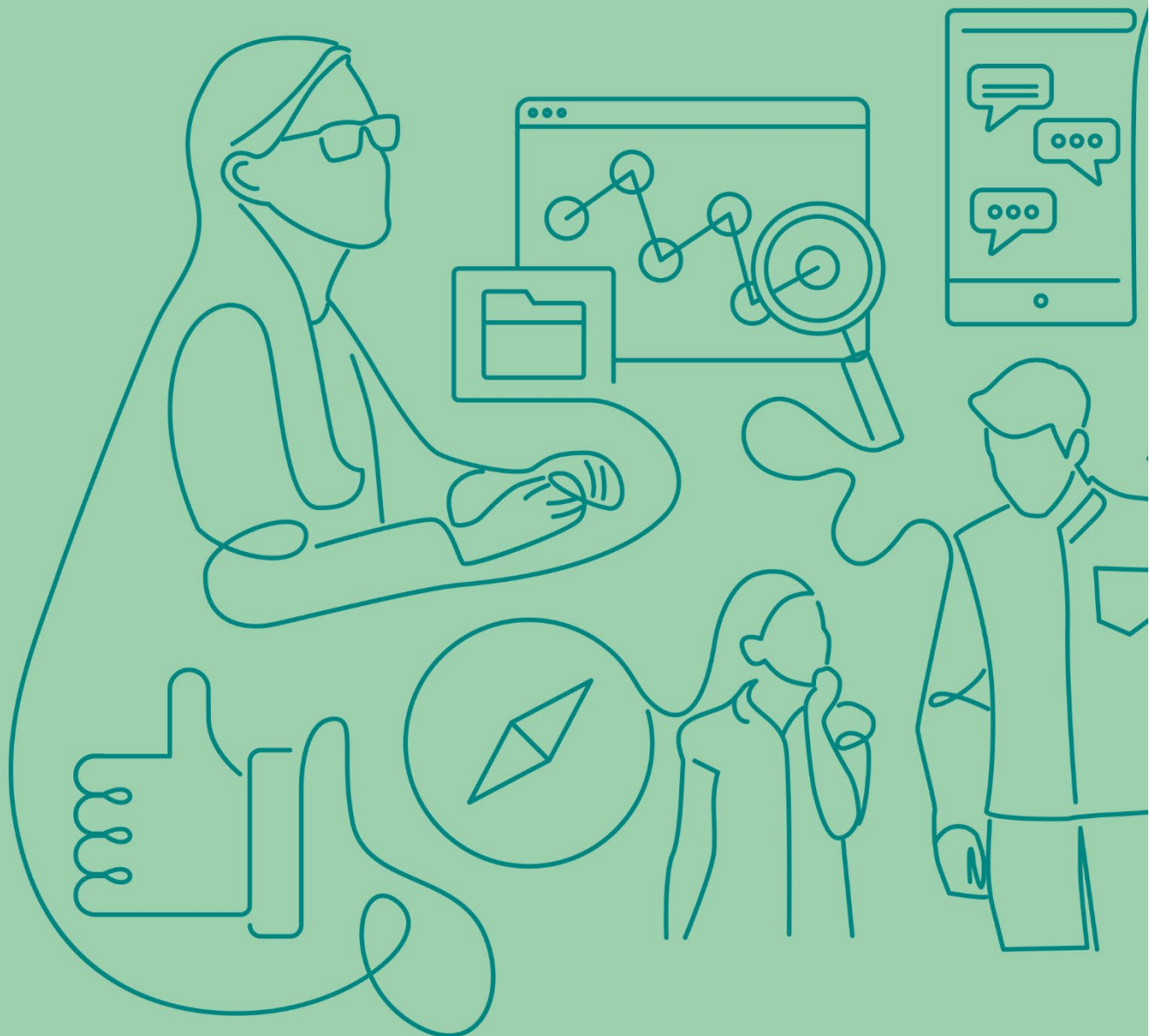


Our statement of intent on equality, diversity and inclusion

Last updated 4 February 2021



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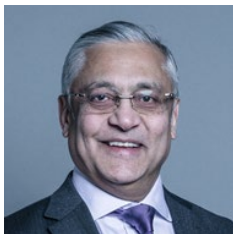
Chair and chief executive's foreword

We are delighted to introduce Social Work England's first statement of intent on equality, diversity and inclusion. As the specialist regulator for social work in England, our approach is rooted in the values of the profession. We are an ambitious organisation, striving to protect the public and raise standards across social work in England, so that people receive the best possible support whenever they might need it in life. We believe that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are central to us being an effective regulator and employer.

