

Social Work England Board Meeting

MEETING
2 February 2024 10:30 GMT

PUBLISHED
29 January 2024

Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 2 February 2024, 10.30 – 13.00

at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

AGENDA

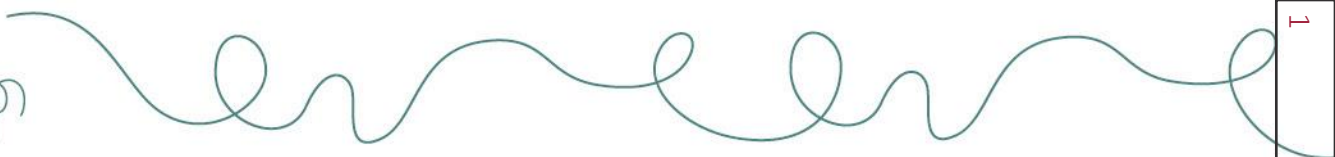
Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
		Welcome			Chair
1.	10.30	Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest	Verbal	To note/declare	Chair
2.	10.35	Minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2023	Paper 01	To approve	Chair
3.	10.40	Matters Arising and Action Log	Paper 02	To discuss and note	Chair
4.	10.45	Chair's Report	Verbal	To note	Chair
5.	11.00	Chief Executive's Report	Paper 03	To discuss, advise and note	Chief Executive
6.	11.15	Policy Committee Chair's Report	Paper 04*	To note	Policy Committee Chair
7.	11.30	ARAC Chair's Report	Paper 05*	To note	ARAC Chair
8	11.45	RemCo Chair's Report - 2023 Engagement Survey Feedback	Paper 06* Paper 06a*	To note	Chair; Executive Director, People and Business Support
9.	12.00	Finance and Commercial Report - Management accounts to 31 December 2023	Paper 07	To note	Head of Finance and Commercial
10.	12.15	Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/2024	Paper 08	To discuss and note	Executive Directors; Head of Business Planning and Improvement
11.	12.30	Overseas Applications	Paper 09	To discuss and note	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
12.	12.45	AOB Board Buddying Proposal	Paper 10	To discuss, advise and note	Chair; Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
		Social Work Week 2024	Paper 11	To note	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
		Date of Next Meeting: Friday 22 March 2024 10.30 – 13.00		To note	Chair
	13.00	Meeting ends			

* Papers marked with an asterisk are 'private' to protect confidentiality according to our guidance for publishing board papers.

LIST OF ATTENDANCE

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Interim Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Boardroom Apprentice:	Rachael Hood	Boardroom Apprentice
Social Work England staff in attendance:	Catherine Witt	Regional Engagement Lead – North East
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Jack Harrison	Participation Officer
	Joe Stockwell	Head of Registration and Advice
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Sponsor Team:	Andrew Wise	Department for Education
	Brooke Parker	Department for Education
	Catherine Pearson	Department for Education
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education
Public Observers:	Colin Anderson	British Association of Social Workers
	Siobhan Carson	Professional Standards Authority
Minute taker:	Elizabeth Frier	Corporate Governance Manager
Apologies:	n/a	



1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Minutes of the last meeting on 27 October July 2023

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Jenna Hodgson, Director's Assistant

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Decision

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance - Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting for approval
27 October 2023, 10.15-12.45
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Interim Chair
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Mark Lam	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Boardroom Apprentice:	Jennifer Waterhouse	Boardroom Apprentice
Social Work England staff in attendance:	Elle Langdown	Director's Assistant
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
Sponsor Team:	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Brooke Parker	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	James Wilkinson	Unison
	June Thoburn	University of East Anglia
	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
	Terry Rich	RedQuadrant
Staff Observers:	Elizabeth Frier	Corporate Governance Manager
	Lara Timms	Head of Education Programmes
	Nicholas Leon	Triage Case Officer
	Nicola Meston	Investigations Manager
	Rumbie Chivaura	Finance Business Partner
Minute taker:	Jenna Hodgson	Director's Assistant
Apologies:	None	

1. Welcome

- 1.1 Interim Chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies noted.
- 1.2 Ann Harris declared that an interest would need to be removed from the Social Work England register next year, she would provide details to the secretariat.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 28 July 2023 **were approved as an accurate record.**
- 2.2 In relation to the powers introduced via the changes to rules and regulations in December 2022 (paragraph 11.6), the Board asked when the review would take place and be reported to the Board. Executive Director, Regulation, confirmed the review was planned for Q3/Q4 and that the outcomes would be shared with the Board when available.

3. Matters Arising and Action Log

Paper 02

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.
- 3.2 The Chair reviewed the action log. All actions closed at or since the last meeting were **approved** as follows:
 - **Action 61:** Business Planning and Improvement team to produce a short summary of the annual report. *Infographics for 2022/23 annual report have been published on the website and shared with the Board. Action closed.*
 - **Action 69:** Executive Director, People and Business Support to implement an annual whistleblowing disclosures report for reporting to the Board annually. It was clarified that this action related to whistleblowing as a prescribed body. Executive Director, People and Business Support, to notify Board members of the report and implications in advance of publication. *Update on the 2022/23 report was circulated to the Board on 20 September 2023. The report was published on the website on 27 September 2023. Action closed.*
 - **Action 79:** Executive Assistant to circulate the Quarterly Policy Committee Briefing: The Public Policy Landscape to Board members for information. *These briefings will be circulated to the Board routinely in the future. Action closed.*
 - **Action 80:** Following the Policy Committee away day, Chief Executive and Policy Committee Chair to produce a paper on the Data and Insight Strategy for the 27 October 2023 Board meeting. *On meeting agenda for 27 October 2023. Action closed.*
 - **Action 81:** Executive Director, People and Business Support, to ensure that the 'Our Vision' section is clearly highlighted on the internal webpage, when launching the People Strategy. *Completed. Action closed.*
 - **Action 82:** Business Planning Manager to assess the wording of the reputation and credibility appetite description to ensure it captures the Board's recommendations. *Completed. Action closed.*
 - **Action 83:** Executive Director, People and Business Support, to inform Board members of the whistleblowing annual report and implications in advance of publication. *See action 69 above. Action closed.*
- 3.3 The progress on the open actions was noted:

- **Action 70:** Head of Finance and Commercial to plan an exercise to look at financial modelling for 24/25. *Initial work has been undertaken to understand resourcing needs in 2024/25 and across the next spending review period. Discussed with DfE on 14 September. Detailed process to develop 2024/25 budget and business plan commenced in October. Action open.*

4. Chair's Report

Verbal

- 4.1 The Chair noted that Jennifer Waterhouse would be leaving shortly and a new Board Apprentice would be joining next year. The Chair thanked Jennifer and hoped she had found this a useful experience, he would arrange a one-to-one conversation to discuss any feedback that she may have.
- 4.2 Recruitment was underway for the permanent Chair's position and 2 Non-Executive Directors. The Chair also reflected on his attendance at the recent all-staff day and reported that the event was well organised and insightful.

5. Chief Executive's Report

Paper 03

- 5.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of ongoing policy work, the next phase of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data analysis and strategic financial planning with the DfE, noting that the current year's budget position was very tight. Annual registration renewals was progressing well so far, and was due to complete on 30 November.
- 5.2 The Board supported the approach which had been taken regarding the first phase of analysis of EDI data, and valued the external partnerships that were being established via the new data oversight group. The Board asked how the initial EDI data analysis had been received. Board member, Sue Ross had recently attended a Social Work England event with Local Authorities who had reported that the data was very useful. The Chief Executive also noted that it had been well received at the Community Care Live event and attendees were interested in the next phase of analysis.

6. Policy Committee Chair's Report – verbal

- 6.1 The Policy Committee Chair commented on the success of the Policy Committee away day and thanked all for their participation. The discussions focused on the external policy landscape, education, learning and development, the education quality assurance (EQA) process, concluded research findings and the co-production model. The Board thanked Nottingham University for hosting the event. The Board also acknowledged that the away day enabled in-depth discussions and proposed that similar sessions could be repeated in future.
- 6.2 In relation to the DfE response to the consultation on Stable Homes Built on Love, specifically the section around educating people on the role of social workers and promoting the profession, the Board asked where Social Work England stood on the proposal. The Chief Executive explained that the DfE approached Social Work England at the start of the year and recommended that they launch a recruitment campaign to address the known recruitment and retention issues in the workforce. Research had been conducted to gather evidence which would be reported to the Policy Committee in

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

December. Plans were yet to be agreed however, Social Work England were considering a media campaign to 'inform and educate people of the value of social work'.

Action: Chief Executive to provide further details on the campaign 'to inform and educate people on the value of social work' to the Board once plans have been agreed.

7. Remuneration Committee Chair's Report - verbal

7.1 The Remuneration Committee Chair reported that at the last Committee meeting, they reviewed the staff engagement survey results, the Chief Executive's mid-year appraisal and agreed a workplan for next year. The Remuneration Committee Chair also noted that it was his last Committee meeting and commended the Executive Director, People and Business Support's leadership skills and support to the Committee and Board.

8. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report

Paper 04*

8.1 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair reported that the last committee meeting had reviewed the annual report of the Registration and Advice service which had provided rich data on activity and performance across the service, process improvements that had been made, challenges and opportunities. A joint lessons learnt session had taken place with the National Audit Office to review the 2022-23 external audit process which had been very useful and was informing plans for 2023-24. The ARAC Chair also updated the Board on the outcomes of the first three internal audits completed by RSM. One (travel and expenses) had received substantial assurance, one (risk management) adequate assurance and on the third (cyber-security) a number of recommendations had been made which were being implemented.

8.2 The committee observed that the number of risks on the corporate risk register had started to slowly increase; the ARAC Chair and Executive Director, People and Business Support, planned to review these. The Board were in support of this approach.

9. Finance and Commercial Report

Paper 05

9.1 Head of Finance and Commercial reported a year to date overspend of £488k which was primarily due to the government's cost of living payment, which had been made in July and was not funded. The year to date capital expenditure was £181k overspent, due to forge development costs that were higher than initially envisaged. Head of Finance and Commercial provided assurance that the organisation would continue to tightly monitor the budget for the second half of the financial year and seek to minimise the impact of any steps taken to keep within budget on regulatory activity, where possible. The tender process for the re-procurement of legal services was underway and an appointment would be made imminently.

9.2 The Board asked for clarification on the reasons for the £488k year to date overspend. Head of Finance and Commercial explained that this was primarily due to the cost of living payment (approximately £355k) which was unbudgeted for, and also due to legal fees, some of which related to unexpected litigation costs. There was also potential for fee income to be less than budget forecasts, this was being closely monitored. The Board queried where the cost of living payment appeared in the management accounts. Head of Finance and Commercial clarified that the payment was included in 'wages and salaries'

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

line within the accounts. This itself was not overspent, however the unbudgeted payment had limited room for manoeuvre, meaning that additional costs in other areas, such as legal costs, could not be offset against other budgets.

9.3 The Board queried how Social Work England planned to return expenditure to within budget by year end and what the risks were. The Chief Executive highlighted the challenges faced, as previously it had been possible to flex certain budgets to balance the costs. Recruitment could be managed to a degree, and there may be a need to review the fitness to practise activity planned for the remainder of the year, if necessary. Discussions were also ongoing with the DfE around the challenges presented by unpredictable litigation costs. The Chief Executive explained that as an arms-length body, it was not possible to build up reserves and that holding a high level of contingency within the budget to manage unforeseen costs did not necessarily represent the best use of resources; there was a fine balance to be struck. The Board requested an update on the budget position and mitigations that were being put in place by December/January, with an ad-hoc meeting to be considered if necessary.

Action: The Chief Executive to update the Board on the budget position by December/January and to consider an ad-hoc Board meeting, if the risk were to increase.

10. Quarter 2 Performance Report 2023/24 Prevention and impact

Paper 06

10.1 The Chief Executive reported that performance was strong in Q2 for communications and engagement. There had been a recent appointment of 6 National Advisory Forum members (NAF); following the meeting, the Board would have an opportunity to meet the members as part of a joint Board/NAF workshop. The Chief Executive thanked Morwenna Hart for her contribution as head of strategic engagement, and welcomed Matthew Devlin, who had recently been appointed to this role. Plans to reimagine the role of engagement had progressed and the Board would be updated in due course.

10.2 As part of the Data and Insight Strategy, the initial EDI analysis of fitness to practise (FtP) data had been published. Routine reporting of FtP and registration data was also now available on the website. In relation to objective 2.1 of the business plan, the Board noted that the EDI data analysis would also impact other stakeholders.

10.3 The Chief Executive commended the Education, Training and Advisory Forum in the development of the readiness for professional practice guidance. The guidance was close to publication, however, this would need to be aligned with the Early Career Framework. The Chief Executive also welcomed Lara Timms, who had been appointed as Head of Education Programmes. The course reapproval key performance indicator (KPI) had been met in Q2. The Chief Executive noted the balance between maintaining progress towards our business plan targets for course inspections/re-approvals and responding to new developments in the education and training sphere arising from Government policy, such as the increasing number of apprenticeships.

10.4 The Board queried how to measure the impact of the readiness for professional practice guidance. The Chief Executive explained that discussions are ongoing to agree at what

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

point the guidance should be mandated and included within the inspection process. The implementation plan would come to the Board in future.

Regulation and protection

- 10.5 Executive Director, Regulation, reported that to date, approximately 21,000 social workers had completed all three steps to submit their registration renewal application. The organisation continued to remind social workers to renew their registration as early as possible and there was a communications plan in place.
- 10.6 UK registration applications had been managed well in Q2 however, the number of overseas applications continued to be a challenge. The Executive Director, Regulation, noted that work continued to address these issues by streamlining internal processes and through external engagement. The Board were in support of this and highlighted the workforce pressures facing the social work sector which were contributing to the focus on international recruitment. The Executive Director, Regulation, recognised the fine balance between wanting to provide registration service that is as timely as possible, in recognition of workforce pressures, whilst needing to ensure that all social workers are safe to practise.
- 10.7 The Board also noted the slight increase in misuse of title cases. Executive Director, Regulation, explained that this had been caused by two factors; social workers who had failed to renew by the end of the 2022 annual renewals period and then continued to practise whilst not on the register, and concerns raised by members of the public about someone they *believed* to be a social worker.
- 10.8 Executive Director, Regulation, outlined the capacity challenges in Triage and Investigations during Q2; there had been a number of vacancies within both teams and new members of staff had been appointed which took further capacity from experienced staff to deliver in-depth induction programmes. During Q2, a review of the triage decision-making processes was completed and further work was planned in Q3 and Q4. In Q2, short-term support was provided to the Triage team to increase decision-making capacity and there had been a reduction in caseload during September. Executive Director, Regulation, noted the increase in witness escalation letters he had sent recently and reported that they continued to work with the Single Points of Contact within Local Authorities to improve timeliness of case progression.
- 10.9 Case Examination performance remained strong in Q2, despite a number of vacancies within the team. Executive Director, Regulation, reported that they continued to optimise the use of accepted disposals, where possible. The PSA recently reviewed the accepted disposal process and were interested in the learning. Social Work England had informed them that a key factor was early and ongoing engagement. Executive Director, Regulation, noted that the Board were aware of the ongoing challenges in relation to hearings.
- 10.10 The Board asked how long the two-person panel pilot would last and what reduction it would achieve in hearing costs. Executive Director, Regulation, reported that the pilot was likely to be extended into the next financial year to ensure that a sufficient number of hearings could be included. The pilot would initially focus on cases which met agreed criteria, until there was confidence that there would not be an impact on decision-making (such as an increase the number of cases going part-heard). It was expected that the

pilot would create a minor budget saving in 2023 and, potentially, further cost avoidance savings next year.

