on and people are afraid our PDC's are going to stop representing us. My opinion is that they are employed by the HSE, they are paid and supported by the HSE. To date the HSE have not even recognised practice nurses or the work we did during covid. We are all professionals and I value my PDC a lot, they have helped us all. But they are professionals, there should be no doubt that they will remain professional even when they are not members of the association. An NEC rep brought up an excellent point at the NEC meeting at the conference. We do not have people from CervicalCheck, NIAC, Diabetic Retinal Screening, etc. as members of the association. They are all separate stakeholders, and they work with us and for us. There should be no doubt that we will work with the PDC's, but we have worked hard to get our Association to where it is and I feel strongly that until the HSE start recognising us and supporting us with the same benefits as our HSE colleagues then we are entitled to have our association to ourselves and the membership should not be scare mongering people that they won't get the support they need.

Mary thanked Jennifer, nothing is going to change now as we have clarified the membership's views on this with a vote and the majority feel they should be members if they choose to.

**Orla Loftus Moran:** I feel we should support our PDC's in their opposition to the new appointee. We should await the outcome of their referral to the INMO.

Mary clarified, does Orla mean, if this new PDC makes an application to join the IGPNEA, should we allow them to be a member?

**Marie Cantwell:** informed that the new PDC for CH07 comes from a Public Health background. The matter has been referred to the INMO and as such we cannot comment further. Mary added that she completely understands that.

**Orla Loftus Moran:** well done on another evening given up for IGPNEA. Yes, I think we should hold our thunder and hold any potential application until the INMO reviews this as it has always been overtly clear that for any PDC role, the person has to have a background in general practice. It was the fundamental part of the job campaign. I am a little frustrated by the whole PDC thing as I don't know where it came from. If anyone knows the background, the history of IGPNEA, we were founded in 1993. The PDC's came out of the nurses' strike in 1997. IGPNEA lobbied for the PDC position, and we got what we lobbied for out of the commission of nursing. The NEC at the time valued them so much and the outcome of the commission of nursing that they put into our articles that they could be members and I don't know why we have this hostility to the HSE as in that they are HSE employed and we don't want the HSE knowing this and that, but actually we do. We want to work with the HSE to bring our role to as high a level as we can.

In 2006 when NUI Galway, UCC and RSCI had the Post Graduate Diploma in General Practice Nursing, that was lobbied for by the PDC's and they successfully got funding from the OMNSD for this.

We are all on the same team, there is a strong historical link and yes things are changing, and I am open to that but let's not cut off our nose to spite our face, let's keep building links and keep them close to us.

Mary thanked Orla and reiterated we are not anti PDC's, but the unfair part is some are members, and some are not, but they are sharing our information.

Orla replied that these girls are in the HSE fighting our battles for us and they are having a hard time as they are seen in a lowly light because they represent us and we on the otherhand are giving them a hard time from our side, so they are like a devil in the deep blue sea. I can not see how it hurts the Association for them to be members and I understand all or none, but we live in democracy, and everyone has a choice. What's to stop one of our members sharing everything here with one of their colleagues that are not a member of the association? And we can't say that all GPN's must be members. Its all for the good and if our message is spreading that's good.

**Mia O'Doherty:** The Mayo branch brought up that the poll was confusing, and I have to agree. It was an all in or all out, but what we are really talking about is should they be members at all.

Mary clarified that at the AGM in October there was a vote to determine if the PDC's should be members and the majority voted that they should be. The PDC's fought hard to remain members, but then turned round that 2 are and 2 aren't and one of those never will be. So what does that say about us as an Association?

**Maria Galbally:** As an INMO member I will be giving the INMO my opinion . PDC should be a GPN. The Carlow Branch felt we should have them as members.

Mary added that we are not disputing that they should be members, that was voted at the AGM, but we wanted them all to be in. It doesn't seem fair that some are in, and some are out.

**Liz Kinane:** I have been a practice nurse for 25 years, in regards to the PDC's, we have never had one in our area, I have never met one. I support the PDC's and yes, they support us, and we are all about being inclusive, but I can't understand going forward if there are 4 PDC's, 2 are members, 1 historically never will be and the other is on the fence. Is now not the time to decide they don't need to be members. Just like we have fantastic collaborations with Cervicalcheck, etc. The PDC's started off historically as members as they were all practice nurses, and they were passionate about their jobs as they were practice nurses first and then PDC's but if we are going to end up with Public Health Nurses that's wrong. They don't need to be members for us to have an amazing collaboration with them. I hear what Orla is saying that we should all be working together but the PDC's and IGPNEA can work together to lobby the HSE, but they don't need to be in bed with us. Cervicalcheck are amazing people, some have been members in the past. One that springs to mind is Mary Cashin. She misses being part of the Association, but she is still an amazing advocate for us. Going forward I would like to explore that.