This statement sets out our 3 year ambition and monitoring process for ensuring that we operate in a way that reflects our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion as part of our core business. It also outlines our legal and regulatory obligations. We will demonstrate leadership in our approach and actions, learning lessons along the way. We will regularly assess, review and take stock to make sure we're doing all we can. The ambitions set out in this statement will contribute to building trust and confidence in us as a regulator and as an employer. It should be read alongside our [corporate strategy from 2020 to 2023](#).

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as our core business will be led by the Social Work England board, who will hold the executive leadership team accountable for its delivery. Through the commitment and enthusiasm of all our employees and partners, we aim to be a regulator and employer that proactively pursues our ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do.

Finally, we'd like to thank our equality, diversity and inclusion steering group, our National Advisory Forum, and our people from across the organisation for their consideration and contribution to this statement.



Professor The Lord Patel of Bradford OBE
Chair



Colum Conway
Chief Executive

Introduction

We became the specialist regulator for social workers in England on 2 December 2019. We were established by the Children and Social Work Act (2017) and The Social Workers Regulations (2018). Section 37 of the Act sets out that our overarching objective is the protection of the public. The Act also describes how we will achieve this, through the following objectives:



To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public.



To promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England.



To promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

We are a non-departmental public body, operating at arm's length from government and sponsored by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care. We've been established in a way that allows us to deliver radically different regulation. This means that through our legislative powers, we can:

- resolve fitness to practise cases at the earliest appropriate stage;
- include professional advisors from the social work sector at all stages of fitness to practise; and
- develop an effective approach to communication throughout the fitness to practise process.

Our focus is on engagement, dialogue and collaboration, and being a meaningful, relevant regulator for the social work profession.

What we mean by equality, diversity and inclusion

When we talk about equality, diversity and inclusion, it's with an understanding that these are separate but interlinked issues, which may need different approaches.

Equality means making sure that everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and respect. It means challenging discrimination and removing barriers, so that everyone has opportunities to achieve their desired outcomes.

Diversity is about recognising the benefits of different values, abilities, and perspectives, and celebrating people's differences. This means promoting an environment that welcomes and values diverse backgrounds, thinking, skills and experience.

Inclusion is providing a space where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and where everyone feels valued and accepted. Everyone should be able to contribute and have a voice. This may mean making reasonable adjustments to facilitate participation.

Our values and why equality, diversity and inclusion matter to us

We believe that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our work as an effective regulator and employer. They are inherent in our values, which are to be fearless, independent, transparent, ambitious, collaborative, and to act with integrity. As a regulator that prides itself on building positive relationships, we strive to ensure that anyone who engages with us finds it easy to do so, and feels they are supported and treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

We are an organisation rooted in the principles of engagement and co-production; with the social work profession, key stakeholders, and those with lived experience of social work. It is critical that we remove any barriers to that engagement and co-production.

We recognise the diversity of the social work profession and the people who receive support from social workers. We believe that building a diverse workforce that is equipped to support people to improve their chances in life will help to maintain and build trust and confidence in us, both as a regulator and an employer.

People from different backgrounds and with different experiences provide us with fresh ideas, broader perspectives, and insights into needs and challenges. We believe that working in a diverse team helps broaden everyone's horizons, making for a more innovative and stimulating place to work. The more diverse we are, the greater the talent that we have and the better organisation we can be. That's why as an employer, we're committed to creating an inclusive culture, in which people from all backgrounds and abilities can reach their full potential and bring their whole selves to work.

Our legal and regulatory obligations

As a public authority, we are legally obligated to comply with the general equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This prohibits discrimination because of the following protected characteristics.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The public sector equality duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not by:
 - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups, where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

We must publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty, and prepare and publish equality objectives at least every 4 years.

