

The PHA board of directors plays a crucial role in overseeing the Agency's strategic direction and ensuring that its operations align with its mission to protect and improve public health.

The board is composed of:

- Non-Executive Chair,
- the Chief Executive,
- six Non-Executive Directors,
- and three Executive Directors (the executive directors are employees of the PHA).

These individuals collectively ensure that the PHA full fills its responsibilities and goals in an effective and accountable manner.

Register of interests

[Click here to access PHA Board Register of Interests 1 March 2025](#)



Colin Coffey
Chair



Aidan Dawson
Chief Executive

Colin took up post as Chair of the Public Health Agency on 1 November 2023. His professional career was within the Agri-Food sector where he held many senior Board positions with UK Companies.

Colin is an experienced Chair and currently holds a portfolio of Non-Executive Chair and Director positions in both the public and private sectors. These include Chair at the AgriFood & BioSciences Institute, Non-Executive Director at InvestNI where he is Chair of their Business Funding Committee and a member of their Audit & Risk Committee. He is also Chair at Natural World Products, an organics company targeting sustainable climate-focused solutions that will address key structural problems within Northern Ireland to deliver positive outcomes for our environment

Colin has extensive experience of increasing Shareholder value and better governance using a mix of leadership skills, practical experience, risk management as well as acting as a mentor to the board members. He is particularly interested in the development of leadership skills that will lead to more effective and sustainable organisations.

Colin is a Chartered Director and Fellow of the Institute of Directors and is an experienced assessor for the IoD in their Chartered Director programme.

Aidan was appointed Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency on 1 July 2021. He comes with a career spanning over 30 years working in the Health Service and 3rd sector.

In 2016 Aidan was appointed as the Director of Specialist Hospitals & Women's Health in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. He was responsible for a diverse range of services including Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick children, Maternity Services, Gynaecology Services, ENT, Trauma and Orthopaedics, Neuro Rehabilitation, Sexual and Reproductive health, Regional Disablement Services and the Dental Hospital.

In April 2019 he also assumed responsibility for Mental Health Services for adults and children across the Trust on an interim basis. In 2020 the Mental Health role expanded to include the Mental Health Capacity Act Compliance.

Prior to this role Aidan was the Co-Director in the Trust for Trauma, Orthopaedics, and Rehabilitation Services. His career has included roles working with The British Red Cross and Disability Action.



Dr. Joanne McClean
Director of Public Health



Heather Reid
Interim Director of
Nursing, Midwifery and
Allied Health
Professionals

Dr Joanne McClean took up post as Director of Public Health on 1 September 2022.

Joanne graduated from Queen's University in Medicine with Honours in 1999. After graduation Joanne worked in junior doctor hospital training posts before completing specialist training in public health medicine. Joanne has a Masters in Population Health and is a member of the Faculty of Public Health and of the Royal College of Physicians. Joanne was appointed as a Consultant in Public Health in the Public Health Agency in January 2012. In her consultant post Joanne had a particular interest in health service public health and in child health. Between June 2021 and August 2022 Joanne was seconded to the Department of Health as Associate Deputy Chief Medical Officer to work on the COVID response.

Joanne was made an Honorary Professor of Public Health Practice by Queen's University in February 2023.

Heather Reid took up post as Interim Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals on 1st May 2023.

Heather qualified as a nurse in September 1989 and worked as a staff nurse a number of posts including a short period in a neuro-rehabilitation unit in Bavaria. Heather joined the Graduate Management training programme in 1994 during which she completed a Masters in Health Service Management.

Heather joined the Public Health Department in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in 1996 as a project manager for evidence-based commissioning and during this time worked towards specialist practitioner registration with the UK Public Health Register. She was then seconded to the Department of Health in 2008-09 to support the establishment of the Public Health Agency.

Heather was appointed as a Public Health Consultant in the Public Health Agency in January 2012. She worked in health service public health on a range of areas and has a specific interest in maternal, child and perinatal mortality surveillance and improvement.