Mary thanked Liz for coming in.

**Jane Campion:** Thank you for all of your work. I know as ex chairperson how much time and effort goes into being an NEC officer and being on the NEC committee. You are doing a great job. One of the things when I was chair that we talked about was setting up a CEO position and a board of advisers because there is such commitment and responsibility for the NEC officers. I just wanted

to add a suggestion really. That while you are talking about a CEO as the organisation is getting more professional it would sit well with the Charities Regulator and make us look even more professional as an organisation. As the NEC officers are charity trustees you are accountable as the charity trustee, so it is not a role to be taken lightly. The role needs to be thought out carefully, Ts crossed, I's dotted. So I suppose my suggestion is really in addition to the CEO, is to have a board of advisers, the NEC would retain responsibility for the governance of the Association, but there would be a board of advisers to assist with decisions. When I say board, I mean people externally like a marketing adviser, CRA adviser, legal adviser, financial adviser, and HR adviser. We would have them for their opinions and to advise the charity. I think that would be important for anyone that takes on the CEO role for the Association. That's all I wanted to say, thank you. Mary thanked Jane and agreed all of these options need to be explored, the only thing that would concern Mary is would the advisers charge for their time.

Mary asked does anyone have any suggestions on where we start with defining a CEO role.

**Roisin Doogue:** Just to talk about the CEO role, I think it is a really important one. I was delighted to see the poll and the vote in favour of this. I know it's now a lot of work to put this position in place and Jane said exactly the same thing. Anyone who has previously been chair of the Association, held any position on the NEC, even the REPs would realise this as well. The amount of voluntary work is not sustainable, you can do it for a very short period of time, but even then, your family suffers, your work, your holidays are taken, and I have to commend everyone who has worked in these positions to bring us to where we are today. But it is now time to move to the next step and the next step is, how do we go about this? Our voters have said yes, we do need this position.

I would suggest that we put together a working party and we look at all of these elements that you have listed here Mary. They are all very, very important. But I suppose we need to start putting facts and figures to them and as to how the role might work. So a working party of those who might want to volunteer for it, of this already on the NEC committee. I suppose within that we do need to say if someone is considering going for the role of CEO, that they absent themselves from the working party. I think it is important that we get this working party together as soon as possible, look at the elements that have been discussed and then bring that back to the membership saying these are our suggestions, this is the salary scale we are considering and benchmark it against other Associations as we do have to make sure we put the right person in place, we do pay them appropriately and we make sure their role description is what we need someone and like you say we need someone who had the GPN background and represents us as GPN's with the different stakeholders.

Mary thanked Roisin and asked if anyone else had any input into this.

**Karen Canning:** I don't know if the CEO needs to have a GPN background. My only experience with a CEO is when I was on the NMBI and Mary Griffin who was the CEO prior to Sheila, she is now the CEO of Kings Inn and is neither a RGN or a lawyer nor is Shelia a registrant. I think the CEO would be the face of the Association and would represent but with the chair not instead of. So I don't know if the CEO should necessarily be a GPN. We are not financially stable enough to pay a high CEO wage in comparison to big companies so should we perhaps look at the title and review this? Because if we advertise a CEO role, we may not be able to pay the wage expected of someone looking for a CEO role. But that's just my thoughts and that's why we are here to have the discussion.

Mary responded, absolutely, the CEO does not need to be a GPN but how are you going to send a non GPN out to talk to our stakeholders? Are you bringing the chair with you?

Karen responded, I can only go back to my experience at NMBI and when Shelia McClelland was meeting with people, the chair tended to be there too and someone coming in can be advised on our position and still go out and meet stakeholders.

Mary responded, absolutely, but are you still then putting as much pressure on the chair, who is a GPN to go to these meetings, but all of this needs to be explored,

Karen added, my point is we need someone with experience of not necessarily a CEO but along those lines.

Siobhan Leacy added, maybe when we have the job description made, maybe this would be clearer? It would be more obvious as to what kind of person we need to fit the role.

