

Agenda Item 8

Renewal of Registration Report

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Summary

This paper sets out the requirements relating to the renewal of registration, describes the work undertaken to date to prepare for the first renewal cycle to be undertaken by Social Work England, and provides an overview of the key timescales and outputs for 2020 renewal process.

Purpose

The purpose of the report is to keep the board up to date with our registration renewal process that we are running for the first time and is now live.

Background/context

The requirement for regulated individuals to re-register on a periodic basis is a basic principle of professional regulation. Re-registration allows the regulator to ensure that those on the register have provided up-to-date information about their current circumstances, allows confirmation from registrants that they continue to meet the professional standards, and also allows for the regulator to set other requirements relating to continuing registration, such as demonstrating of continuing fitness to practise.

The requirement for social workers in England to renew their registration is set out in the Social Workers Regulations 2018¹ (in particular Regulation 13), and the process by which registration will be renewed is set out in the Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019² (in particular Part 7).

The Registration Rules, consulted upon in 2019, set out the requirements for registered social workers in England in relation to re-registration. These requirements differed from that of the

¹ <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1502/social-workers-regulations-2018.pdf>

² https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1657/registration-rules_final_01.pdf

previous regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), in the following broad areas:

- The renewal of registration for all registrants would take place on an annual basis. The HCPC required social workers to renew their registration every two years.
- Registrants would be required to demonstrate that they had met the standards for continuing professional development at renewal and provide evidence of this. The HCPC did not require every registrant to provide evidence, only a sample at each renewal period.

In other aspects, the requirements relating to renewal remained the same; the timeframe for renewing registration was retained as 1 September - 30 November, and the fee for renewing registration was kept at £90 (the HCPC renewal fee was £180 every two years).

To ensure that registrants were ready to renew their registration from 1 September 2020, a number of engagement and communication activities have taken place over the last 18 months. These have included:

- Consultation on Rules and Standards in 2019, which included an explanation around the changes to the timeframe and requirements for renewal of registration.
- Over the course of 2020, a number of communications activities to remind registrants of the requirements for renewal, including direct communication with all registrants by letter and email, social media activity through Social Work England channels, direct engagement with registrants and their employers by Regional Engagement Leads and other Social Work England staff, and engagement with Community Care, a website for social workers and everyone in social care.

Additionally, significant work has been undertaken throughout 2020 to create an online renewal application process. During the development of this process, registrants were involved in the design and testing of the process, to ensure that as far as possible it was easy and intuitive for registrants to use. Guidance and explanation of how to renew registration was also developed for registrants and published to the Social Work England website³ in advance of 1 September 2020.

Renewal commenced as planned on 1 September 2020 for all registrants (over 99,000), as of 8 September 2020, 13,511 registrants have completed an application for renewal.

Issues

This the first time that Social Work England has undertaken the process of renewal. In terms of engagement with social workers this is a much more significant event than the commencement of our regulatory activities in December 2019. Whilst the 'go-live' period was significant in terms of ensuring social workers were aware of the change of regulator (and therefore of Standards, Rules and processes), for many social workers there was not a significant immediate change in how they interacted with the regulator.

³ <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/renewal/>

Over the course of 2020, increasing numbers of social workers have engaged with us (for example by creating an online account, recording their continuing professional development (CPD), or paying a Direct Debit), but renewal is the first time that all registrants will be required to engage, in order to remain registered.

As set out above, there has been a significant amount of work undertaken to ensure that renewal of registration is a straightforward process for registrants, and a variety of engagement activity has taken place throughout 2020 to prepare registrants to undertake the requirement. However, as this is the first time that Social Work England has engaged with all registrants, there remains a need to continue to engage with registrants throughout the renewal period to ensure that all social workers who wish to renew their registration do so within good time. As social workers renew over the next three months, targeted communications will be sent to registrants at various times to inform them

- That they have yet to renew, and failure to do so would lead to their removal from the register; or
- That they have renewed, but have yet to submit CPD evidence, and failure to do so would lead to their removal from the register; or
- That a Direct Debit payment will be taken from their account.

Communications will continue with registrants who have not renewed until the end of the renewal period, to ensure that all registrants are reminded of the requirement to renew, and the consequences of not doing so.

The performance of the renewal system will be closely monitored through the renewal process, and where possible improvements to both system performance and guidance will be made. Changes to guidance will usually only be made to improve clarity; changes to process will not usually be made to ensure that all registrants are renewed in a consistent way.

Implications

Strategic

The completion of the renewal period at the beginning of December 2020 completes the first registration year for Social Work England. Once complete, we will be able to undertake full review of the year's activity, and identify where changes can be made to processes, policy, and systems.

At the end of the renewal period, all registered social workers will have created an online account and updated their registration information with us. This will allow us greater engagement and more accurate data into the future.

In line with corporate strategy⁴, successful completion of the first renewal process will assist with the following strategic objectives:

⁴ https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/3110/corporate-strategy_final.pdf

- We will continue to develop and refine our registration, systems and processes
- We will continue to develop clear guidelines, tools and messages to support professionals to understand the relationship between standards and practice
- We will gather intelligence, stories and data about social work and the profession through quality conversations and sound research, sharing what we are learning with the sector.
- We will establish robust infrastructure, systems and processes that promote trust and confidence.
- Our culture of innovation, improvement and co-production will be embedded across the organisation.

Financial

Most of the registrant income for the financial year will be taken during the renewal period, in the region of £6 million.

Risk management

A risk register has been in place and updated throughout the course of the development of the renewal process.

During the delivery of the renewal process, there are a number of checks in place to ensure that registrants are able to complete their re-registration. These include daily reporting to senior management to monitor compliance, daily meetings to review and resolve identified issues with systems and process, and flexible allocation of staff resource when required.

Conclusion

The board is invited to note the content of this paper.

Future Reporting

A further paper will be provided to the board at its meeting on 18 December. This paper will report on the outcome of the 2020 renewal process.