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care is an independent organisation, whose role is to help protect the public by improving the regulation and

registration of people who work in health and care. They oversee the work of 10 organisations that regulate health and care professionals in the UK, including Social Work England.

Standard 3 of the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care's good standards of regulation, that came into effect in January 2020, similarly requires that 'the regulator understands the diversity of its registrants and their patients and service users and of others who interact with the regulator and ensures that its processes do not impose inappropriate barriers or otherwise disadvantage people with protected characteristics.'

What we've already done

Whilst this is our first statement of intent, we outlined our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in our [first annual report and accounts](#) published in July 2019. We have continued to develop our thinking and approach, and now have several achievements to highlight.

As a regulator, we:

- have published [standards and guidance](#) for social work professionals and education and training providers that include our equality, diversity and inclusion requirements.
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- have published [equality and diversity reasonable adjustments guidance](#) that outlines our legal obligations with regards to equality and diversity, as well as a reasonable adjustment process at fitness to practise hearings.
- regularly test the accessibility of our website and update our [accessibility statement](#) accordingly. We can offer support for people to tell us about their concerns, provide information in alternative formats, and make adjustments if they're visiting us in person.

As an employer, we have:

- published an [equality and diversity policy](#) on our website that sets out not only our legal requirement, but also our organisational commitment to equality and diversity.
- created a people handbook available to all employees on our intranet, that outlines our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer.
- begun to develop a positive action mentoring scheme for employees who wish to progress through the organisation and in their careers.
- included competencies related to equality and diversity in our behaviours and values framework that applies to all employees. At a leadership level there is an expectation that employees:
 - work to understand differences and maximise the strengths that come from diversity.

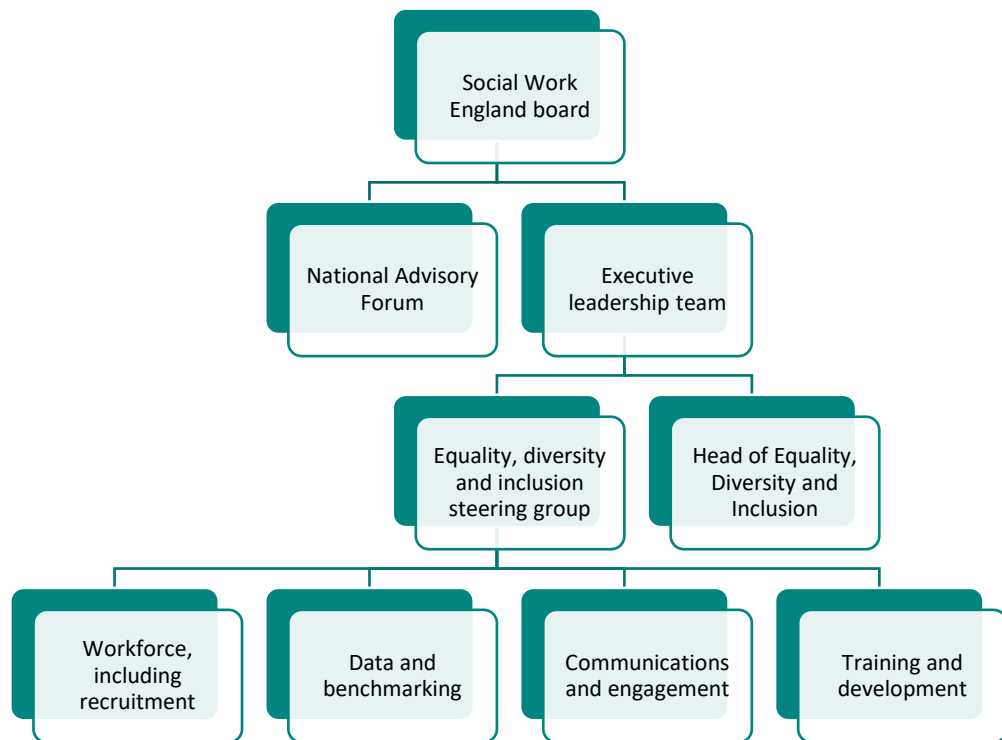
- model behaviours that value diversity and equal opportunity.
- challenge discriminatory and aggressive behaviours.
- are consistent and fair in their treatment of colleagues.
- established a people forum, that includes representation from employees across the organisation. A stated role for the forum is to 'identify aspects of organisational delivery where gaps arise in the fairness and consistency in how people are treated'.
- established a LGBTQ+ network to bring employees together to collaborate, share experiences and support each other. They also provide a source of experience to inform our work.
- established a race equality network to also bring employees together to collaborate, share experiences and support each other. They also provide a source of experience to inform our work.
- established a think well forum, to share experiences and support for mental health and wellbeing.
- signed up to the Employer Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) and will use their benchmarking tool to assess and monitor our performance and progress.
- held dedicated sessions on equality, diversity and inclusion at our all-employee meetings.
- included mandatory e-learning courses on 'the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion', 'disability awareness' and 'being aware of your unconscious bias', as part of our new employee induction processes.