Karen mentioned we need to look at 3 roles when reviewing this: the CEO, the Chair and the Administrator so everyone is in their own lane.

Mary agreed.

Mary read out a question from the chat:

**Joan Twohill:** When and how have any conversations been had with the PDC's who are not already members to get their reasons for not taking on membership ? Thanks

Mary responded that all she has been told is one will never be a member and the other has not renewed

**Siobhan O'Riordan:** I agree with comments regarding the CEO position. no one should be expected to divide so much of their own time and an increasing amount of time to carry out the role of chair

**Theresa Lowry Lehnen:** I agree with Karen, the CEO does not necessarily need to be a GPN. The Carlow branch had a meeting last week, and the majority of concerns and comments raised by the Mayo branch, also reflect the Carlow branch's concerns.

Mary responded that this is why she was so pleased to be able to read out Mayo's observations as this is probably indicative of the general consensus of the membership and great to be able to discuss this.

**Roisin Doogue:** I don't agree, I think they need to be a GPN, can I speak again.

I hear what Karen is saying, but I think we are at our infancy with a CEO role and one of the reasons this role is so important is to take the pressure off our committee and our officers. Because what we are asking of them at the moment, in their own time, in their holiday time is really considerable and too much to ask of them. The chair can of course accompany them to anything they attend but they can also send the CEO on our behalf to represent us. In this early stage we set the salary,

I'm not saying that we have to benchmark it against the top echelons of different CEO positions, but benchmark it where we see fit. But we do need to have a person that represents us and takes the load. It is a different role than admin, who is amazing for us, but they are completely different roles. We do need someone with the knowledge and the background but can represent us also at CEO level.

I think even the title of CEO is important because again we go into meetings with other stakeholders, we introduce ourselves as a title. I have learnt that from doing my PHD, me 6 months ago, was Roisin Doogue with all the same experience and education and all the stuff I have done. Then just by simply getting something across the line and getting a title you become a really important person and you are needed. I have been invited to so many things and to speak at things. It really staggered me as I am not a title person, I have no interest in a title, but I could not believe it. It really woke me up to the fact that it is really important that our representative has the correct title and is on the same par as those other representatives in other groups so we can push forward.

**Mary Florence:** Would a joint chair position be viable?

**Joan Twohill:** Really sorry Mary, but your response to my query re discussions with the PDC's is if I'm correct "gossip". We need to have a formal meeting with the PDC's. Thanks  
Mary added it is not gossip if her fellow PDC has given me that information.

**Elaine Young:** Would it be feasible that the officers and chairperson get paid for their time instead of paying a CEO .??

Mary responded, absolutely not. Under the Charities Act this is not a possibility.

**Orla Loftus Moran:** I agree with Roisin that we do need to establish a group to explore this, but I also agree with Karen that the CEO role does not necessarily need to be a nurse. The reason for this is I looked on the Charities Regulator website and they have a lot of advice on evolving your charitable organisation. And they are quite clear the CEO is in a Management and Operational role. So it would oversee things like the Articles of Association, etc. But the NEC would still set out the vision for the Association, not the CEO. I know the whole focus is to take the pressure off of the NEC and I understand that too Mary. But regardless of the CEO you are still going to need volunteers to take care of the governance .

We do need to thrash this out in a forum where we all sit around a table, it's difficult on zoom like this. And then we bring back the ideas to the membership. I do worry a bit that we are financially stable as the fees in from membership are still relatively low, we do rely heavily on members fees and the conference. So it is a precarious position to be in, but the expert group would explore this.

Mary added she does see the point about the CEO not necessarily needing to be a GPN, because if we look at the equivalent in ICGP, Finton Foy is not a Doctor.

**Karen Canning:** Going forward then should we set up a working group to look at all the different issues?

Mary responded, we will have to, there is only one problem with that, if any of the people involved as NEC officers, REPs or any other interested person in being part of the working group is then interested in applying for the position. Then they can not be part of the group. But you are

then expecting someone to declare their interest before they ever know what is involved in the role.

**Deirdre Gillespie:** I know the working group might be a good idea but the whole point is it is hard to get people to volunteer. That's why I think the CEO role is so important, whether it be a nurse or not. I think they should have some GPN experience. The amount of work you do behind the scenes month in, month out is a lot, so the role is needed. But it might be hard to get a working group together.