- 10.11 In relation to the internal quality assurance KPI, the Board noted the 89% score and the small sample size. The Board suggested that an alternative, more qualitative approach may provide a more accurate assessment of quality. Executive Director, Regulation, reported that the current scoring was based solely on the output from the Decision Review Group and agreed that it would be more accurate to include outcomes from other quality assurance work, for example, audits. This had already been discussed internally and some work would be starting to explore and scope the options.
- 10.12 The Board recognised the workload and risk being carried by the Executive Leadership Team. The Chair thanked the Executive Director, Regulation, for his contribution.

Delivery and improvement

- 10.13 Foundational work was underway to enable the organisation to carry out user research in the best possible way to identify priorities and improve digital users' experience. This was likely to remain ongoing for the remainder of the business year, to develop a robust and supportive framework.
- 10.14 Executive Director, People and Business Support, reported that the people strategy was broadly on track; an internal communications plan had been implemented and a review of the recruitment approach was progressing. There had been some minor slippage with benchmarking in relation to benchmarking of our people function and progress towards our EDI charters. In Q2, 360 feedback had been initiated for leaders. The positive action mentoring pilot had been evaluated and a new programme would launch in the new year.
- 10.15 The new assurance framework had been rolled out across key regulatory functions and largely completed; the final 3 self-assessments were now underway. There had been an internal workshop focused on value for money and cost/efficiency benchmarking work would be taking place. The sustainability plan had progressed well and most of the year 1 objectives were on track or had already been delivered. The corporate complaints response time KPI remained strong, despite a vacancy within the team. The people retention rate had improved slightly and was more healthy during Q2, although there had been higher turnover in the Fitness to Practise and Registration teams than across the organisation as a whole. Executive Director, People and Business Support, informed that work was beginning to start to explore career development pathways and entry routes for business areas that experienced more challenges with recruitment and retention of staff
- 10.16 The Board noted the lack of resilience for certain teams due to their size. The Board asked if members of the National Advisory Forum were involved in the digital user research.

Action: Executive Director, People and Business Support, to confirm if members from the National Advisory Forum were involved in the digital user experience work.

11. Data and Insight Strategy – progress update

Paper 07

- 11.1 Executive Director, People and Business Support, briefly introduced the strategy and outlined the progress to date. The Board agreed that the priorities were correct and noted that the strategy was ambitious. The Board commented that the automated reporting functions may be particularly important into the future, given budget

constraints. The Board also discussed how data could inform wider stakeholders about the profession. The Board noted that the collaboration element to the strategy was slightly undernourished and wondered if a national data group should be set up, involving key stakeholders, to collaboratively map out the data about the social work profession held by different organisations and how data could be appropriately shared to support collective learning and insight. Executive Director, People and Business Support, agreed that collaboration and bringing together of insight was a key ambition within the strategy, and this would be looked into to understand what more could be done to support improvements within the sector, whilst not going beyond our role as the regulator.

12. Proposal for Senior Independent Director role

Paper 08

12.1 The Board approved the proposed role description for Senior Independent Director (SID) and the appointment of Ann Harris. The Chair noted the importance of the role, particularly in terms of continuity following the appointment of new Board members.
Action: Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the Terms of Reference to reflect the SID role and appointment.

13. Any other business

13.1 The Chair acknowledged that it was the final Board meeting for Mark Lam and Jennifer Waterhouse. The Chair expressed gratitude for Mark Lam's significant contributions to the Board over a number of years, and wished him well for the future. The Chair also commended the success of the first Board Apprenticeship.

13.2 The Board received a Data Protection training session immediately following the meeting.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 2 February 2024 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12:00pm.

Summary of Actions

- Chief Executive to provide further details on the campaign 'to inform and educate people on the value of social work' to the Board once plans have been agreed.
- Chief Executive to update the Board on the budget position by December and to consider an ad-hoc Board meeting, if the risk were to increase.
- Executive Director, People and Business Support, to confirm if members from the National Advisory Forum were involved in the digital user experience work.
- Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the Terms of Reference to reflect the SID role and appointment.

* Papers marked with an asterisk are 'private' to protect confidentiality according to our guidance for publishing board papers.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12



Summary of Actions from Board meetings up to 2 February 2024

Agenda Item 3 Paper Ref 02

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair

Author

Sophie Rees Rumney, Executive Assistant

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance - Averse

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Summary

The actions below provide an audit trail of items closed at or since the last meeting on 27 October 2023. Actions still in progress or yet to complete since the last meeting are listed on the log that follows.

Closed actions following the last meeting:

- **Action 84:** Chief Executive to update the Board on the budget position by December and to consider an ad-hoc Board meeting, if the risk were to increase. *Revised end year forecast and budget mitigation plan circulated to the Board in December 2023. Action closed.*
- **Action 85:** Executive Director, People and Business Support, to confirm if members from the National Advisory Forum were involved in the digital user experience work. *Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement and Insight updated that there has been a focus on preparing for the launch of our new user research database. This aims to bring together a pool of user researchers that we can draw on to improve our digital services and specifically our concerns journey. The National Advisory Forum are aware of this work and have helped in some of the early stages. However, there is also an understanding that depending on the user need we wish to test, they may or may not be the best people to participate in the user research itself. This is a positive example of where co-production is encouraged both within and outside of the forum. The forum continues to be supportive in helping us to recruit more user research participants using their valuable contacts and networks. Action closed.*
- **Action 86:** Executive Director, People and Business Support to update the Terms of Reference to reflect the SID role and appointment. *The terms of reference have been updated and circulated to the Board. Action closed.*
- **Action 87:** Chief Executive to provide further details on the campaign 'to inform and educate people on the value of social work' to the Board once plans have been agreed. *An update will be provided during the meeting. Action closed.*

Updates on open actions are noted in the action log that follows.

2. Action required

The Board is asked to note the progress against the actions.

Social Work England Board Action Log

Action no.	Date of Meeting	Action	Owner	Due By	Update	Next review	Status
70	10/03/23	Head of Finance and Commercial to plan an exercise to look at financial modelling for 2024/25.	Head of Finance and Commercial	27/10/23	Following a detailed review of our budgetary needs we submitted 3 budget scenarios for the 2024/25 financial year to the DfE in December. Conversations with the DfE are continuing and we will present our 2024/25 budget to the board at its meeting in March. Further information regarding the budget process is included in the finance and commercial paper.	22/03/24	Open

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12



CEO Report to the Board February 2024

Agenda Item 05 Paper Ref 03

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author
Colum Conway

Date
2 February 2024

Reviewed by
Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for
Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective
SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite
Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Introduction

Since the last Board meeting in October 2023, we have had meetings of the Policy Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Chairs of the committees will be reporting to this Board meeting.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mark Lam for his contribution to Social Work England as a founding Board member and Chair of the Remuneration Committee. Mark's tenure on the Board came to an end a couple of weeks ago in early January. Social Work England benefited greatly from his skills, knowledge, and expertise. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome Natalie Day to Social Work England. Natalie has joined us from Sheffield Hallam University as our Assistant Director for Policy and Strategy.

Also, to note that the Chief Social Worker Adults, Lyn Romeo, has recently retired. Lyn played a pivotal role in the establishment of Social Work England and has been an important critical friend through the early years. She has made a very telling contribution to the profession of social work, and we send her best wishes for whatever she plans to do in the future.

2. Q3 Performance Report

The main part of the meeting today will be the performance report on Q3 of our business plan. The report will be discussed in detail with the leadership team later in the meeting, however I would like just to highlight a few areas.

This is the first Board meeting following the completion of the renewals process at the end of November 2023. It was a successful renewal period with a high level of compliance across all stages of the renewal process. We have had the lowest number of social workers having to restore to the register as a result of unintentionally dropping off the register. There are many reasons for this outcome but chief among them is the level of collaboration across the organisation and the positive nature of the external partnerships and relationships we have established with many stakeholders. Everyone involved deserves to be commended. Now that we are 4 years into the renewals process we have committed to completing a review of the process to take account of learning and of any changes to the external environment.

In Fitness to Practise there continues to be a focus on timeliness in triage and investigation which we are confident will have an impact, although for the reasons outlined in the report may take more time to come to fruition. Optimising our approach to accepted disposal also remains a focus.

In relation to data and insight, we are undertaking further research to understand the disparities that we identified in our initial analysis of Fitness to Practise outcomes, to inform further action. We will update the Board on the outcomes in due course. As noted in our Q3 performance report, an error has been recently identified within our sickness absence reporting, which has been swiftly addressed. We will provide further assurance to the Board in March, and outline the programme of work underway, as part of our data and

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

insight strategy, to strengthen our systems for data and reporting. A project to implement new data architecture has been scoped and is due to commence in Q4. Our programme of digital development is proceeding largely as planned. In Q3 we delivered improvements to the annual renewals process, these have been well received. We continue to work on our case management system, Forge, to improve the security and efficiency of our communications with external parties.

Noted in the performance report is the launch of our 2024 positive action mentoring programme across the organisation. This is the second such scheme and is being launched on the back of a very positive evaluation of the first scheme. Also of note we will be having our second all team meeting at the office in Sheffield on the 9 February 2024. At the meeting we will be relaunching our hybrid working principles following extensive engagement with our people.

We are continuing to work aspects of the children's social care reform relating to the review recommendation in Stable Homes Built on Love. A particular focus is on the Early Career Framework, the potential for the registration of the children's residential care workforce and practice educators.

Board members will be aware that the independent board effectiveness review is well under way and we anticipate a report coming to the Board at the March meeting.

3. Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors

The Board will be aware that following the Department Health and Social Care's announcement that the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) would be delayed, we drafted and consulted on education and training approval standards for BIAs in Q3. Following the closure of the consultation, we analysed responses, amended the standards and have now shared the final draft standards with the Secretary of State at Department of Education for sign off.

We are now developing guidance to support the inspection process for both BIA and AMHP courses. Once we have the Secretary of State's approval, we will publish the new standards and consultation response, along with the guidance as soon as possible. We intend to begin the first inspections for new course approvals for BIAs later this year.

4. Annual survey for Social Workers

In the 2023/24 business plan we committed to starting to collect information to show how our work is incrementally contributing towards: an increase in the proportion of social workers who have confidence in the way we regulate; and an increase in the proportion of social workers who value our professional standards. We are therefore in the process of designing a short annual survey of social workers to establish baseline measures that we will look to refine in future years. The survey will be launched in March 2024 through our social

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

media channels and will be open for 8 to 10 weeks. We will also use Social Work Week as an opportunity to promote the launch of the survey.

5. Social Work Week

Now in its fourth year, we are proud once again to facilitate Social Work Week. The programme boasts the strongest line-up to date with over 20 free sessions being co-produced by Social Work England with those working across the sector and those with lived and learned experience. Over 60 sessions will run independently, featuring local and national content and we have international perspectives appearing this year which is most welcome. The week will take place between Monday 18 and Friday 22 March bringing people together to learn, connect and influence change across the social work sector in England. Social Work week is underpinned by the strategic importance we put on raising trust and confidence in social work both within and outside of the profession. There is more detail in paper for this Board meeting.

As noted in the performance report we are being supported by Department of Education to deliver a short burst of campaign activity to coincide with Social Work Week this year. The focus is to help educate and inform the public on the important role social work plays in society. This speaks to our role to promote confidence by helping people to understand the nature of social work, that it is a regulated profession adhering to professional standards and requires specific qualifications, skills and expertise.

6. Business and Budget Planning

At the meeting today we will have an opportunity to discuss the business and budget planning process for next year 2024/25. The context for the planning process is a challenging one as we work to align the limitations we have on resources against a plan that reflects our statutory responsibilities and the ambition we have for the organisation. The plans for today are early draft and comment back from the Board is very welcome as we work toward final draft for the March Board meeting. It is worth noting the broader planning process that sits alongside the budget and the business plan includes an number of other key documents for example the internal audit plan, Internal Quality Improvement plan, Equality Diversity Inclusion action plan, and from this month (February) we are starting the process for our 2023/24 external audit and annual report.

7. Employment Tribunal Judgement

In relation to recent judgment at an employment tribunal we have made the following statement.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

We acknowledge the Judgment of the London Central Employment Tribunal in the case of Ms Rachel Meade against Westminster City Council and Social Work England.

The tribunal made findings in respect of Ms Meade's claims against Social Work England. Following the Judgment, all parties now have the opportunity to consider the decision and their options.

8. Professional Standards Authority

We are expecting to receive the performance report 2022/23 from the Professional Standards Authority by March which will give the Board the opportunity to discuss in detail at our next Board meeting.

The Authority has recently published a consultation on good practice guidance documents in support of regulatory reform. There are two sets of guidance on the use of Accepted Outcomes in Fitness to Practise and on Rulemaking. Social Work England have been operating an accepted outcomes process in line with legislative powers and guidance for over four years and in this context the authority has noted that guidance does not directly apply to us. However, we have been in ongoing discussions with the Authority on accepted outcomes mainly through general performance reviews and a targeted review of accepted outcomes in May 2021. These discussions are referenced in the document. We are preparing a response to the consultation.

9. Conclusion

There is much to focus on for us at present and I think we are managing our resources well particularly in light of our efforts balancing a financial breakeven position for year end with delivery of our key objectives contained in the business plan 2023/24. We are continuing to monitor budget, operations and risk carefully to the end of the financial year. While we introduced a recruitment pause earlier in the year, we have now moved to implement a phased recruitment plan for posts to be in place from April onwards. This is always a busy time for planning and reporting as we prepare for a new business year in April and for reporting on the year that is coming to an end.

The primary consideration for professional regulation is protection of the public, this is our central focus in our management of resources and risk and in our planning and decision making in every part of the organisation.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

10. Annexe

Annex 1: Chief Executive's meetings

Skills for Care – Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy Steering Group

Attended the National Children and Adult Services Conference in Bournemouth in November

Principle Social Workers Network Chairs – Adults and Children's

Children' Social Care National Framework and National Practice Group

Chair and members of the Association of Directors of Children's Services Workforce Committee

Professional Standards Research Conference

The Social Work and Social Care Regulators in the UK and Ireland

Association of Chief Executives

The Senior Advisor Workforce Local Government Association

National Director of Regulation and Social Care Ofsted

Chief Social Workers – Adults and Children

Foundations the national What Works Centre for Children

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12



Finance and Commercial Update

Agenda Item 9 Paper Ref 07

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

Richard Simpson, Head of Finance and Commercial

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Financial governance - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Summary

This paper provides an update on the following:

- Year to date management accounts for the period ending 31 December 2023, including an updated full year forecast.
- An update on the creation of our 2024/25 budget
- An update on our preparation for the 2023/24 financial year end audit
- An update on commercial activity

2. Action required

For discussion and noting.

3. Commentary

Management accounts

A summary set of the Management Accounts for the year to 31 December 2023 can be found in Annex A. Key highlights are:

Year to date expenditure, net of fee income, is £8,663k compared to the budgeted amount of £8,441k. This represents a year-to-date overspend of £222k which is an improvement of £192k from the prior period. This improvement is the result of our recently implemented financial mitigation plan which includes a recruitment pause, a reduction in hearings activity and an adjustment to our EQA inspection programme. We expect that these measures will result in a small full year underspend compared to budget, within our finance KPI of +/- 1.5%. Further detail regarding the forecast can be found below.

Year to date capital expenditure is £1,820k, which is £171k higher than budget. We have recently assessed that £111k relates to repairs and maintenance of our Forge system and this will be transferred from capital to revenue in January. We expect that the planned level of activity in the final quarter will return expenditure close to and within budget by the end of the financial year.

