

## Introduction

The focus of this report is on the performance of Social Work England at the end of Quarter 2, which ended on 30 September. The report has been prepared by the chief executive with the executive directors. This report is provided as below:

- I. **Section 1:**  
An overview and update of recent activity and developments since the last board meeting
- II. **Section 2:**  
A performance management information report for Quarter 2 which includes an executive summary from the Executive Directors and additional commentary on the quantitative information (agenda item 6b). This section also contains an update on the business plan objectives with a RAG rating at Quarter 2.
- III. **Section 3:**  
Financial and HR information including Quarter 2 management accounts and year end forecasts (agenda item 6c).

It should be noted that there is also an opportunity for the board to explore the work in fitness to practise in more detail at item 7 of the meeting.

## Section 1: An overview and update of recent activity and developments

This overview is presented as an update from the last chief executive's report presented at the September meeting, and by way of a lead into the performance reporting for Quarter 2.

### Response to Covid-19

#### Social Work Together

We are continuing to meet with partners on a weekly basis to review and plan for Social Work Together, which is the collective expression of the temporary register held by Social Work England and the deployment tool managed by the Local Government Association.

The sector is indicating that Social Work Together remains an important part of the contingency planning for capacity issues that may arise in the sector and as such its profile will be maintained. We have been informed that the emergency registration powers will remain in place for the time being. We will review the arrangements for the temporary register in the new year post the renewal period.

#### The impact of Covid-19 on social work

We continue to have regular contact with the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Chief Social Workers, the Principle Social

Workers and Practice Leaders networks, the social work education and training sector and other key stakeholders to assess and respond to the impact of Covid-19 on social work and social work students and trainees.

We have also met this month with the Children's Commissioner and with the Vulnerable Children's Board looking at the impact and response to children during the pandemic.

From our perspective concerns over capacity and the ability for social work to respond to a surge in demand in community-based services remains on the agenda. It is positive that the levels of new applications to the register from students has held up through the summer and into the autumn.

### **How we are working during the pandemic**

At our last board meeting I reported that we were working towards a blended approach to our planning for the working environment, bringing together our approach to working in the office with working from home.

Increasingly more people were returning to the office for part of their working week, and we were planning to have some physical meetings and hearings in the office and the hearing rooms. Unfortunately, as a result of the recent change in national government advice on working from home, which is likely to be the case for some time, alongside the increasing prevalence of Covid-19 cases in Sheffield and surrounding area, we are now advising staff not to attend the office for the foreseeable future. The office does remain open for the time being for anyone who is unable to work from home.

I am concerned about the impact working from home can have on culture and innovation and we have had to restructure in certain areas to ensure our new staff teams have the support they need. We need now to consider ways to ensure we are responsive to the health and wellbeing of our staff through the winter months.

Contingency plans for an increase in the number of virtual hearings are now being put in place so we can work against the potential of a backlog building up in hearings.

### **Our partners**

The way we are working currently is also significant for our partners, who work on our range of panels for registration, education and training quality assurance and fitness to practise. The above was addressed with them as part of a recent online training and information sharing session. Again, we need to ensure our partner network can remain connected to the organisation.

### **Working in partnership**

Regular meetings continue with the chief executives of the Health and Social Care Professional regulators group. At these meetings we share information, consider the progress of regulatory reform, and explore opportunities for collaborative working. Every quarter these meetings include the chief executive of the Professional Standards Authority and representatives from the DHSC across the 4 jurisdictions of the UK.

The social work and social care regulators in the four jurisdictions of the UK – Scottish Social Services Council, Northern Ireland Social Care Council, Social Care Wales and Social Work

England - are also meeting to continue to build a strong working relationship and agreement across the UK for social work and social work students and trainees.

### **Strategic engagement**

Recently Sarah Blackmore and I met with Dr. Kish Bhatti -Sinclair and colleagues from the Anti-Racism in Social Work Education Group to discuss the Social Work England approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and the ways in the group could support and collaborate with this work. We have agreed to ongoing engagement.

The Leadership in Social Care journal recently carried a piece on our approach to regulation, renewals, and continuing professional development (CPD). We have presented a workshop and hosted an online booth at the national Community Care Virtually Live event where the organisation had a strong presence to support our messages on renewals and CPD. This gave us further opportunity to answer any other questions social workers had relating to our regulation. It is important that we take every opportunity to get the message across about renewals and CPD, while the numbers renewing and submitting CPD are making progress they need to keep moving towards 100% by the end of November.

Lord Patel and I recently met with the chair and chief executive of the General Osteopathic Council (GOC) by way of an introductory meeting and to consider regulatory reform and the impact our legislation is having on our work. We also met with the presidents of the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) and the Association of Directors of Children' Services (ADCS) to reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on social work, as well as to give updates on renewals and CPD.

### **Policy update**

Our policy and legal team have been examining the potential implications of the EU exit at the end of the transition period and its possible impact on Social Work England's rules, regulations, and guidance. This will be an ongoing review as we reach the end of the transition period and we will share further information as possible scenarios come to light.

## **Section 2: Performance management information report**

The following report provides a high-level overview of the organisational performance in Quarter 2. It outlines progress towards delivering the objectives in the business plan and provides an update of the performance of key regulatory functions. Also included is an overview of data in the register, the renewals process and submission of CPD.

### **Key performance indicators (KPIs)**

The KPIs focus primarily on registration and fitness to practise processes. We have set targets for each of our KPIs, these are aspirational targets which we are aiming towards over time. I believe we are making good progress in all areas given this is our first years and we have spent most of it with the organisation working from home. However, we have had to reorganise our resources and build capacity in key areas to ensure we accelerate the progress towards our targets in the second part of the year.

Key areas of activity in strategy, policy and engagement are summarised, it is difficult to set KPIs in these areas – the summaries are for information and an indicator of the level of

activity we have maintained through the year to date. The finance and people reports are presented at agenda item 6c to allow for some detail to be presented particularly on the work of the organisation in response to the challenges for staff in our first full year of operation and support structures we are putting in place. In the first part of the year we have been building a budget surplus due to under spends in areas such as travel and subsistence, the finance report will show the work that has been done to reprofile the budget to year end to address the under spend.

### **Business Plan RAG ratings**

Reporting on the Business Plan objectives we have used a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) ratings system to indicate:

- Green: where we are on track to achieve our aims
- Amber: where we need to address some issues to remain on track
- Red: where we need to take significant steps to remain on track

**Colum Conway**  
Chief Executive