**Karen Canning** asked if Deidre had any suggestions, then, as at the end of the day we have 1000 members. So does that mean that the working group should be the NEC officers and some of the REPs? For the progression of the Association we need volunteers but maybe the onerous task will be lessened when the CEO is in place, so it is worth committing the time to a working group to get this sorted.

Mary added, let's say for argument's sake I wanted to apply, I am the sitting chair, therefore I can't have any knowledge of what is being discussed by the working group. But as a sitting chair, everything that happens within the Association ultimately falls on my shoulder. I have ultimate responsibility for what goes on. So you are planning that the chair knows nothing about what a working committee is doing or the chair steps down and walks away. Now I am not saying I am going for the role. I am saying hypothetically.

**Jane Campion:** They don't need to declare their interest; they just don't volunteer for it. Could each branch be delegated a specific area to explore (e.g. salary, funding options, person specifications etc etc) and report back on to the NEC.

**Louise Kearney:** why can't people on the working body not then go for the post?

Mary responded, because they cannot be seen to have insider knowledge. Imagine if you were on the working group, drawing this up and you went up against someone who wasn't on the working group. Well you are going to know all the right things to say as you know what they are looking for.

Karen added, yes, it's a conflict of interest.

Mary added, it wouldn't be transparent and wouldn't actually be allowed.

**Maria Galbally:** What is the feasibility of hiring someone objectively to describe the role and put it to the members to see if they agree/disagree. I know there would be an expense to this but there is no point putting it out to the members to work on this.

**Mary Osakwe** added that this could be a good idea because Mary, you as chair can write what you think the role should be, the NEC and everyone can have input but then it is written independently.

Karen Canning asked if The Wheel could help?

Mary responded that The Wheel is very good at putting together role descriptions, but it still comes back to if I am the sitting chair, I still need to know what is going on in the Association because whatever decisions are made, they are ultimately my responsibility and my neck on the chopping block.

**Theresa Lowry Lehnen:** I know there is a long way to go, but has the NEC and branch reps had any discussion to date on how many hours approximately per week/ monthly would be involved in the CEO role, and what an IGPNEA CEOs rate of pay would/ should be? Most CEOs in Ireland receive a high figure sum. Can IGPNEA afford it?

Mary responded, I would imagine the hours would be something like the equivalent to 2 days a week, so 16 hours. I won't lie and say that I don't do a lot more hours than that a week. I do a lot more than 16 hours. But if we could adjust responsibilities, we could get away with 16 hours a week. But when you are drawing up the job description it's not going to be 2 full working days. It will be split over 5 days, but also include some evenings and weekends.

So if anyone thinks this is going to be a Monday to Friday role. It's not, that's what the administrator does. So you are not going to be paying someone to reinvent the wheel.

**Maria Galbally:** We should put a time limit on this and decide when the role is going to be advertised. If anyone on the NEC wants to apply, then they have to resign. That's not going to work as we will have no one left. I just think someone objectively outside of the NEC should be writing the role description.

Mary Osakwe added that The Wheel was mentioned earlier, I wonder if they could just guide us in where to start with this.

Maria mentioned that there is a limit on pay in the Articles of Association and she thinks it is €40,000

**Roisin Doogue:** I agree with Maria, we need to speak to The Wheel and have an external person work on this. We can look at giving suggestions to them. I think you made a very good point, Mary, that we cannot ask any of the committee to step down. It is really important that we take ownership of this role before it is advertised. So maybe each branch could give feedback and ideas for the external person.

External means we can't be seen to be creating a role that suits one of our own, but it then means the role is right for the Association and then the right person can apply for the role. Then we don't preclude anyone from applying for it.

Mary added that is exactly what Orla has written in the chat.

**Orla Loftus Moran:** If a working group was initially established to do a scoping review of the feasibility of employing a CEO initially & explore the broad concepts of the role without getting into the specifics of the T&Cs. An implementation group could then take over if it was deemed feasible (minus all those interested in the role)

**Teresa Lowry Lehnen:** It was also mentioned that an NEC member would be one of the five interviewers. To avoid any possible bias for or against, is this a good idea?

**Sharon Egan:** That's us selling ourselves short again..... GPN is as important a job as CEO

**Christine O Connor:** we have spent a long time wanting to be paid directly by HSE. and acknowledged as an educated specialised branch. I think appointing a CEO we are going backwards to getting ourselves pensionable HSE Recognition



**Liz Kinane:** I think we have so much expertise in our Association, but we do need to be careful on how we go forward. I agree with Karen, I know CEO sounds lovely, but do we need to call it something else? Also we can't throw the baby out with the bath water on setting up a steering committee and then lose very good people because they might want to apply.