Forecast

We have reviewed the forecast communicated to the Board on 15 December 2023 and the outcome of this review is a small increase in the forecast underspend from £3.6k to £4.9k. This movement is the result of the following changes to our assumptions. A listing of our current assumptions is set out in Annex B.

Change since previous forecast	£
Increase in expected fee income shortfall.	(£84,586)
Reduction in external legal fees	£90,000
Increase in other costs.	(£4,090)
Net movement	£1,324

Whilst the level of fee income and external legal fees remain volatile, and a number of assumptions are being made (as per Annex B), we feel reasonably confident that no further mitigation measures, in addition to those reported to the board in December, will be required to return the level of expenditure to budget by the end of the financial year. We will continue to review the forecast each month and report to the Board if we consider there is a need for further action.

2024/25 Budget

At their request we provided the Department for Education (DfE) in December with the following 3 scenarios for the 2024/25 budget, to inform their internal planning process:

- i. Reverting close to our original core funding level, which is less than current year's budget, with a minimal adjustment for known price increases and the 2023/24 pay award. Under this scenario there would be a high level of regulatory risk. The budget would be extremely tight and waiting times at the hearings stage of fitness to practise would continue to increase.
- ii. Funding levels similar to this financial year. This scenario would enable us to meet the cost of known pay and price increases and provide a small amount of additional capacity to engage and influence the national policy agenda. While would be able to continue work to prepare cases for a hearing, waiting times at the hearings stage would continue to increase.
- iii. An increased level of funding to grow our level of regulatory activity, ensuring that the number of cases awaiting hearing would begin stabilising during the 2024/25 financial year. This third scenario would also deliver additional funding to meet potential liabilities, for example to respond to legal changes or judgements, and would see an increase in capital funding to unlock further efficiency improvements.

Further information regarding these scenarios is provided in a separate paper to the private strategy meeting.

Whilst we have yet to receive a formal reply to our budget proposals the DfE has indicated that scenario 3 is unlikely. Given this uncertainty we are currently preparing for either of the first 2 scenarios and considering the best allocation of expenditure across our various budget lines to support our 2023 – 2026 corporate strategy and emerging business plan priorities, although there will be limited room for manoeuvre. We will present our proposed budget to the Board at its next meeting on 22 March.

In setting next year's budget we face a number of cost pressures; to cater for known inflationary increases and to make provision for a small increase to staff salaries and partner fees. In addition, there is a higher level of uncertainty concerning the number of overseas applicants wishing to join the register compared to previous years.

Preparation for the 2023/24 financial year external audit

We met with the National Audit Office (NAO) in December for an initial planning meeting and we agreed that an interim audit will be undertaken in the week commencing 12 February and that the full year audit will complete in the normal timeframe with the audited accounts and the

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

audit completion report reported to ARAC at its June meeting. As with previous years the annual report will be laid before Parliament prior to the summer recess.

We informed ARAC in October of the actions we were taking in preparation for the audit, and we remain on track to complete these in advance of the year end. The current status of each of the actions is provided below:

- We have commenced the recruitment process for a senior finance and payroll officer, and we are planning that the successful candidate will be in place at the beginning of April. Recruitment was delayed slightly due to the recruitment pause.
- We are on schedule to complete the transition to a new fixed assets register for IT equipment in advance of the interim audit.
- We are reviewing the accounting judgements and policies published in the 2022/23 financial statements, and any changes will be reviewed and approved by the accounting officer on the recommendation of the Head of Finance and Commercial. These will be provided to the external auditors in advance of the interim audit.
- We intend to prepare an initial draft set of the financial statements for internal review prior to the end of March 2024 with a first draft of the full year accounts by the end of April. The final draft will be shared with the external auditors following review by the Executive Director of People & Business Support and the Head of Finance and Commercial.

Commercial update

At its meeting of 5 May 2023, ARAC approved business cases for the re-procurement of legal services and software licences for our Forge system. Both of these contracts were awarded in December and in the case of the procurement of the software licences we were able to negotiate a reduced cost of c£130k over the length of the contract.

We are in process of planning our procurement activity for the 2024/25 financial year and will bring a business case to ARAC at its May meeting for the procurement of transcription services.

We met with the Cabinet Office in November to review our procurement pipeline and it was confirmed that we would not require their approval for any of our procurements planned in 2024.

We will provide ARAC with a report on the implementation of our 2023/24 commercial plan at its May meeting.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

N/A

5. Annexes

Annex A – Management accounts at 31 December 2023

Income and Expenditure Statement

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance	Full Year Budget	Full Year Forecast	Variance
Fee Income	(7,521,682)	(7,800,857)	(279,175)	(10,605,000)	(10,140,414)	(464,586)
Executive Leadership Team						
Wages & Salaries	389,913	377,282	(12,630)	504,814	509,016	(4,202)
Support	22,104	7,500	(14,604)	10,000	34,662	(24,662)
Total	412,016	384,782	(27,234)	514,814	543,678	(28,864)
People & Business Support						
Wages & Salaries	1,762,982	1,827,331	64,349	2,435,835	2,323,871	111,965
Support	1,761,158	1,778,772	17,614	2,351,029	2,434,619	(83,590)
Total	3,524,140	3,606,103	81,963	4,786,864	4,758,490	28,374
Regulation						
Wages & Salaries	4,505,424	4,395,548	(109,875)	5,850,773	5,962,788	(112,015)
Support	5,701,598	5,612,977	(88,621)	7,464,440	7,147,545	316,895
Total	10,207,022	10,008,525	(198,496)	13,315,213	13,110,333	204,880
Professional practice and external engagement						
Wages & Salaries	1,582,923	1,533,184	(49,739)	2,063,578	2,090,483	(26,906)
Support	459,322	710,136	250,815	925,529	633,521	292,009
Total	2,042,244	2,243,320	201,076	2,989,107	2,724,004	265,103
Total Expenditure	16,185,422	16,242,730	57,308	21,605,999	21,136,506	469,494
Net Expenditure	8,663,740	8,441,873	(221,867)	11,000,999	10,996,092	4,908

Depreciation/Amortisation	1,552,460	1,621,500	69,040	2,162,000	2,130,147	31,853
Net Expenditure inc Depreciation	10,216,200	10,063,373	(152,827)	13,162,999	13,126,239	36,760
Capital Expenditure	1,820,111	1,648,500	(171,611)	2,199,000	2,180,000	19,000
Total	12,036,311	11,711,873	(324,438)	15,361,999	15,306,239	55,760

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Balance Sheet

	Cost £	Depreciation £	N.B.V £
Fixed Assets			
Buildings	1,264,299	(918,968)	345,331
Lease - Right of Use	1,122,252	(318,400)	803,853
IT Equipment	1,196,619	(845,374)	351,245
Fixtures & Fittings	318,851	(318,851)	0
Intangible Assets	7,807,986	(1,561,597)	6,246,389
Asset under construction	2,384,979	0	2,384,979
	<u>14,094,987</u>	<u>(3,963,190)</u>	<u>10,131,798</u>
Current Assets			
Prepayments			1,302,738
Bank			5,641,376
			<u>6,944,114</u>
Current Liabilities			
Accruals			(1,183,325)
Deferred Income			(5,773,232)
Trade Payables			(11,683)
Payroll Control			(255,498)
			<u>(7,223,738)</u>
Working Capital (Current Assets less Current Liabilities)			(279,624)
Non-Current Liabilities			
Short Term - PFI Finance Lease Liability Additions			(887,466)
Dilapidation Provision			(135,542)
			<u>(1,023,008)</u>
Total Assets and Liabilities			8,829,166
Taxpayers' Equity			<u>(8,829,165)</u>

Annex B – Underlying forecast assumptions

This forecast is based on the following assumptions:

- Full year Fitness to Practise (FtP) legal fees do not exceed the recently agreed level of activity of the provider and partners' fees remain as recently forecast. Other legal fees, whilst difficult to gauge, are assumed to be overbudget by £42k, for the full year.
- Fee income is expected to be £464k less than budget.
- The payroll forecast is based on the payroll cost in December and the impact of the recently approved recruitment pause. In addition, it is assumed that no further agency staff will be employed during the remainder of the year.
- The level of capital expenditure for the remainder of the financial year is in line with the plans of the relevant budget holders.
- Any expenditure related to the development of policy on behalf of DfE (early careers framework and advice on the potential regulation of the children's homes workforce) is excluded. These are assumed to be budget neutral as the DfE will fund these additional costs.
- Other costs are assumed to continue at their current rate of expenditure.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12



Performance Report Q3 2023-24

Agenda Item 10

Paper Ref 08

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Andy Leverton, Head of Business Planning and Improvement

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Discussion and Advising

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Operational delivery - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1. Executive summary

This report presents our performance for Q3 of 2023-24. We publish our performance and data on a quarterly basis. Publishing quarterly means we show trends and performance within the year and against previous years.

2. Overall assessment

Table 1: Overview of business plan objectives for 2023-24

Business plan objective for 2023 to 2024			RAG
Prevention and Impact	1.1	Develop an inclusive communications and engagement approach to improve understanding about social work and the value of our professional standards	
	2.1	Implement our data and insight strategy	
	3.1	Influence and advise development of national policy and statutory guidance	
	4.1	Implement the readiness for professional practice guidance	
	4.2	Review approach to course inspections, reapprovals and quality assurance	
Regulation and protection	5.1	Identify opportunities to improve the timeliness, fairness and quality of our registration and advice processes	
	5.2	Identify ways we can improve the timeliness of overseas applications	
	5.3	Review approach to concerns about misuse of title of 'social worker'	
	6.1	Identify opportunities to bring more investigative activity into earlier stage of the FtP process	
	6.2	Optimise our approach to accepted disposals	
	6.3	Ensure our hearings process is efficient and delivers value for money	
	6.4	Demonstrate impact following changes to revised legislative framework	
	7.1	Develop our SPOC network and explore local resolution pathways	
Delivery and improvement	8.1	Conduct user research to identify how to improve digital user experience	
	9.1	Implement our people strategy	
	10.1	Further develop and communicate quality and assurance frameworks	
	10.2	Evaluate our economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, and demonstrate value for money improvements	
	10.3	Implement our corporate sustainability plan	
Green: On track			Amber: Some issues, being managed and closely monitored
			Red: Significant issues, action plan required

Table 2: Overview of key performance indicators for 2023-24

ID	KPI Description	Target		Q3	Last Q
EQA1	Percentage of course reapproval decisions made	70% by March 2024	Q3: 67%	66%	57%
REG1	Time taken to approve UK registration applications	≤ 10 working days (median)		2	3
REG2	Time taken to approve restoration applications	≤ 20 working days (median)		2	4
REG3	Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases	Monitor (working days)		21	85
REG4	Time taken to answer emails	≤ 5 working days (median)		1	3
REG5	Time taken to answer phone calls	≤ 8 minutes (median)		5	8
FTP1	Age of triage caseload	≤ 14 weeks (median) by March 2024	Q3: ≤ 15 weeks	23	18
FTP2	Age of investigation caseload	≤ 54 weeks (median) by March 2024	Q3: ≤ 57 weeks	66	62
FTP3	Time taken to complete case examination process	≤ 12 weeks (median)		11	9
FTP4	Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome	Monitor (weeks)		109	118
FTP5	Time taken to approve interim orders	≤ 20 working days (median)		17	17
FTP6	FtP cases internal quality score	≥ 90% meet our internal standards		93%	88%
IG1	Time taken to complete FOI requests	≥ 90% within deadline		100%	100%
IG2	Time taken to complete subject access requests	≥ 90% within deadline		100%	99%
C1	Corporate complaints response time	≥ 70% within 20 working days		92%	97%
P1	Retention rate	≥ 80%		86%	86%
P2	Sickness absence over last 12 months	≤ 5.4 days per person		6.0	4.8
FIN1	Forecast year-end variance to budget	+/- 1.5%		0.04%	0.05%
IT1	System availability excluding planned outages	≥ 99%		99.9%	99.9%

3. Performance 01 October to 31 December 2023

Strategic theme: Prevention and impact

Our objectives

Objective 1.1: Develop an inclusive communications and engagement approach to improve understanding of social work and professional standards

Communications and engagement help us to facilitate positive, long-term change in our role as a specialist regulator. This is specifically true for our third statutory objective, to build trust and confidence in the social work profession. Through proactive action in this space, we aim to create opportunities to educate and inform people on social work and why it is deemed important enough by society to be regulated. Some of the activity in Q3 aims to incrementally grow confidence in the way we regulate and the proportion of social workers who value our professional standards.

Registration renewals campaign

In Q3, our communication and engagement work has focused on our registration renewal campaign. A wide range of targeted and multi-channel communication activity supported 100,495 (97%) social workers to renew during the 2023 registration renewal period. This included:

- emails being adapted to communicate specific outstanding actions
- text messages being piloted to improve cost efficiencies and responsiveness
- direct employer engagement on the requirements and local compliance
- a proactive media relations strategy.

In addition, work continued to strengthen our relationships with key stakeholders, including UNISON. In response to their feedback about the supervision content on our website, we better outlined the difference between supervision and peer reflection. We also delivered online sessions for UNISON and BASW representatives to support them with the registration renewal process.

We improved our approach to publicly reporting registration renewal data, by publishing regular and consistent updates on our website. This resulted in fewer ad-hoc data requests and increased the transparency of the social workers' actions during the registration renewal period.

Engaging with the sector

Our engagement team attended a total of 158 external meetings, and we engaged with a total of 2,976 external stakeholders. In comparison to 23-24, there were fewer requests for bespoke, regional CPD and registration renewal sessions. This suggests there is a better

understanding of registration renewal and CPD requirements. In addition, we had a presence at Community Care Live 2023, where we delivered a conference session, answered questions, and gathered vital insight from over 100 stakeholders.

During Q3, there was an increased level of requests from higher education institutes for in-person support from our engagement team. This support was for students who were starting or nearing the end of their respective courses and apprenticeships. We used these sessions to introduce and discuss regulatory topics of registration, misuse of title and fitness to practise (FtP).

By the end of Q3, we had recruited new national advisory forum members. Using a targeted approach, we recruited members who are social work students and who bring expertise from the private, voluntary, and independent sectors of the profession.

Informing and educating

The Department for Education (DfE) is committed to working with us to educate people on the vital role that social work plays within society. This will also support our ambition to promote social work as a rewarding profession. This is a key focus within the [‘stable homes built on love’](#) report and our own statutory aim - to promote public confidence in social work.

In Q4, we will deliver a short burst of campaign activity to coincide with Social Work Week March 2024. We want to understand and learn about public awareness, as well as inform and educate the public on the nature of social work. This will include that it adheres to professional standards and requires specific academic qualifications, skills and expertise. This is closely aligned to our current approach to communication and engagement and our overarching strategic objective to build trust and confidence in the social work profession, and in regulation.

Benchmarks and insight

We have been exploring the findings of all the research we commissioned this year, and how they may support our future work. We will be sharing the final products of the research into the social work workforce and practice education, in Q4.

We have also been developing an annual survey that will help us to understand and track social worker perceptions and confidence in us and in the profession. We will launch the survey in Q4 and use the findings to help inform our activities.

Objective 2.1: Implement our data and insight strategy

We have continued to share routine data about the social work profession and our regulation on our [website](#). By sharing this data and insight we can support leaders and policy makers with the latest insight, and ensure our processes are safe and fair. There have been over 1,400 views of our data and insight page since it launched at the end of September. It has also formed the basis of a number of engagement activities.

We have started phase 2 of our work to understand our diversity data. We are expanding on our initial headline findings that groups within the demographic categories of age, gender identity and ethnicity were overrepresented in our FtP process. We are conducting further analysis to better understand causality for these overrepresentations. We have established a data oversight group to ensure our analysis is robust.