As an organisation, we have:

- published our 3 year corporate strategy outlining our clear commitment to actively promoting and ensuring equality, inclusion and diversity is central in all aspects of our work.
- established a governance structure (see diagram on the following page), including an equality, diversity and inclusion steering group. This group will oversee the implementation of our statement of intent and its associated action plan, together with an executive lead for equality, diversity and inclusion.
- commenced recruitment for a head of equality, diversity and inclusion, as part of our senior team, who will develop our ambitious action plan and be responsible for leading on its delivery.

- recruited a professional advisor as a subject matter expert on equality, diversity and inclusion to provide advice, support and challenge to our work. This role will complement the work of the head of equality, diversity and inclusion once in post.
- established our National Advisory Forum, who will assist and challenge us on the delivery of our corporate strategy, including all aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- become members of the joint healthcare regulators equality, diversity and inclusion forum.
- begun to facilitate the work on anti-racism in social work with the principal social worker networks.
- engaged with and moving to becoming an associate of the Staff College's Black and Asian Leadership Initiative (BALI) Network.
- met regularly with groups of students and academics on equality, diversity and inclusion issues arising within social work education and training, learning from their experiences and identifying where change is needed.
- become part of Stonewall's Diversity Champion's Programme.
- made links with the Seacole group, to look at how to develop opportunities for future non-executive board members.
- ensured all our procurement activity is aligned to Cabinet Office guidelines. These guidelines provide advice on supplier diversity, such as the commitment to contracting with small and medium-sized enterprises and the voluntary and community sector. We aim to be fair, open and transparent whilst taking a proportionate approach given our size and spending power. Whilst seeking value for money, we are also mindful of opportunities to procure as locally as possible. As part of our [procurement principles](#) published on our website, we adhere to a procurement process which is equitable, lawful and compliant with current legislation.

Equality, diversity and inclusion governance structure



Our ambitions for 2020 to 2023

Our [corporate strategy](#) guides what we will be aiming to achieve as a regulator and employer, setting out our 5 key areas of focus:

1. Our regulatory approach
2. The social work profession
3. The people we work with and work for
4. Education and training
5. Our organisation

Our statement of intent underpins this, and is our core business, because equality, diversity and inclusion is core business for social work. We have listed all the things we have already done as part of our set-up phase as a new organisation and regulator. We know that we need a new member of our senior team to lead and drive this forward in an ambitious action plan, firmly based on data and evidence.

We are recruiting a head of equality, diversity and inclusion to work with our executive lead, the executive leadership team, and our board. We are launching our data collection activity and have built our system to enable us to gather information about those with protected characteristics, voluntarily from social workers. From this, we can develop the key strategic questions for the profession over the next 3 years, and the key outcomes that we want to achieve together. We will do this, as everything, in dialogue and collaboration with our key stakeholders, the social work profession, and those who are supported by social work. We will focus on the 4 thematic areas listed below, but will look across our engagement to identify where there may be other areas to also consider. We will also continue to build on the progress we have already made as described earlier.