I agree with Orla, set up a broad group first and then get expertise from someone outside. Charitable organisations have moved on a lot so there must be someone who can advise us on how to do this fairly without losing valuable people.

Mary replied, this makes perfect sense. What we do not want to happen is come the AGM in October nobody puts themselves forward for the NEC Officer roles. Now I am hoping that does not happen, as we had 13 people vote against establishing a CEO role. So I am hoping they will all be fighting it out to be NEC Officers at the AGM as the last thing we want is his Association to all fall apart.

Liz agreed, no one expects Mary to do the amount of work you do unpaid.

Mary added, she has done no more than her predecessors have done. It is just now we have over 1000 members, and we have a lot of online education. It is a huge amount of work, and I am trying to get the conversation started now so we are not forcing people to take on roles at the AGM.

**Jane Campion:** might be worth looking at [www.boardmatch.ie](http://www.boardmatch.ie) in addition to contacting the Wheel

**Ann Kinsella:** I wonder if it is possible that if all members expressed an interest would there be a way around it. Ann clarified that she meant to avoid there being a conflict of interest.

Mary summarised that all of the points raised here in the meeting is exactly why the issue is being raised this early as we don't want another situation at the AGM where we are coercing people into positions. We are a better Association than that and we should have a bit of respect for ourselves. The Association has the potential to be great and we have made so many inroads in the last few short years. Covid has turned out to be the greatest blessing for us. We are on the cusp of something good. I got an email from the ESRI looking for information that the Minister of Health has asked for, about GPN's, who we are, what we do, and we are formulating a document to present to them. This is all coming from the way forward for general practice to meet the capacity crisis head on. The Minister for Health believes the way forward is to upskill the existing GPN's that we have. But they now want to know who we are because we have over 1000 members, so we are now the biggest voice for GPN's. But yet we don't have the same face going to meetings year on year. I will never forget the day we went to the Oireachtas on St Patrick's Day. They were all asking who are you...I am from the IGPNEA....Oh I think we have worked with you, but I don't recognise you and that is where we are falling down. We need to get up and shout about who we are. I certainly believe in the Association, and I think we have great things to achieve. We need to be recognised. Georgina Bassett, dCNO, was a different person at our conference this year. She knew who we were and what we do. Completely different to last year when she turned up not really knowing what GPN's do. We have worked very hard to get her to engage with us and the PDC's are doing that for us too. We all need to be fighting together and fighting to get recognised.

Karen Canning asked going forward, what do we do next?

Mary replied, feedback from the branches at the next NEC reps meeting. Which is in 2 weeks' time.

Mary Osakwe added she can start making enquiries with The Wheel.

**Siobhan Leacy:** Going back to you being chair, Mary, and you not being able to oversee the group. I am sure other organisations have working groups. So is it not acceptable for the group to work on it and then present to the NEC and members what they have thought about?

So then theoretically you are not involved but they still have to present it, they are not making decisions, they are just formulating what they think and obviously you are in a prime position to say what you think the chair role and the CEO role should be as you are doing it. So you would still present this to the working group, and they work off of that. Then when they have everything together, they present it back.

So you are still then doing your role as chair, but it doesn't leave you open if you decide to apply.

Mary replied that this is exactly why we needed this discussion today. It could also take the best part of 6 or 9 months to work on this but at least the conversation has started.

Siobhan added ideally though we really want something formulated to present at the AGM in October. So when we are re-electing NEC officers, we have some sort of idea on where we are going in the next year.

Mary replied that this is a very reasonable idea. Something concrete at the AGM. As Orla and everyone's suggestion, we start a working group to look at and examine what we need to do and decide and come up with some sort of criteria.

Karen Shevlin asked if the EGM was recorded for members to watch back.

Mary asked Mary Osakwe about the minutes. Mary Osakwe replied that the CRA needed the minutes urgently to finalise the Articles of Association so she would work on those straight away tomorrow and confirmed all branches will have these before the next NEC reps meeting.

#### **AOB**

No AOB was raised

#### **NEXT NEC REPS MEETING**

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 80m via Zoom

#### **EGM CLOSED**

Mary thanked everyone for attending and officially closed the meeting