Guidance to support the Decision Review Group to explore equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) concerns has been updated in light of our initial analysis of the diversity of social workers in FtP. We have also created additional guidance for decision makers to ensure our decisions are equitable.

Objective 3.1: Influence and advise on the development of national policy and statutory guidance

We have continued our work to respond to the challenges faced by the social work workforce in England. We held a further national roundtable meeting of sector leaders and representatives where we presented the findings from our causal loop analysis. We have started mapping all known initiatives and good practice that are helping to address the issues identified in the causal loop analysis. We will take the findings from this work to the next workforce roundtable meeting in Q4.

We have agreed the final report for the research on workforce issues around recruitment and retention. We will share what we have learned with the sector during Q4, culminating in a dedicated session at social work week March 2024.

We are a member of the DfE's Early Career Framework (ECF) Expert Writing Group. This group has met twice during Q3 to develop content on the framework for years 1 and 2. A draft of the ECF was completed and circulated by the DfE for evaluation and feedback from key stakeholders, including representatives of Social Work England. Our internal project group held a workshop in December to address key questions and complexities associated with the project.

During the evaluation period, we shared a draft of our Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour statements (KSBs) with the DfE and Expert Writing Group as part of a gap analysis process undertaken by the Education and Training Advisory Forum. This provided an opportunity for

us to consider alignment between the structure and content of our KSBs and the draft content for years 1 and 2 of the ECF.

In Q4, the group will map out options, potential timeframes and external dependencies for the regulation of the ECF, to be shared with the DfE. This is an evolving area of work, which could potentially result in changes to timeframes and direction. We are monitoring this work closely and continue to consider the implications for our own strategic priorities in professional practice.

Objective 4.1 Implement the readiness for professional practice guidance

The education and training advisory forum (ETAF) have continued to meet monthly. The ETAF have been refining the readiness for professional practice guidance. Consultation has taken place on the draft and this information is being collated and is reflected in revisions of the document. The consultations took place with students, practice educators and people with lived experience of social work. This guidance is on track for publication at the end of the financial year. Work is ongoing to ensure alignment with the ECF.

Objective 4.2 Review approach to course inspections, reapprovals and quality assurance

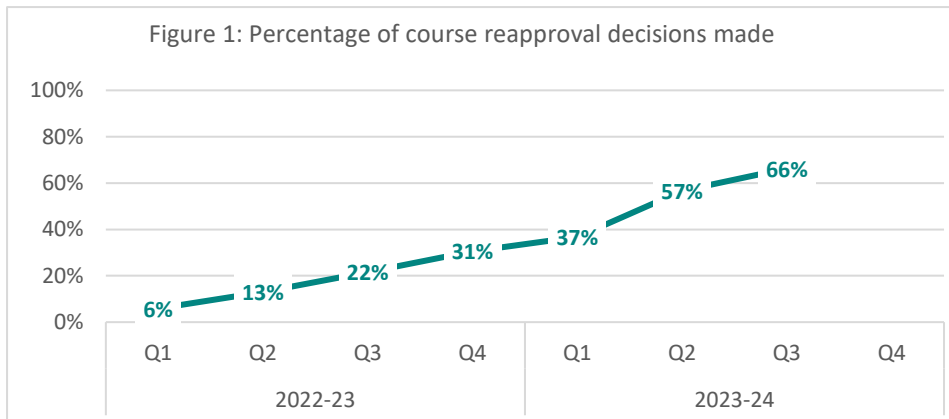
We continue to streamline our approach to systems and inspection processes. We have started an evaluation of the inspection process to date to help refine what this looks like going forward. The timeline for inspections has changed and we are now on target for completion in December 2024. This has allowed for additional capacity to be made available for new course approvals.

Annual monitoring began in October, which will provide a live picture of the education landscape. We are also currently in the process of planning and shaping the inspection process for best interest assessors and adult mental health practitioner inspections working closely with our policy team.

KPI: Percentage of course reapproval decisions made

Table 3: Education and training key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3 target	Q3
EQA1	Percentage of course reapproval decisions made	70% by March 2024	67%	66%



We narrowly missed our Q3 target for reapproval decisions. We have made reapproval decisions for 169 courses to date. Our current cycle of course reapproval inspections is on track to be completed by December 2024.

We have continued to work with higher education institutions to review evidence from courses with conditions and to ensure that appropriate improvement action is taken against areas of concern.

Strategic theme: Regulation and protection

Registration and Advice

Objective 5.1: Identify opportunities to improve the timeliness, fairness and quality of our registration and advice processes

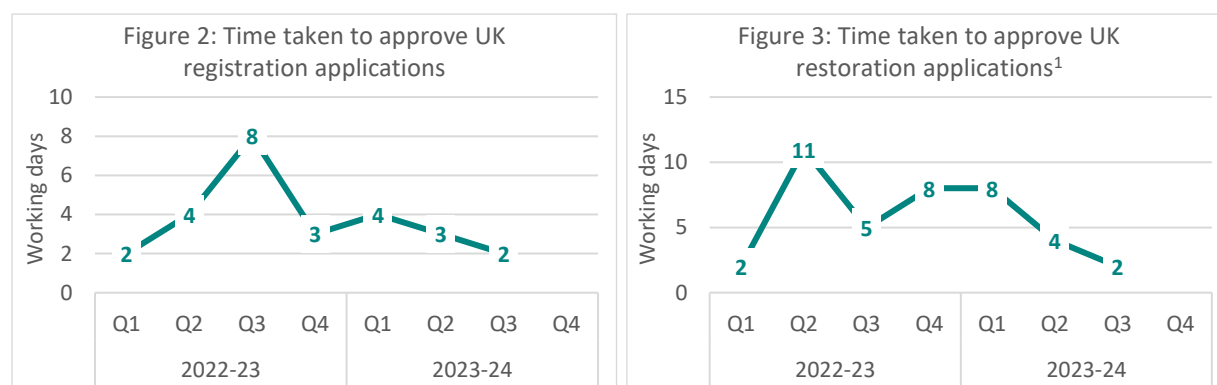
Registration renewal for the year commencing 1 December 2023 opened on 1 September 2023 with a deadline of 30 November 2023. All social workers who wanted to renew their registration had to complete three actions: submit an application to renew, pay a registration fee and provide two pieces of CPD (one of which must contain peer reflection).

We had a successful renewals period. Of those eligible to renew their registration, 97% of social workers completed the process by the deadline and were retained on the register. Further information about the renewals outcomes was published on our website, and can be found here: [Registration renewal and CPD progress report](#).

Time taken to approve registration and restoration applications

Table 4: Registration and restoration applications

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG1	Time taken to approve UK registration applications	≤ 10 working days	2	3
REG2	Time taken to approve restoration applications	≤ 20 working days	2	3



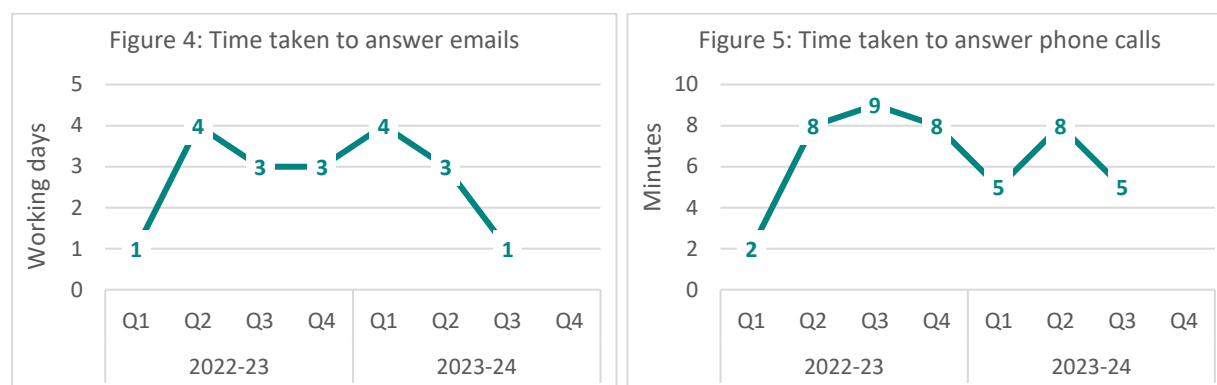
We met our targets for assessing applications to join and restore to the register during Q3. We received 1,593 UK registration applications between October 2023 and December 2023, compared to 1,479 during the same period last year. Q3 is a peak period for applicants joining the register following completion of postgraduate courses.

¹ REG2: Q1 23-24 figure has changed from 9 to 8. These amendments are anticipated each quarter due to retrospective changes being captured on the system after the data has been compiled and reported.

Time taken to answer emails and phone calls

Table 5: Phone call and email key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG4	Time taken to answer emails	≤ 5 working days	1	2
REG5	Time taken to answer phone calls	≤ 8 minutes	5	6



We met our targets for time taken to answer phone calls and emails in Q3. We received 14,645 calls during the period, which is lower than the 17,435 calls received in the same period last year. We believe this reflects social workers continuing to become familiar with the renewals requirements, alongside improvements that were made to the renewals communications to give more tailored information to applicants. We were able to use the new call centre software to route renewals enquiries, which helped improve timeliness for telephone queries. We received 14,074 emails compared to 10,332 received in the same period last year.

Objective 5.2: Identify ways we can improve the timeliness of overseas applications

There was a decrease in overseas applications received (381 in Q3 compared to 485 in Q2), although we received 115 applications in December, which was slightly higher than the same time last year (109). We took a median of 57 days in Q3 to process overseas applications. This is linked to the continued assessment and processing of the higher number of applications received in Q1 and Q2. A paper describing our continuing activity to manage international applications is included as a separate paper at this meeting.

We have co-produced refreshed guidance for overseas applicants with social work representative bodies. Publication is delayed slightly and will be published once the legal and communications review has been completed.

A paper on international recruitment went to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) in October 2023.

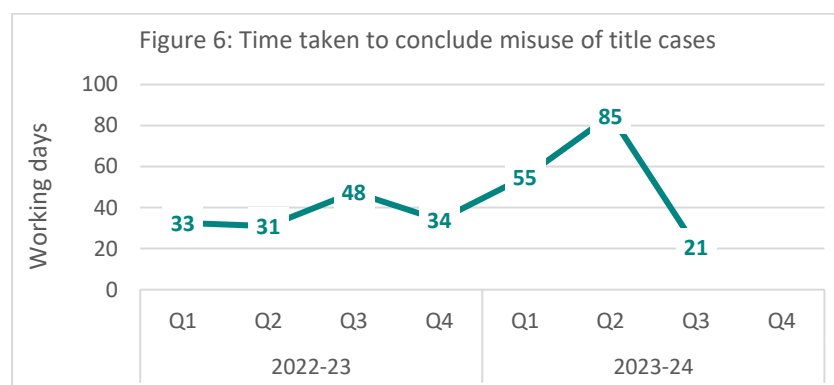
Objective 5.3: Review our approach to concerns about misuse of the protected title ‘social worker’

We continue to investigate misuse of title cases in line with the guidance published in Q2. In December, we introduced changes to our process for the assessment of restoration applications for registrants who failed to renew their registration but continued to practise for a short period (1-2 days). This has assisted with ensuring these individuals can return to practise appropriately and efficiently.

Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases

Table 6: Misuse of title key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG3	Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases	Monitor (working days)	21	55



The changes to how we investigate misuse of title cases, as described above, account for the drop-in time to conclude a misuse of title case, bringing the median down to 21 working days for Q3, compared to 85 working days in Q2. This is most notable in our December figures, where we took median of one day to conclude misuse of title cases, compared to a median of 31 days in December 2022.

Fitness to practise

Objective 6.1: Identify opportunities to bring more investigative activity into the earlier stage of the fitness to practise process

In Q3, we made further progress with delivering our learning and development plan in triage and investigations. We have delivered training on supporting participants in the FtP process and provided teams with a caselaw update. We also reviewed and agreed our learning and development requirements for 24-25. In Q4, we will focus on good communications as our learning and development theme, with a series of internally and externally facilitated sessions being provided to the teams.

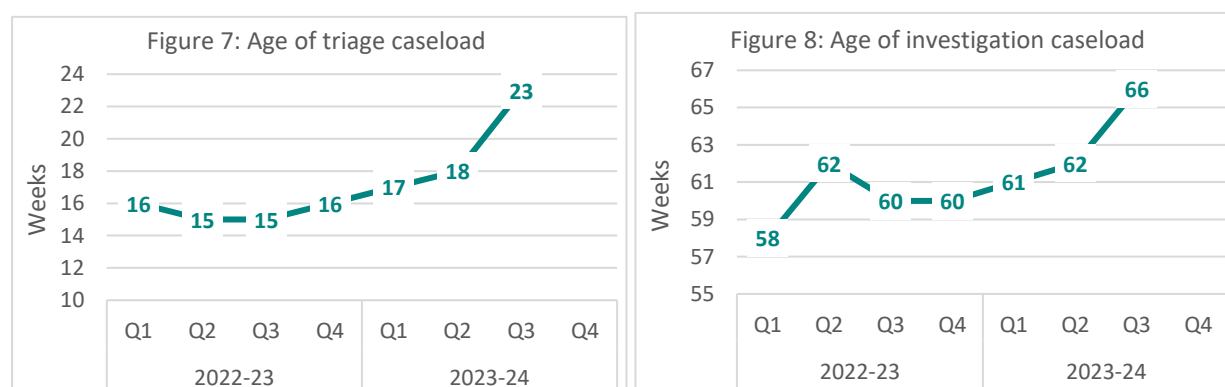
In Q4, we are introducing complex case drop-in sessions for our investigations team. We anticipate that these sessions will assist investigators with progressing their more complex, older investigations. We are continuing to plan work for 24-25 to strengthen our approach

to investigations so that we reduce time and cost at the later stages of the process. This includes focussing on early engagement and developing our targeted approach to investigations.

Age of triage and investigation caseloads

Table 7: Triage and investigations key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3 target	Q3
FTP1	Age of triage caseload	≤ 14 weeks by March 2024	≤ 15 weeks	23
FTP2	Age of investigation caseload	≤ 54 weeks by March 2024	≤ 57 weeks	66



The median ages of the triage and investigations caseloads have increased during Q3.

We received 519 new concerns in Q3, compared to 448 in Q2, and 438 in Q1. Due to other constraints, the short term increases in decision-making capacity that were introduced in Q3, did not have the expected impact on the age of the triage caseload. There have also been delays in recruiting to 2 additional officer roles in triage as planned, which accounts for 24% of the team's officer capacity. These roles are being recruited for currently, with new staff expected to join in the coming weeks.

While we continue to focus on timeliness at triage, we do not expect to reduce the median age of the triage caseload to the target of 14 weeks by the end of the financial year. We are exploring other options to increase capacity and reduce the age of cases at the triage stage as part of our 24-25 resource and business planning process.

The median age of the investigations caseload is adversely impacted by the age of the triage caseload, because this metric includes the time cases spend at the triage stage. In Q3, the median time that cases spend in the investigations team is 59 weeks. This emphasises the importance of reducing time taken for cases to pass through triage. We progressed 279 cases from investigation to case examiner in Q3.

In November we progressed 134 cases to case examiners, which is the highest number in this financial year. The team continued to focus on progressing high-risk cases. We are

introducing complex case drop-in sessions in Q4 to support the team to progress older, more complex cases.

Objective 6.2: Optimise our approach to accepted disposals by reviewing the case examination stage

During Q3, 11 cases were closed through accepted disposal (AD). We continue to review cases where ADs are offered but not accepted, in order to identify learning that can be shared with the case examiners. In November, we held our second internal AD workshop with the case examiners to look at different themes. We will continue to hold thematic reviews to further support our learning and improvement.