Leah Scott
Director of Finance and Corporate
Services



Joseph Stewart OBE
Non-Executive Director

Leah Scott joined the Public Health Agency in March 2024 as Director of Finance and Corporate Services. Leah has extensive senior leadership experience across Northern Ireland public sector and joins the Agency after six years as Director of Finance and Corporate Services at CCEA. She was interim Chief Executive Officer during 2022, leading the organisation through a return to public examinations following the COVID-19 pandemic. Leah has an established track record leading through several transformational and change projects including Reform of Public Administration and the COVID-19 pandemic. Leah's previous roles include Head of Finance and ICT at Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Head of Finance at Stranmillis University College.

Leah is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland with more than 20 years post qualification experience and qualified with Grant Thornton. She is currently a member of the ICAI Ulster Society Public Sector Committee.

Joseph has held a number of Board level positions in the public and private sectors in Northern Ireland having retired in 2016 as Director of Human Resources from PSNI, a post which he held from the inception of the service in 2001.

A graduate of Law from Queen's University, Belfast, Joseph was a Director of the Engineering Employers Federation until 1990 and a Director in Harland and Wolff between 1990 and 1995. He was Vice Chairman of the Police Authority from 1989 to 1994 and Chief Executive from 1995 to 2001.

Joe is Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee of the Agency and in February 2021 was appointed Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee of the Livestock and Meat Commission Northern Ireland.

Joseph received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in 1994.



Craig Blaney

Non-Executive Director

Craig Blaney was appointed to the Board of the PHA in August 2022.

He has a strong track record working with some of the most exciting and innovative brands in the UK. He specialises in brand creation and development and has worked with businesses across Northern Ireland, Ireland, the UK and Europe to bring their marketing strategies to life.

He sits as a member of Ards and North Down borough Council and has held several positions of authority including Vice Chair of the Regeneration Committee, Member of the Corporate Committee and Member of the Council Audit Committee. He is the current Deputy Mayor of Ards and North Down and serves on the board of the Northern Community Leisure Trust and the YMCA Bangor.



John Patrick Clayton

Non-Executive Director

John Patrick is Policy Officer of the trade union, Unison Northern Ireland. He was appointed to the trade union member position on the PHA Board in 2018.

He is a qualified barrister who has previously practised both at the Northern Ireland Bar and at the Bar in the Republic of Ireland.

John Patrick is a member of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. He is a part-time Associate Lecturer in Law with the Open University. He has previously been a member of the Executive of the voluntary organisation NIACRO.



Anne Henderson OBE
Non-Executive Director



Robert Irvine
Non-Executive Director

Anne is the Non-Executive Finance Director of the PHA. She is a qualified chartered accountant whose experience in KPMG and BDO Stoy Hayward, accountants in Belfast, included audit, insolvency and management consulting. She was a senior manager for three years in the audit and management consulting of the international media company Time Warner Inc, based in London, Los Angeles and New York. Her public sector board experience includes chairing the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland for 7 years, until 2020. She was vice-chair of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 8 years until 2012, and has held board positions in the International Fund for Ireland, Enterprise Equity, Nomadic Trading Company Ltd, and is a former member of the audit committee of Queen's University of Belfast.

Mr. Robert Irvine lives in County Fermanagh and has been a partner in R.J. Irvine, a quantity surveying and project management consultancy firm, since 1982.

He has been an elected local District Councillor since 2001 and currently sits as a member of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. In his role as a Councillor, he sits on various committees, notably the Planning Committee and the Local Development Plan Steering Group of which he has been chair since 2015.

In the recent past he has been a member of the Western Local Commissioning Group, a committee of the Health and Social Care Board, the Western Education & Library Board and several school and college Boards of Governors. He currently is a Board member of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Downloads

Attachment	Size
PHA Board Register of Interests 1 March 2025.docx	91.35 KB
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