Those 4 thematic areas are:

1. Workforce, including recruitment
2. Data and benchmarking
3. Communications and engagement
4. Training and development

Initial objectives for each area

Workforce, including recruitment

- Audit all existing and proposed policies, procedures and practices, to ensure they support equality, diversity and inclusion principles.
- Consider how we understand whether our processes are ensuring fairness to all.
- Treat all in our employment with equality, fairness and respect.
- In accordance with applicable law, work towards improving the diversity and equality of the workforce at all levels and functions within the organisation, to ensure that we are representative of our communities. This includes diversity in applications for our board, advisory groups, fitness to practise panels and independent inspector roles.
- Encourage all employees to bring different ideas, innovation and creativity to help improve what we do and how we do it.
- Encourage, support and develop the establishment of staff networks to enable peer support and challenge.

Data and benchmarking

- Have a clear plan for the improvements for collecting and using data, to be viewed as a regulator that has expert knowledge of social work in England.
- Consider how we will use the data we collect through our regulatory processes to ensure that we understand how certain groups are represented in our processes. This will help us ensure that processes are equitable and inclusive, that no one group is disadvantaged, and that all have equal opportunity to engage in the processes in a meaningful way.
- The data we collect and analyse and the insights we gain will be shared with people with an interest in social work, to identify any trends or differences in outcomes for people with protected characteristics.
- Review our approach to collecting data from job applicants and employees, to identify improvements that we can make on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are an inclusive employer.

Communications and engagement

- Proactively deliver communications and engagement activity in a way that is diverse, relevant, and accessible to all.
- Establish inclusive ways to co-produce our work with people who have protected characteristics, to improve our products and services.
- Ensure our online presence not only complies with web content accessibility guidelines but strives to go beyond minimum standards.

Training and development

- Encourage all employees to bring different ideas, innovation and creativity to help improve what we do and how we do it.
- Create progressive policies and procedures that value equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Support and develop everyone to their full potential, acknowledging that we bring our whole selves to work.
- Raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion, and encourage people to support each other.
- Develop our learning offer for board members, employees and partners to include face-to-face refresher courses on equality, diversity and inclusion, and include content on equality, diversity and inclusion on our bespoke training for designated groups of employees, for example, fitness to practise investigators.
- Create and develop positive action mentoring schemes for people with protected characteristics who wish to progress their careers through the organisation and beyond.
- Roll out our proposed reverse mentoring scheme and encourage widespread participation, including for our senior team and board.

How we will monitor our progress

Central to delivering our ambitions is monitoring our progress and performance against our plans. This will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in everything we do.

As well as establishing an equality, diversity and inclusion steering group, we will use our National Advisory Forum as a critical friend, to review our progress and provide a sounding board to inform improvements.

We expect all our employees will support the delivery of our ambitious action plan where appropriate and will address equality, diversity and inclusion issues as they arise within their day-to-day roles.

As part of our work in establishing our governance for equality, diversity and inclusion, we will determine our monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure our statement on intent and future action plan is kept central within our organisation. This will include regular review and renewal as necessary during the lifetime of this statement.

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care publishes annual performance reviews of regulators against its standards of good regulation. As mentioned earlier in this statement, this includes standard 3 which states 'The regulator understands the diversity of its registrants and their patients and service users and of others who interact with the regulator and ensures that its processes do not impose inappropriate barriers or otherwise disadvantage people with protected characteristics'. As part of our priorities for 2020 to 2021, we will be working towards being able to report positively on this standard in our 2020 submissions and beyond.

Our board holds the chief executive and the executive leadership team to account and provides the overall strategic direction for the organisation. It will ultimately have oversight of the progress of realising our ambitions.

Our ultimate aim is to be a regulator and employer that is proactive in pursuing our ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do.

How to contact us

If you have any comments or questions about this document and its associated action plan, or if you would like this document in an alternative format, please contact us. Our [contact details](#), including our most up to date opening hours, can be found on our website.



Email us at enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk



Call us on +44 (0)808 196 2274



Tweet us [@SocialWorkEng](https://twitter.com/SocialWorkEng)



Message us on [LinkedIn](#)