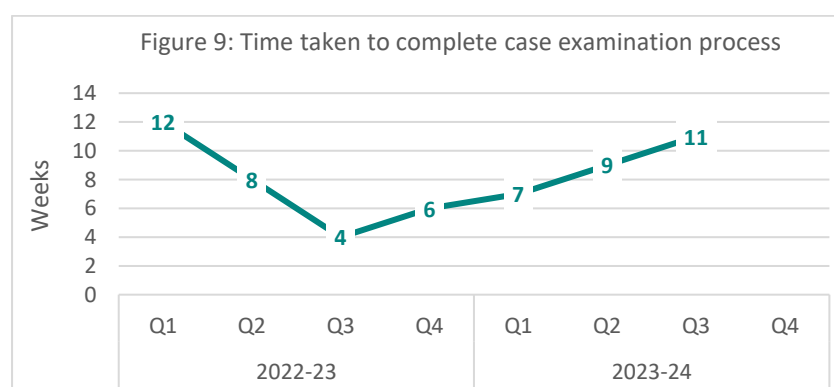
The internal quality and improvement (IQI) team conducted an audit of AD decisions, which provided an outcome of adequate assurance. The IQI team also conducted an audit on the overall decision-making process for case examiners, which provided substantial assurance. Learning from that audit will be shared with case examiners and operational teams as we continue to improve our approach to AD.

Due to availability over the Christmas period, there was a reduction in CE decision making in December. We therefore anticipate increased decision making at the start of Q4, with the resultant increase in AD offers and outcomes.

Time taken to complete case examination process

Table 8: Case examination key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP3	Time taken to complete case examination process	≤ 12 weeks	11	8



We remain within our target of 12 weeks for cases completing the case examiner stage. The increase in timeliness is because it takes longer to conclude a case through AD than if it is closed or referred to a hearing due to the additional time allowed for a response to the offer of an AD. We have also had some long-term absence that has affected the time taken to progress cases. We anticipate this absence to continue during Q4, which will continue to affect timeliness.

Objective 6.3 Ensure our hearings process is efficient and delivers value for money

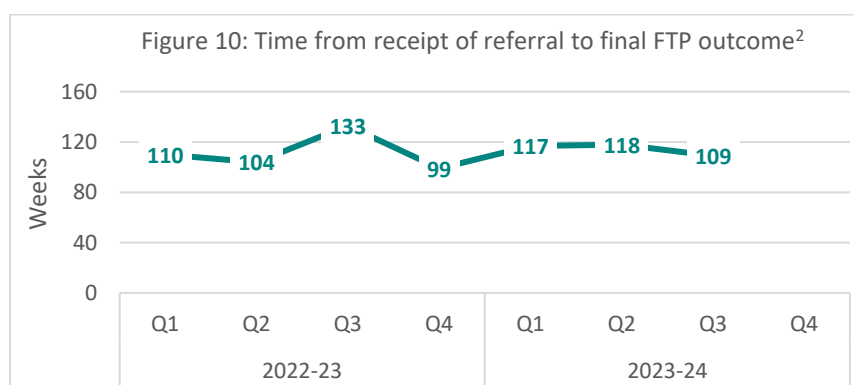
We started a pilot of two-person panels for final hearings in November. We will review the outcomes and learning from this pilot during Q4.

During Q3, an internal audit was conducted in relation to the hearings process, and this returned a finding of substantial assurance. During Q4, we will continue to review the hearings process to determine what changes can be made as we conduct fewer substantive hearings throughout 24-25.

Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome

Table 9: Final FtP outcome key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP4	Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome	Monitor (weeks)	109	115



As has been previously discussed with the Board, the budget available this year will not enable a reduction in the number of cases awaiting hearing. Consequently, the time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome is expected to increase during Q4, and through 24-25. We have concluded our work to determine the position of cases awaiting hearing, and we continue to manage the progression of these cases within our available resources.

Objective 6.4: Demonstrate impact following the changes to our revised legislative framework, focusing on interim order timeliness, quality of voluntary removal decisions, and efficiency and outcomes of case examiner decision review process

In Q3, we instigated 26 applications for an interim order and 9 applications for an interim order hearing. We maintained the reduction in the time taken to approve interim orders since the start of the financial year, which demonstrates the positive impact of our more streamlined interim order referral process.

We have considered 14 applications for voluntary removal from social workers who are in the FtP process, and 3 applications have been granted. Following internal and external

² FTP4: Q1 23-24 figure has changed from 118 to 117. These amendments are anticipated each quarter due to retrospective changes being captured on the system after the data has been compiled and reported.

workshops in Q2 to review the voluntary removal process, we have progressed the identified actions to streamline the process.

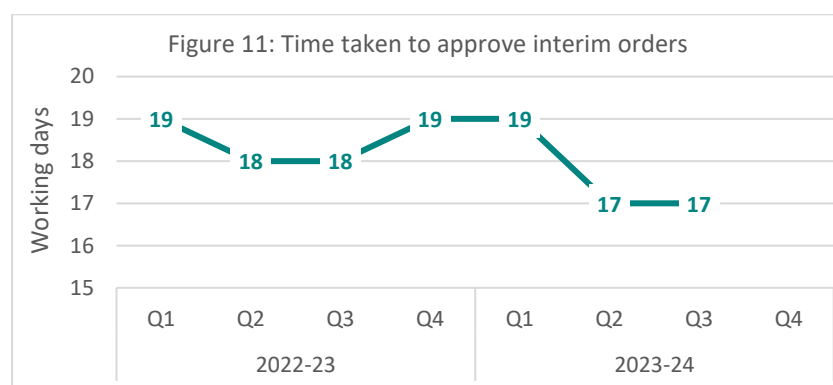
In Q4, we will progress our analysis of the impact of the changes to our legislative framework.

In Q3, our legal team received two new applications to review a case examiner decision using the powers given to us in our revised legal framework. At the start of Q3 we also had one ongoing application, which concluded during Q3 and was referred back to the case examiners for a fresh decision. At the end of Q3, the two new applications are being considered at stage one of the process.

Time taken to approve interim orders

Table 10: Interim orders key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP5	Time taken to approve interim orders	≤ 20 working days	17	18



We continue to meet our timeliness target for approving interim orders. We have maintained the reduction in the take taken to approve interim orders from 19 days to 17 days.

Objective 7.1: Develop our single point of contact network and explore local resolution pathways

We held our third single point of contact (SPOC) network event in Q3. The event focussed discussions and feedback relating to our analysis of diversity data in the FtP process, which we published in September 2023. Work is planned in Q4 to co-produce FtP referral guidance with the SPOC network.

The SPOC network continues to help us engage with local employers more effectively. The network has a reach of 307 people at 178 organisations. We will be beginning our evaluation of the impact of the SPOC network in Q4 to look at what the network has achieved so far, while looking towards ambitions for the future. We recognise that this

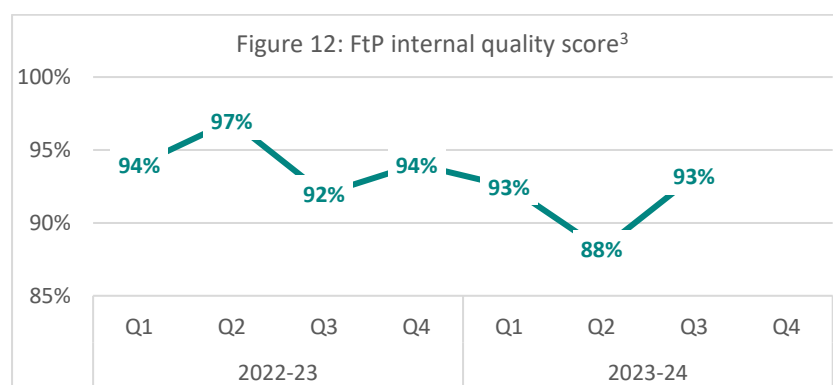
network needs to be continually nurtured as contacts shift roles and organisations and this is something we will progress in our next business plan.

Due to capacity constraints, we have not made further progress in exploring local resolution pathways. Further work in relation to local resolution is planned in 24-25.

Fitness to practise cases internal quality score

Table 11: FtP cases internal quality key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP6	FtP cases internal quality score	≥ 90%	93%	91%



We have met the KPI for the internal quality score in this quarter.

As set out above, we have received the outcomes of audits conducted by the IQI team in relation to accepted disposal decisions, and from our internal auditors in relation to the hearings process. Our audit of interim order outcomes resulted in an assurance rating of adequate. We have completed an audit of case examiner decisions, and the report awaiting finalisation.

In Q3, we managed 5 registrant appeals relating to the outcome of an FtP hearing (including interim orders, final hearings and review hearings), and a referral of hearing decision by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care to the High Court. Where we are successful in defending litigation, we consider whether it is appropriate to recover our legal costs from the appellant. The team has continued to advise on our involvement in a number of Family Court proceedings where documents may be disclosed to us. Any learning identified from this work continues to be shared and followed up with the relevant teams.

³ FTP6: Q2 23-24 figure has changed from 89% to 88%. These amendments are anticipated each quarter due to retrospective changes being captured on the system after the data has been compiled and reported.

Strategic theme: Delivery and improvement

Our objectives

Objective 8.1: Carry out user research to identify how to improve digital user experience

Work continues on interventions to improve our approach to user research. We are preparing to launch user research into how we can improve our 'raise a concern' service. During Q3, the project group have prepared our approach to these research sessions. We have drafted an email invitation to recruit a pool of people with lived experience as potential participants for this research. This will help us to create efficiencies in how we conduct this work whilst ensuring that we stay true to our co-production values.

We have also been finalising our broader approach to user research. This includes writing a privacy notice, updating our policy, creating a sign-up form, and preparing digital communications to promote the new database. We plan to launch the database at the start of Q1 24-25.

We are progressing with priority improvements following an accessibility audit we conducted on our website to help us to ensure we remain inclusive. This will be implemented against 7 major areas of improvement in accordance with our budget. Work is expected to be completed spring 2024. Additionally, we continue our internal education work to ensure our people understand that accessibility is everyone's business, this includes sharing resources across the organisation.

This work continues to lay the foundation work ahead of any future digital strategy.

Objective 9.1: Implement our people strategy

We paused recruitment during Q3, to help manage our budget for the remainder of 23-24. We assessed risk and impact on delivery, and exceptions were made for high-risk roles. In - progress applications were retained held and communications with applicants meant we were able to retain their interest. This has meant that we have been able to recruit for these roles quickly and successfully. We have developed a phased plan to allow us to recommence recruitment in Q4 and fill roles that are currently vacant ready for Q1 of 24-25.

During Q3, we evaluated our recruitment approach to identify current strengths and areas for improvement. The outcomes from this work will be reported during Q4. We used targeted recruitment methods for the Legal Adviser recruitment by sending communications to lawyers from ethnic minority backgrounds, as these individuals are underrepresented in our partner pool. We also reviewed our Legal Adviser role descriptors to encourage applications based on skills and not just experience and increase interest from suitable candidates who have no direct regulatory experience. We are planning to analyse the impact of these changes and share the findings.

We are on track to deliver priority learning and development programmes for registration and fitness to practise. We have created comprehensive guidance for recording development activities undertaken by teams, to ensure all activity is tracked effectively.

We received 28 applications to our positive action mentoring programme, and we have made 10 pairings for this cohort. Everyone who indicated they were a member of a traditionally marginalised group (specifically regarding ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQIA+ identity) has been matched with a partner. The cohort includes representation from every directorate and various seniority levels. There were more applications from male employees, which was positive to see as they are often underrepresented in these type of activities. The launch event is on 16 January 2024.

Competing demands made employee engagement with our networks more challenging in Q4, so we have looked at more opportunities for them to pool resources. They hosted a lunch on 7 December to celebrate Hannukah and the launch of the “networks hub” intranet page, which brings together information about the networks and how to join.

We are signed up to the Race at Work charter, which provides a practical framework from [Business in the Community](#) to develop race equality strategies and promote leadership, allyship, workplace safety and inclusivity, mentoring and sponsorship for ethnic minority employees. We received the results from our first submission in Q3. Our results are better or comparable to other organisations except for data and career progression. We have already identified ways we can improve in these areas.

Work to identify an appropriate external benchmark for our people and development function continues and will be completed during Q4.

We remain on track with our plans for leadership development. We have rolled out 360-degree feedback to all senior leaders across the organisation and are due to complete this process by the end of Q4. To assist leaders in making the most of this learning opportunity, individual coaching support and access to wider learning and development is available. We have also developed a proposal to support managers in their day-to-day roles and to build confidence in applying policies. This includes online content, face to face sessions and a manager’s forum as a space to share knowledge with peers and build an active community of managers. The details of this programme will be finalised during January 2024 with the opportunities becoming available from Q4.

Objective 10.1: Further develop and communicate quality and assurance frameworks.

We have now completed the roll out of our assurance framework across the remaining 3 regulatory functions. An update paper was discussed at the January ARAC.

The learning from implementing this assurance framework across our regulatory functions is being used to inform our approach to wider roll out across the rest of organisation during 24-25.

In December, the executive leadership team approved a 2-stage approach to publishing information about our quality assurance arrangements. This includes how these arrangements have driven improvements in the quality and fairness of decision making and the timeliness of our regulatory process. This will begin in the first half of 24-25, via the publication on our website of key information to explain our quality assurance arrangements.

Objective 10.2: Evaluate our economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, and demonstrate value for money improvements.

We completed an initial draft of our value for money report in Q3. The executive leadership team provided feedback, which will be incorporated into the next draft in Q4. We anticipate completing our evaluation by the end of Q4, delayed from the end of Q3. We have now been provided with access to the Cabinet Office data on value for money in Arm's Length Bodies. We are considering how we can use this information to inform our evaluation. We are working on our benefits realisation plan, which we aim to deliver by the end of Q4.

Objective 10.3: Implement our corporate sustainability plan

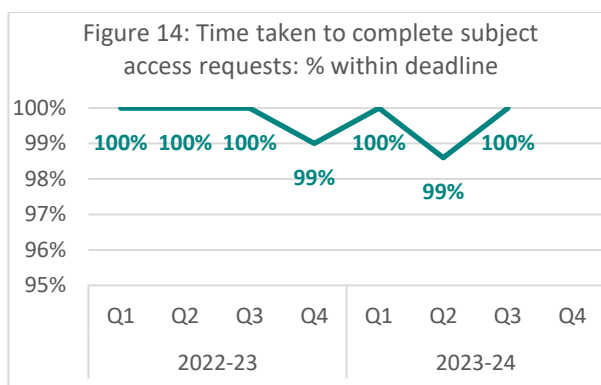
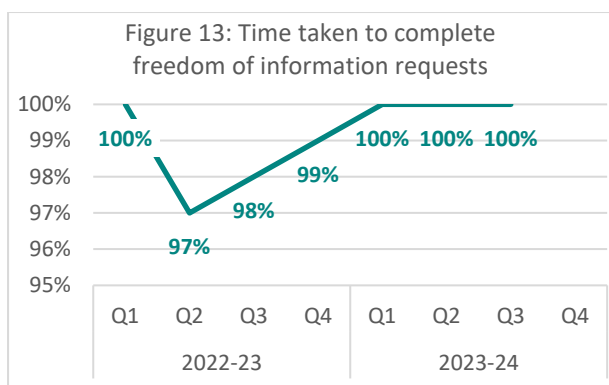
Our sustainability plan remains on track and a detailed report was provided to ARAC during Q3. Although there have been minor delays in a couple of areas, we have plans in place to ensure we can deliver all key objectives by the end of the financial year. In Q3, the Chief Executive and other staff involved in championing the sustainability plan completed carbon literacy training and made commitments on behalf of the organisation and personally. We are working through the modern slavery assessment tool to understand where there may be risks of modern slavery within our supply chain. The proportion of our waste that is now recycled has increased by more than 10% in the last year.

Our key performance indicators

Information governance

Table 12: Information governance key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
IG1	Time taken to complete FOI requests	≥ 90% within deadline	100%	100%
IG2	Time taken to complete subject access requests	≥ 90% within deadline	100%	99%

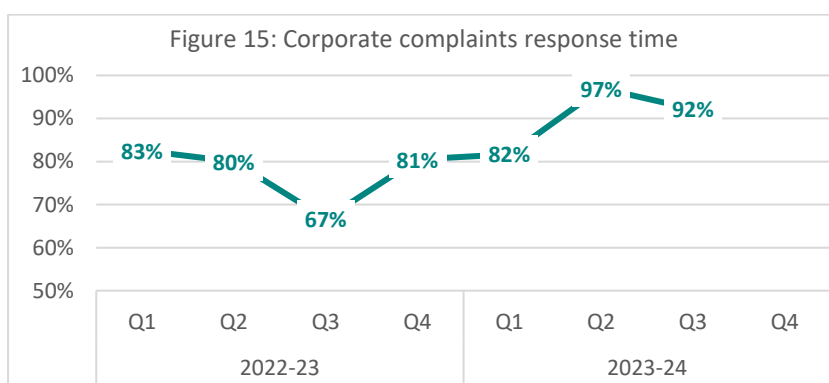


We responded to all freedom of information requests and all subject access requests within the statutory deadlines.

Corporate complaints response time

Table 13: Corporate complaints key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
C1	Corporate complaints response time	≥ 70% within 20 working days	92%	91%

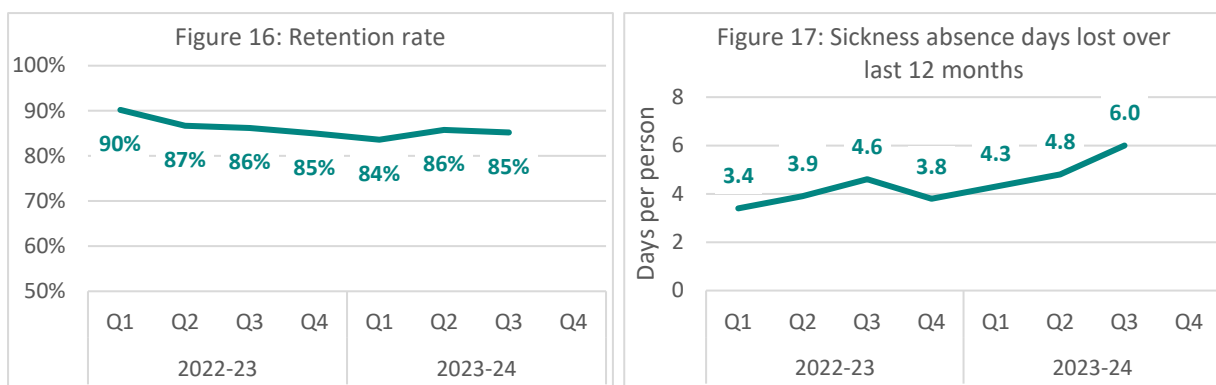


We continue to exceed our target for responding to corporate complaints in this quarter. We received fewer corporate complaints about this year's annual renewal cycle (3) compared the previous year (8). There were also significantly fewer complaints in 23-24 about the decision to remove individuals for failing to renew their registration (5) than in 22-23 (38).

People

Table 14: People key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3
P1	Retention rate	≥ 80%	85%
P2	Sickness absence days lost over previous 12 months	≤ 5.4 days per person	6.0



Over the rolling 12-month period, there has been a gradual increase in days lost to sickness absence. We are now exceeding the target of 5.4 days per person. A significant factor has been a rise in long term absence, often for mental health reasons. People have been appropriately supported and long-term absence has reduced since Q2, although there has been more seasonal illness during Q3.

We recently identified an error in our sickness absence reporting, which means that sickness absence has been omitted from our figures for people who have left the organisation. We have identified the cause of the problem and have changed our reporting mechanism. We are testing the new report thoroughly to ensure that the problem is fixed, and we can provide assurance of accurate reporting for this KPI.

When we are confident the new report is working as it should, we will present a revised set of sickness absence figures for 2022-23 and 2023-24 in our Q4 report. We will also prepare a report for the Board in March to explain in more detail what caused this issue, what we have done, and our programme of work to improve data architecture and reporting arrangements. It is important to note that this error only affects the calculation of the KPI; our recorded sickness absence records for people still in our employment and those who have left are unaffected.

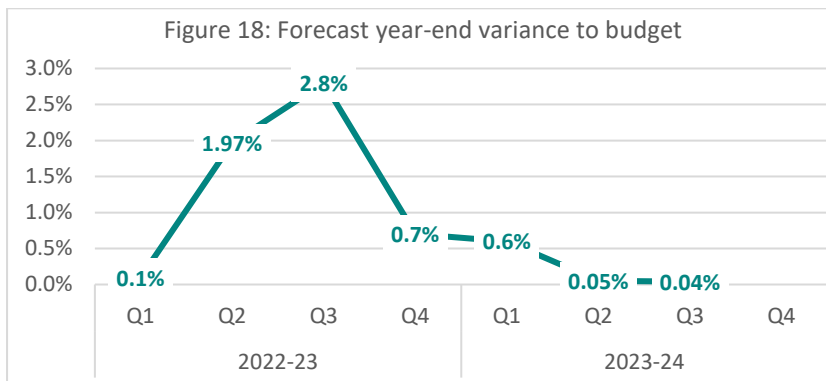
The change in reporting means our sickness absence rates since April 2022 will be higher than previously reported. Our sickness absence rate is likely to be higher than the latest public sector average of 7.7 days per person published by the Office for National Statistics.

In light of the higher rate of sickness absence that we are now identifying, we will review and re-prioritise our absence management approach. There is no impact on our ability to manage sickness absence effectively. We continue to provide one to one support, using our tools and occupational health to allow sustained return to work.

Forecast year-end variance to budget

Table 15: Finance key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3
FIN1	Forecast year-end variance to budget	+/- 1.5%	0.04% ⁴

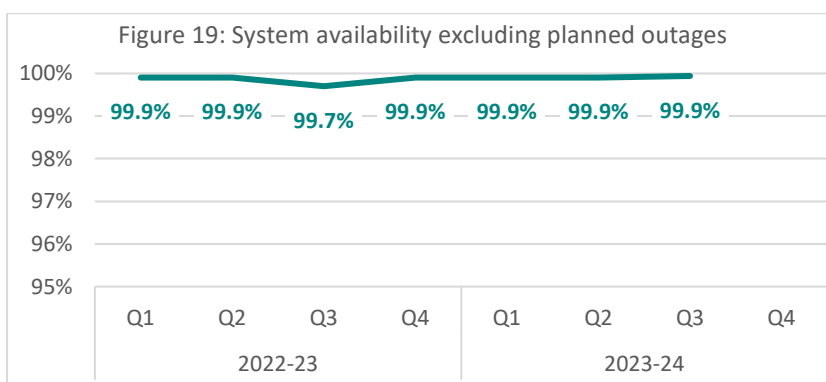


Year to date expenditure, net of fee income, is £8,663k compared to the budgeted amount of £8,441k. This represents a year-to-date overspend of £222k which is an improvement of £192k from the prior period. This improvement is the result of our recently implemented financial improvement plan, which includes a recruitment pause and a reduction in hearings activity. We expect that these measures will result in a small underspend compared to budget and within our finance KPI of +/- 1.5%.

System availability

Table 16: IT key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
IT1	System availability excluding planned outages	≥ 99%	99.9%	99.9%



Our systems were available within the agreed tolerances throughout Q3, despite a significant system load during the registration renewals period.

⁴ This is an underspend of 0.04%

Annex A

Statistical data 2023-24

Education and training			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of concerns received	2023-24		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	2022-23		0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Number of re-approval inspections started	2023-24		11	16	13	11	0	0	6	7	6			
	2022-23		5	14	12	20	7	0	0	2	0	1	15	24
Re-approval decisions	Number completed	2023-24	3	2	10	21	7	21	8	6	10			
		2022-23	2	0	4	6	4	9	8	6	9	9	8	6
	Number re-approved	2023-24	1	0	0	1	3	7	0	0	0			
		2022-23	0	0	1	4	2	5	0	0	6	0	0	0
	Number re-approved with conditions	2023-24	2	2	10	20	4	14	8	6	10			
		2022-23	2	0	3	2	2	4	8	6	3	9	8	6
	Number not re-approved	2023-24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
		2022-23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Approval decisions	Number completed	2023-24	3	0	4	10	3	2	0	1	6			
		2022-23	0	0	0	3	3	2	0	2	1	2	0	0
	Number approved	2023-24	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0			
		2022-23	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Number approved with conditions	2023-24	3	0	4	9	2	1	0	1	6			
		2022-23	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	2	1	2	0	0
	Number not approved	2023-24	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0			
		2022-23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Registration		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of registered social workers	2023-24	99,893	100,316	100,677	101,460	102,388	103,284	104,138	103,324	101,779			
	2022-23	98,512	98,640	98,725	99,326	99,909	100,856	101,523	100,654	98,236	98,792	99,190	99,567
Number of social workers joining the register	2023-24	437	468	504	822	989	985	1,130	368	726			
	2022-23	243	161	295	798	534	1,007	963	588	1,341	559	408	426
Number of social workers leaving the register	2023-24	112	43	124	37	58	85	273	1,185	2,283			
	2022-23	181	41	215	59	43	146	306	1,461	3,768	11	14	54
Number of new registration applications received	All applications ⁱ	2023-24	535	726	694	1,333	1,230	1,321	999	638	337		
		2022-23	275	358	594	1,236	1,129	1,475	948	632	310	437	436
	UK graduates ⁱⁱ	2023-24	394	537	519	1,151	1,064	1,184	863	508	222		
		2022-23	152	188	463	1,075	954	1,338	777	501	201	308	254
	Overseas graduates	2023-24	141	189	175	182	166	137	136	130	115		
		2022-23	123	170	131	161	175	137	171	131	109	129	182
Median time taken to approve registration applications (working days)	All applications	2023-24	5	6	4	3	4	4	3	2	3		
		2022-23	4	5	3	3	4	6	8	9	7	3	4
	UK graduates	2023-24	5	5	3	3	4	3	2	1	2		
		2022-23	2	3	1	3	3	6	8	8	7	8	3
	Overseas graduates	2023-24	52	56	56	57	56	56	52	59	57		
		2022-23	8	14	12	13	20	25	33	33	34	35	46
Number of restoration applications received	2023-24	79	85	95	81	65	76	82	129	495			
	2022-23	83	82	75	66	94	127	142	105	1,232	194	97	102
Median time taken to approve restoration applications (working days)	2023-24	15	8	3	1	9	2	2	1	3			
	2022-23	2	2	5	13	11	10	9	11	4	8	7	8
Number of misuse of title cases opened	2023-24	18	13	13	8	9	5	15	19	25			
	2022-23	6	7	13	3	7	6	9	13	37	30	26	7
Median time taken to conclude misuse of title cases (working days)	2023-24	60	71	43	70	62	115	54	48	1			
	2022-23	20	35	45	31	35	22	59	38	31	22	34	38

Registration		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of phone calls received	2023-24	1,770	1,843	2,171	2,627	2,696	3,845	4,243	6,775	3,627			
	2022-23	1,304	1,578	1,543	1,976	2,404	3,808	4,347	7,030	6,058	2,677	1,883	2,064
Median time taken to answer phone calls (minutes)	2023-24	6	5	6	6	5	12	9	3	6			
	2022-23	1	3	3	4	8	12	8	8	25	15	6	6
Number of emails received	2023-24	1,643	1,850	1,977	2,057	2,557	4,376	4,481	6,109	3,484			
	2022-23	931	1,344	1,480	1,648	1,802	2,863	3,058	4,281	2,993	1,803	1,592	1,896
Median time taken to answer emails (working days)	2023-24	3	4	3	5	2	5	4	1	1			
	2022-23	1	1	1	3	5	4	4	2	2	5	2	2

Continued professional development		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Percentage of social workers that have submitted at least one piece of CPD	2023-24	4%	5%	7%	10%	13%	20%	35%	96%	0.3%			
	2022-23	5%	7%	8%	10%	12%	20%	34%	95%	1%	1%	2%	4%
Percentage of social workers meeting all CPD requirements	2023-24	1%	2%	3%	4%	7%	14%	27%	96%	0.06%			
	2022-23	2%	2%	3%	4%	6%	12%	26%	95%	0.04%	0.2%	0.6%	1%
Total number of valid CPD items recorded (cumulative)	2023-24	7,414	9,004	13,406	18,451	26,328	43,756	77,756	222,148	441			
	2022-23	7,710	9,968	13,720	17,379	24,072	41,788	75,663	220,937	759	1,793	3,478	5,731

Fitness to practise		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of concerns received	2023-24	141	142	155	146	156	146	170	202	147			
	2022-23	155	121	130	128	163	154	179	177	162	151	128	153
Triage	Median age of pre-triage and triage caseload (weeks)	2023-24	17	17	17	19	19	18	20	19	22		
		2022-23	18	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	15	16	16
	Number of new pre-triage cases	2023-24	123	151	146	138	144	107	101	136	94		
		2022-23	125	146	144	95	150	155	152	176	131	209	126
	Number of open pre-triage cases	2023-24	307	294	305	263	272	316	282	272	195		
		2022-23	350	321	316	272	309	316	319	330	354	342	307

Fitness to practise			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Triage	Percentage of cases closed at the pre-triage stage	2023-24	13%	21%	12%	22%	30%	16%	22%	17%	16%			
		2022-23	27%	40%	22%	15%	15%	11%	16%	29%	22%	16%	14%	9%
	Median time taken to complete pre-triage stage (weeks)	2023-24	6	7	8	6	4	4	9	7	8			
		2022-23	8	10	7	9	6	6	4	3	0	7	8	6
	Number of cases that progressed to triage	2023-24	120	130	120	140	95	53	105	122	143			
		2022-23	114	110	111	122	96	135	123	117	84	186	141	133
	Number open triage cases (excluding on hold cases)	2023-24	490	527	536	615	623	567	588	589	685			
		2022-23	484	483	485	405	365	409	380	376	366	439	448	460
	Percentage of cases closed at the triage stage	2023-24	71%	68%	74%	62%	66%	77%	82%	69%	53%			
		2022-23	49%	58%	61%	60%	62%	73%	57%	46%	61%	71%	79%	46%
Investigation	Median time taken to complete triage stage (weeks)	2023-24	13	19	22	18	25	27	24	29	17			
		2022-23	8	17	23	25	18	19	15	12	19	16	20	12
	Number of cases that progressed to investigation	2023-24	26	32	31	31	35	27	17	41	24			
		2022-23	24	48	44	39	48	27	59	66	34	30	24	62
	Number open investigation cases (excluding on hold cases)	2023-24	667	648	613	606	612	614	574	561	550			
		2022-23	824	784	735	731	733	731	718	720	708	702	640	665
	Median age of investigation caseload (weeks)	2023-24	63	64	61	63	61	62	64	63	66			
		2022-23	63	61	58	61	62	62	61	58	60	62	63	60
Case examiner	Median time taken to complete investigation stage (weeks)	2023-24	31	51	69	55	70	68	65	53	58			
		2022-23	79	129	103	57	50	78	62	63	73	57	44	75
	Number of open case examiner cases	2023-24	77	82	84	101	96	97	111	134	145			
		2022-23	222	177	166	140	74	58	43	68	75	59	70	82
	Percentage of cases closed at the case examiner stage	2023-24	72%	80%	67%	70%	44%	85%	63%	80%	54%			
		2022-23	51%	59%	63%	58%	63%	54%	49%	65%	54%	59%	64%	73%
	Median time taken to complete case examiner stage (weeks)	2023-24	7	8	6	6	9	11	12	11	11			
		2022-23	12	11	12	11	7	8	4	4	4	7	5	4

Fitness to practise			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Case examiner	Number of accepted disposals offered	2023-24	2	14	12	9	8	8	8	10	7			
		2022-23	14	13	7	9	13	9	7	8	1	11	7	8
Hearings	Number of cases that progressed to hearings	2023-24	8	9	19	7	19	4	15	6	11			
		2022-23	32	46	26	32	33	25	24	15	13	27	18	7
	Number of open cases in hearings (excluding post-hearing cases)	2023-24	386	378	362	356	366	354	362	361	361			
		2022-23	321	351	364	375	385	392	395	392	394	406	412	394
	Number of concluded final hearings	2023-24	17	19	28	14	7	14	4	6	7			
		2022-23	6	18	12	18	21	21	16	20	12	12	11	25
Interim orders	Median time take to approve interim orders (working days)	2023-24	19	20	19	17	18	17	20	n/a	17			
		2022-23	12	25	19	19	18	12	17	21	11	19	18	19
	Number of applications for interim order hearings	2023-24	6	4	7	4	8	4	4	1	4			
		2022-23	2	10	6	12	17	11	6	11	5	7	7	7
	Number of interim orders imposed	2023-24	6	3	6	4	7	4	4	0	4			
		2022-23	1	6	6	11	15	9	6	10	5	5	7	8
Number of final order reviews held		2023-24	10	14	11	8	14	11	10	15	7			
		2022-23	8	9	11	8	11	9	9	7	6	12	7	7
Median time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome (weeks)		2023-24	102	127	118	113	128	129	86	119	126			
		2022-23	86	128	107	114	88	105	131	134	117	86	90	138
FtP internal quality score ⁱⁱⁱ		2023-24	93%	93%	92%	93%	85%	85%	92%	94%	n/a ^{iv}			
		2022-23	93%	94%	96%	n/a	96%	97%	92%	91%	92%	95%	89%	97%

People		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Retention rate	2023-24	83%	85%	84%	86%	87%	86%	86%	86%	85%			
	2022-23	91%	89%	90%	89%	87%	87%	86%	85%	86%	85%	85%	85%
Headcount of staff	2023-24	249	247	245	240	237	238	242	242	241			
	2022-23	228	231	237	246	250	257	262	255	252	253	252	256

People		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Days lost to sickness per employee over previous 12 months ^v	2023-24	3.9	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.3	5.8	6.0			
	2022-23	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.0	4.4	4.2	3.8

Corporate complaints		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Corporate complaints responded to within timescales	2023-24	87%	86%	77%	97%	100%	91%	96%	88%	94%			
	2022-23	80%	83%	86%	82%	75%	80%	57%	82%	61%	71%	88%	89%
Number of corporate complaints received (stage 1 only) ^{vi}	2023-24	23	20	27	38	33	24	26	15	21			
	2022-23	8	8	11	11	10	12	14	18	30	26	16	18
Number of corporate complaints that missed 20-day timescale	2023-24	2	3	8	1	0	2	1	4	1			
	2022-23	2	1	1	3	2	3	3	2	7	10	3	2
Median response time over previous 12 months (working days)	2023-24	18	18	18	18	18	16	15	16	15			
	2022-23	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	18	18

^{i-iii, vi} Figures under these measures have been updates since the previous performance report. These amendments are anticipated each quarter due to retrospective changes being captured on the system after the data has been compiled and reported.

^{iv} The Decision Review Group did not meet in December

^v The calculation for this indicator has been amended to better account for flexible working arrangements, including compressed hours.

Annex B

Course reapproval decisions Q3 2023-24

Provider	Course	Region	Inspection dates		Link to inspection report	Decision
			From	to		
Coventry University	MA Social Work	Midlands	13 June 2023	15 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/jb1jy2wk/20230802_cur2_ma_pgdipl_final-report_v3.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work	Midlands	13 June 2023	15 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/jb1jy2wk/20230802_cur2_ma_pgdipl_final-report_v3.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Cumbria	MA Social Work	North West	20 June 2023	23 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/wp1bgxt/20231027_uqr2_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	North West	20 June 2023	23 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/wp1bgxt/20231027_uqr2_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Manchester	MA Social Work	North West	20 June 2023	22 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/uccpr3o4/11082023_umr1_ma_pgdipl_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	North West	20 June 2023	22 June 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/uccpr3o4/11082023_umr1_ma_pgdipl_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Kent	MA Social Work	South East	04 July 2023	06 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/treabkth/071123_uqr2-inspection-report_ma_final_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	South East	04 July 2023	06 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/treabkth/071123_uqr2-inspection-report_ma_final_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Hertfordshire	BSc (Hons) Social Work FT	East	04 July 2023	07 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/q1ym4z3z/20231130_uhr1-bsc-msc-report_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BSc (Hons) Social Work PT	East	04 July 2023	07 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/q1ym4z3z/20231130_uhr1-bsc-msc-report_final.pdf	Approved with conditions

	MSc Social Work FT	East	04 July 2023	07 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/q1ym4z3z/2023_1130_uhr1-bsc-msc-report_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MSc Social Work PT	East	04 July 2023	07 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/q1ym4z3z/2023_1130_uhr1-bsc-msc-report_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work Step Up	East	04 July 2023	07 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/q1ym4z3z/2023_1130_uhr1-bsc-msc-report_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
Goldsmiths, University of London	PG Dip Social Work Step Up	London	11 July 2023	14 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/vuwkhrdx/2023_0823_gulr2_pgdiptstepup_final_report_v2-1.pdf	Approved with conditions
Buckinghamshire New University	BSc (Hons) Social Work	South East	02 May 2023	05 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/gahnixuq/20230502_bnur1_bsc_reapproval_approval_social_work_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
Buckinghamshire New University	BSc (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship	South East	10 October 2023	12 October 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/yiaj5pk5/12122_023_bnur3_v3_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Hull	BA (Hons) Social Work	Yorkshire and the Humber	09 May 2023	12 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/0xmjvdhf/2023_1219_uhulr1.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BA (Hons) Integrated Social Work Degree Apprenticeship	Yorkshire and the Humber	09 May 2023	12 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/0xmjvdhf/2023_1219_uhulr1.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	Yorkshire and the Humber	09 May 2023	12 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/h53koajb/2023_0522_uhulr2_ma_pgdipt_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	Yorkshire and the Humber	09 May 2023	12 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/h53koajb/2023_0522_uhulr2_ma_pgdipt_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Birmingham	BA (Hons) Social Work	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BA (Hons) Social Work with a year abroad	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions

Course approval decisions Q3 2023-24

Provider	Course	Region	Inspection dates		Link to inspection report	Decision
			From	to		
University of Bradford	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship	Yorkshire and the Humber	18 July 2023	21 July 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/cnihycxi/20231109_ubr_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
Buckinghamshire New University	BSc (Hons) Social Work	South East	02 May 2023	05 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/gahniuxq/20230502_bnur1_bsc_reapproval_approval_social_work_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BSc (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship	South East	10 October 2023	12 October 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/yiaj5pk5/12122023_bnur3_v3_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Birmingham	BA (Hons) Social Work	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BA (Hons) Social Work with a year abroad	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route)	Midlands	23 May 2023	26 May 2023	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1thlxcqh/ubir1-inspection-report-final.pdf	Approved with conditions



Registration and Advice – Overseas applications

Agenda Item 11 Paper Ref 09

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Philip Hallam, Executive Director, Regulation

Author

Joe Stockwell, Head of Registration and Advice

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Rachel McAssey, Assistant Director, Regulation

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO5: Ensure that our registration processes are fair, responsive and efficient.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Regulatory functions - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Summary

This paper provides an update to the Board on activities relating to applications received to join the register of social workers in England from applicants who qualified outside of the United Kingdom ('overseas applications'). The paper provides information on our understanding of external factors which has influenced a significant increase in the number of applications being received. It will outline operational performance of the Registration and Advice service during the business year. It also provides additional information regarding measures being taken to ensure performance is maintained and improved with regards to processing overseas applications.

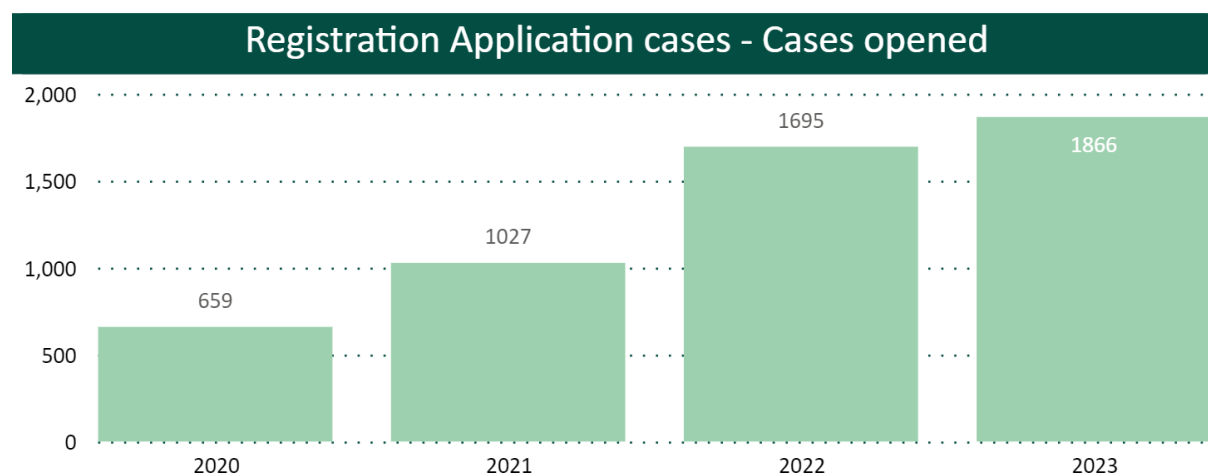
2. Action required

No action is required. The paper is for assurance and noting

3. Commentary

Since Social Work England assumed responsibility for the regulation of social workers in December 2019, we have seen a sustained year-on-year increase in the number of overseas applications being received. In calendar year 2023 we received 1866 applications, this represents a 183% increase on the volume received in 2020.

Figure 1 – Annual totals (calendar years) of applications received from applicants who qualified outside of the United Kingdom

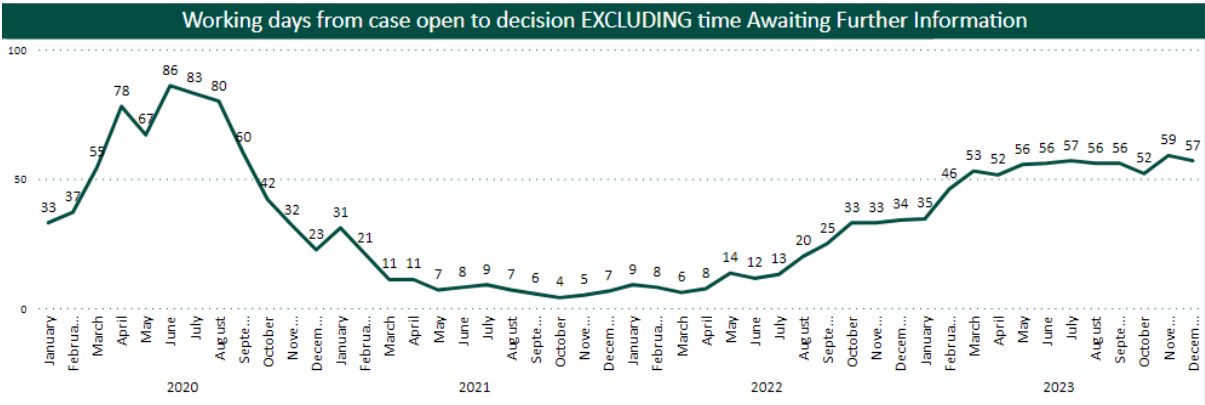


The overseas application process does not collect information from those applying with regards to their intention to practise in England, or information relating to the reasons why they are making an application to join the register, so we are unable to draw conclusions from data to inform our understanding of why volumes have significantly increased. However, we have identified external factors that we consider to have contributed to these increases, which include:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
1. Within 3 months after we went live as regulator, significant travel restrictions were enforced as part of the Covid-19 response. The uncertainty surrounding travel is likely to have discouraged many social workers based overseas from applying to join the register without clarity as to when they may be able to travel to the England to commence work. The subsequent removal of travel restrictions has contributed to increase in volumes, as those that may have intended to apply in 2020, and 2021 are now making their applications.
 2. Government announced that it was making £15 million available over 2023 to 2024 to help support international recruitment within the adult social care sector. The government demonstrated commitment to helping providers make more effective use of international recruitment to help grow the adult social care workforce, alongside wider action to improve domestic recruitment and retention. [International recruitment fund for the adult social care sector: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). We are aware that several Local Authorities across England has recruited cohorts of social workers from overseas to address their resource requirements.

There is a direct correlation between the significant increase in application volumes and our processing times associated with overseas applications. Since June 2022, we have seen a sustained increase in the time taken for an applications to be processed. Between May 2023, and December 2023, processing times have remained relatively steady, with most months recording at 56/57 days.

Figure 2 – Monthly median working days (excluding time awaiting further information) to process (time taken from application being submitted to making a decision) applications received from applicants who qualified outside of the United Kingdom



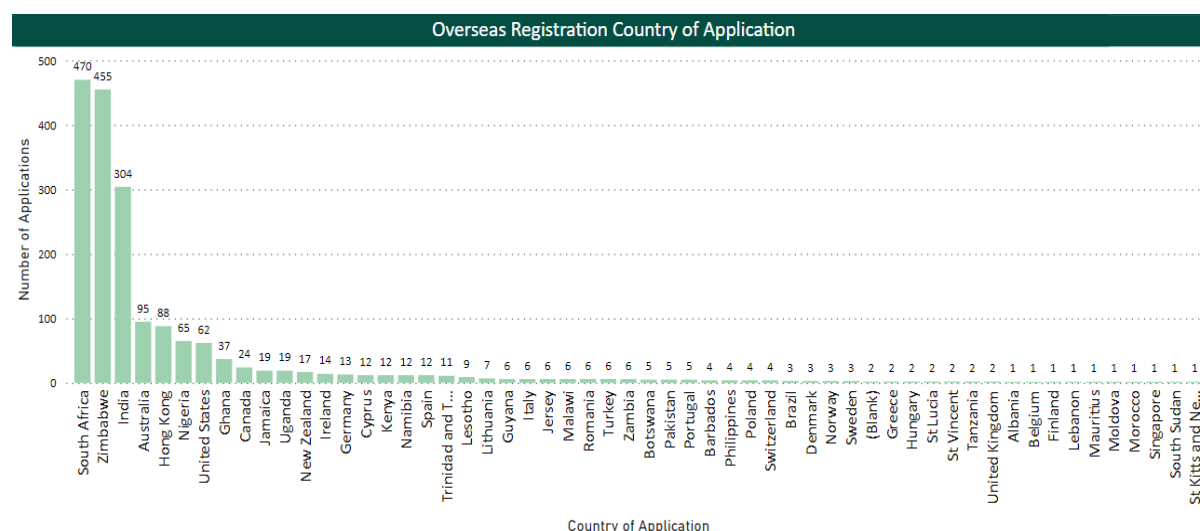
In addition to increased volumes of applications being received, there are additional factors which has led to longer processing times. These include:

1. We made amendments to [Registration rules 2019 \(as amended\) - Social Work England](#), and [The Social Workers Regulations 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) over the course of 2022, which included:
 - a. Registration applicants now have 28 calendar days in which to provide further information to support their application (this has increased from 14 calendar days). This is a well-received improvement for applicants as they have more flexible timeframes to provide information, however, this does mean that applications remain within the case officers case load for potentially longer periods, reducing capacity for throughput.
 - b. Requirements regarding updating skills and knowledge have been amended to include applicants who qualified over 2 years prior to applying to join the register (this was previously 5 years), meaning that more applicants are required to demonstrate this requirement. We also understand that some Local Authorities when recruiting from abroad are seeking candidates that qualified over 2 years ago.
2. Staffing changes within the Registration and Advice Team
 - a. During the business year 2022/23, 4xFTE who were dedicated to overseas applications left the team for internal promotion, or for employment outside of Social Work England.
 - b. Overseas applications are the most complex workstream in the team. Training colleagues to undertake this work has a lead time which cannot be completed within the notice period of those staff leaving.
 - c. The Registration and Advice Team are currently carrying 2xFTE case officer vacancies which have been affected by the recent recruitment pause for the remainder of financial year 2023/24 in response to budget constraints.
 - d. During the summer/autumn of 2022, a deliberate choice was made to prioritise resource in the team to support the influx of UK applications and the annual renewals cycle.
 - e. A new Head of Registration and Advice commenced the role in the autumn of 2022.

Applications are received from applicants across the world, however, most overseas applications are received from 3 countries; South Africa, Zimbabwe and India. Both South Africa and Zimbabwe are countries where social work is regulated, and this means that we are able to liaise with the relevant regulator when assessing an application from these countries. India does not have a model of regulation for social workers. Applications from Zimbabwe remain high despite being added to the 'Red List' ¹ on the Government's code of practice for recruiting internationally for health and social care organisations in England, in March 2023.

¹ [Code of practice for the international recruitment of health and social care personnel in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 3 – Annual totals relating to calendar year 2023 of applications received from applicants who qualified outside of the United Kingdom by country of qualification,



In response to the significant increase in application volumes, and subsequent increases in processing times, we have identified and implemented several improvements:

1. Guidance:
 - a. We have completed a detailed review and update of our public guidance for overseas applicants. [Overseas applicant guidance - Social Work England](#). This review included seeking feedback from the Representative Bodies and International recruitment agencies.
 - b. Discussions have also taken place with International English Language Testing System² (IELTS) to understand future developments., this has given us additional confidence in the availability of IELTS tests and some assurance that applicants will not be affected by delays once they sign up for a test.
2. Process review:
 - a. The Registration and Advice Team have reviewed and updated updating skills and knowledge (USK) forms to simplify and aim to seek the right information, first time.
 - b. Developed a USK examples documents to share with applicants to aid completion of the form and avoid the need to request additional details/information.
 - c. Worked with our Registration Advisers to review the overseas course information form to simplify and aim to seek the right information, first time.
 - d. Held dedicated workshops with the Registration and Advice overseas team to review processes and introduce efficiencies.
 - e. Implemented a checklist for applicants, and an additional contact point (within 48 hours of submitting the application) whereby a member of the team directs the applicant to review and check that they have provided all

² [IELTS | Welcome to IELTS](#)

required information to support their application, thus avoiding the requirements to request additional documentation.

3. Staffing and Training

- a. Reallocated resource internally within the team to increase the number of case officers processing overseas applications.
- b. Sought additional support via a temporary member of staff (agency temp) to support with initial assessments of overseas applications between March and August 2023.
- c. Social Work England's Executive Leadership Team approved an addition 1 FTE case officer role in January 2023 to support with overseas application. This member of staff started in the team in late March 2023.
- d. Overseas officers reduced/removed from enquiry work to focus on processing overseas applications.
- e. Ongoing training commenced for every officer focussing on effective case management.
- f. Reviewed and updated the overseas training package for new members of staff.
- g. Review and updated standard letter templates and trackers.
- h. Registration and Advice Operational Managers and Senior Officers working with case officers to coach, and review complex/old cases to progress to resolution.
- i. During parts of business year 2023/24, some application processing has been undertaken by resource at Senior Officer, Registration and Advice Operational Manager, Head of Registration, and Assistant Director level across all work streams to support the increase in application volumes.
- j. Amended the remit of the Continuing Professional Development Manager role to include Annual Renewals, this has enabled Registration and Advice Operational Managers to remain focussed on application processes.

4. Sector engagement:

- a. Registration and Advice colleagues met with the South African, and Zimbabwean, regulators to understand their processes for verification, and how we can better support each other.
- b. Met several international recruitment agencies focussing on social worker recruitment for the UK to gain insight into their processes and plans, and to raise awareness of our processes, and the overseas guidance and requirements for applicants.
- c. Met with some UK Local Authorities who are recruiting overseas applicants to gain insight into their processes and plans, and to raise awareness of our processes, and the overseas guidance and requirements for applicants.
- d. Work undertaken with Policy team to better understanding the implications and impact of increased overseas recruitment on the sector.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

- e. Contacted 678 employer contacts on 06 November 2023 to raise awareness of our updated guidance for overseas applicants, and to offer support to all employers and agencies who are recruiting candidates who qualified outside of the UK via our Regional Engagement Leads.
- f. Met with the DfE to discuss international recruitment as they are undertaking work to try and support with the recruitment process.
- g. As part of our engagement work, had a workstream focused on international recruitment and impact on the sector.

A case was put forward in Business year 2022/23 for the application journey in Forge to be reviewed and updated. The intention of this request was to streamline the overseas application form, and mandate that appropriate evidence was collected at the application stage to help applicants submit all evidence with their initial application form. The development would have also looked at automation of case allocation based on application origin, reducing manual processes to check and triage the Registration queues. This Forge development was not prioritised by the Forge Programme Board within the resources available, and competing organisational priorities.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

The significant increase in application volumes from overseas applicants has caused additional strain on the ability of the registration and advice to balance their workload over the course of the registration year. As can be seen from the commentary above, a number of activities have been, and continue to be, undertaken to manage overseas applications within the resource envelope that is available.

Despite this marked increase in volumes of overseas applications, the department has continued to deliver against our regulatory timescales and our public key performance indicators.

In order to safeguard our ability to deliver against these timescales and KPI's, we have undertaken a series of actions and projects in which to better understand the reasons for these increased volumes, assessed our internal processes to ensure efficiency, learn from other organisations to support this work, and raise awareness across social work employers. All these actions have been completed in an attempt to ensure we continue to deliver our functions.

Additional work has also commenced with the Regional Engagement Leads to develop an offer for employers who are looking to recruit from abroad, to raise awareness of our regulatory requirements, our overarching aim to protect the public, and the process applicants will need to follow (including the evidence requirements) in order to join the register. The intention of this work is to equip employers with better information so that they can support those they recruit to submit applications at the right time, with the right

information, thus speeding up the application processing timeline and reducing the need for closures and therefore repeat applications.

The Registration and Advice team are also undertaking a piece of work to review [the course list](#) utilised when processing overseas applications. This list enables applicants with identical qualifications as a previous applicant to join the register without the need for a full course review/approval by our Registration Advisers. Maintaining this list is a key action for the team to ensure that those being accepted onto the register meet our threshold standards, therefore maintaining the integrity of the register - one of our most powerful public protection tools.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12



Proposal for reciprocal partnerships between Social Work England's Board and National Advisory Forum

Agenda Item AOB Paper Ref 10

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Jack Harrison, Participation Officer

Catherine Witt, Regional Engagement Lead

Date

2 February 2024

Reviewed by

Katie Florence, Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight

This paper is for

Decision

Associated Strategic Objective

SO1: Build trust and confidence in the social work profession, and in regulation, by strengthening our relationship with the sector.

SO9: Be a diverse and inclusive employer, which supports and motivates its people so they can deliver for the people we serve.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

People and culture - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Background and summary

Since the establishment of the National Advisory Forum (NAF) in 2020, there has been active engagement between the NAF members and the Social Work England Board. In the early days this was more of an ad hoc arrangement, with individuals pairing up to complete pieces of work or sharing information and achievements at the reciprocal meetings.

This then moved into a more structured arrangement, with a board member 'buddying' up with a NAF member, facilitated by a Regional Engagement Lead. Although successful in part, it didn't prove easy or successful for some NAF and Board members, it was limited by geography, availability and lacked spontaneity and opportunity.

This led to a rethink of the relationships and a NAF/Board workshop was held in October 2023 to explore possibilities collectively.

The objectives of the workshop were to create a space for NAF members and Board members to discuss the work of the forum and have a conversation about the 'buddy scheme.' Feedback and reflections were shared on experiences of the scheme as well as comments about how improvements can be made in the next iteration.

The workshop focussed on the impact and added value of NAF/Board relationships and led to this paper being produced. It will outline the objectives of the partnerships, the learning from the previous round, and our proposed approach going forward.

2. Objectives

- Strengthen relationships between the Board and NAF
- Create opportunities for Board members to engage with social work and the wider sector as well as experience how our work is received
- Experiences should link back to our strategic objectives to inform our work
- Partnerships should be reciprocal in nature and also serve as a development opportunity for NAF members.

3. Reflections and learning from work to date

- Reflecting on the previous partnerships between Board members, NAF members and Regional engagement leads, there are many examples of positive engagement that has led to impact and improvements that make us confident we should continue with another iteration of the scheme.
- A more suitable name should be considered rather than 'buddying' which doesn't reflect the nature and purpose of the relationships. We propose 'Reciprocal Partnerships' as an alternative which better describes the shared benefits.
- To be more comprehensive on the purpose, the objectives and the expectations for all parties involved.
- Gather information from NAF and Board members about their areas of expertise, areas for learning and what they would like to get out of the partnerships, so that we can match people up effectively.

- To offer an 'opt in' reciprocal partnership with NAF members, or an alternative of more flexible ad-hoc engagement around particular areas of learning or expertise.
- Utilize the opportunity to be more public with this work, sharing the engagement that the board are involved in and its impact, including being discussed at public meetings.
- Ensure that briefings are produced ahead of external visits so that Board members feel well prepared.

4. Proposed approach going forward

- We launch the next iteration of this scheme called 'Reciprocal Partnerships' that aims to build relationships between Board members and the NAF to the benefit of Social Work England.
- Board and NAF members to fill out a brief survey members about their areas of expertise, areas for learning and what they would like to get out of the partnerships, so that we can match people up effectively.
- In line with the themes in our strategy, we create a bank of opportunities that NAF members and RELs can provide through their engagement, social work practice and lived experience roles, this will allow us to utilize the full breadth of expertise we have in the forum.
- Board members are provided with a list of opportunities and select based on their interests/ knowledge gaps or areas of responsibility.
- Link this work back to the objectives in the business plan and strategy so that it has a more direct link to the work on the organisation and the role of the board in providing oversight.
- RELs will continue to have a role to support to facilitate the opportunities being delivered.
- To consider identifying a Board member to be a named link between the board the NAF to keep this work under review.
- An approach to evaluating the partnerships will be devised in order to measure the impact on our work and the experience of those who were involved.

This programme of reciprocal partnerships sits within a broader piece of work we are doing to ensure that the NAF have access to leadership at all levels, particularly our Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Assistant Directors, to give them a sound understanding of our operational context and parameters and to always ensure we keep the external context of lived experience at the forefront of our work.

5. Action required

- Review the approach, feedback on any amendments and agree an implementation date.
- Board members to clarify who would like to be involved in a reciprocal partnership with a NAF member, so we know how many NAF members to involve.



Social Work Week 2024

Item AOB

Paper Ref 11

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author
Matthew Devlin, Head of Strategic Engagement

Date
2 February 2024

Reviewed by
Katie Florence, Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight

This paper is for
Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective
SO1: Build trust and confidence in the social work profession, and in regulation, by strengthening our relationship with the sector.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite
Strategy - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
Completed

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

1. Summary

This paper provides an update to the Social Work England board on the Social Work Week 2024 programme. Now in its fourth year, the Social Work Week 2024 programme boasts the strongest line-up to date and will bring those with an interest in social work together to have nationwide conversations about key aspects of social work.

There will be over 60 virtual free events taking place between Monday 18 to Friday 22 March 2024, with over 20 sessions being delivered and co-produced by Social Work England, and over 40 sessions being delivered independently of Social Work England.

There will also be events that compliment World Social Work Day on Tuesday 19 March 2024, which this year recognises the transformative role social workers play in driving positive change on an international scale. In addition to this, Social Work England will celebrate with its people internally by bringing together the social workers from within the organisation together to celebrate the profession and re-launch the social work professional network.

2. Action required

No action is required. The paper is for assurance and noting

3. Commentary

Social Work Week is for anyone with an interest in social work in England. From people of all ages with lived experience of social work to professionals, education providers and the many stakeholder organisations who share our goals of public protection, enabling positive change and improving people's lives.

Social Work Week was launched in 2019, this year's event contributes to strategic objective 1: *Build trust and confidence in the social work profession, and in regulation, by strengthening our relationship with the sector*, and has been built around 3 key themes:

- Learn: sharing the breath of good practice from a diverse sector
- Connect: lived, learning, and professional experiences – creating opportunities for the sector to connect
- Influence: understanding challenges and successes in the sector and exploring innovative solutions

Our objectives for the week:

- use this national moment to inform and educate the public on what social work is and why it is regulated

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

- co-produce the week with those with lived and learned experience, ensuring that the programme reflects the diversity of social work practice and the voices of people who have social work in their lives
- listen to the experiences of social workers and people with lived experience, so that we have a rich picture of professional practice to draw from, to further our work to embed our professional standards
- encourage ownership of the week locally, by having a programme of events developed and delivered independently to those hosted by Social Work England
- bring together leaders across one social work profession, sharing regional and national intelligence on the challenges, influencing discussions on collective solutions

The full programme, including registration information, will be live on the Social Work England website in January. We have developed a wide range of communications to support the launch, including emails to stakeholders, social media posts and a communications toolkit for contributors.

Some of the highlights of Social Work England's programme include:

- An opening event that will introduce the week with keynote speakers Colum Conway, Chief Executive of Social Work England, and Beverley Tarka, President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- Dedicated sessions focused on the reforms in children's social care and early career framework including sessions focused on children's mental health and innovative practices and models
- Sessions hosted by the Principal Social Workers Network, Care Quality Commission (CQC), regulators from across the UK, and voices of international social workers and those with lived experience
- Co-produced sessions with people who access social work services including Social Work England's National Advisory Forum
- Wider representatives from across the sector including researchers and education providers who will be delivering sessions on education and social work

In previous years the week has been attended by thousands of people with an interest in social work, including those who use social work services, social workers, students, educators, and employers.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

The successful delivery of Social Work Week 2024 will involve input from across the Professional Practice and External Engagement Directorate along with other parts of the

organisation. Throughout Quarter 4 2023 to 2024 particular demand will be placed on the regional engagement leads and communications team. Delivery of Social Work Week will be managed and monitored by the planning and delivery group which includes members from communications, policy, engagement, IT and the National Advisory Forum. A monthly steering group is also in place, which has a wider membership and provides additional oversight.

Social Work Week 2024 will be evaluated through post-event attendee and stakeholder feedback; data analytics; reviewing the event objectives (and how the event measured up) and identifying any changes that need to be made ahead of future events.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12