

### Paper for the Board

**This paper is for Discussion and Advising, Assurance and Noting**

### Author

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## 1. Introduction

The format for this report is to look back at the period since the last meeting on the 18 December 2020 highlighting areas of good progress for Social Work England as well as those areas requiring greater focus. The report will also take a more forward-looking view considering some key areas that may present opportunities and challenges for Social Work England. In doing so it will also provide an overview of some of the areas that will be dealt with in more detail in the Directors' reports that will follow in the agenda. An additional section has been added to the end of the report which lists the external meetings I have attended since the last Board meeting, which is in line with the Information Commissioners' Office guidance on the kinds of information that they expect non-departmental public bodies to provide in order to meet their commitments under the model publication scheme.

## 2. Looking Back - Areas of progress

### Social Work Week

Plans are well in place for Social Work Week – 8 March to 12 March 2021. There is a full virtual programme for the week bringing together thought-provoking speakers, artistic content, workshops, debate, discussions, and wellbeing drop-ins. Over 12,000 people have registered for the event. It is an important event to help establish Social Work England as the specialist regulator for the social work profession and link our core purpose of public protection with the profession and with building public confidence in social work.

## CPD

At the last meeting I reported on the success of our first annual registration renewals process. At that time the final date for social workers to upload evidence of their CPD had not yet passed. In the end a very small number, 256, social workers failed to upload their CPD on time. We are currently assessing reviewing the content in CPD with a view to publishing a report in March. We have also completed a lessons learnt process and will look to publish a consultation on our proposals for CPD in the Spring. We have commissioned a study to explore and understand the CPD social workers have undertaken in the first year of our regulation, how they engage with learning and how they reflect on global events and movements such as Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter.

## Social Work in England: First Reflections

In January we published Social Work in England: First Reflections which is our first report giving a snapshot of the social work profession in England. We are in a position to provide a unique overview of the profession and this is the first in a series of reports to be published in the coming years.

## Statement of Intent on Equality Diversity and Inclusion

We have also recently published our statement of intent on equality, diversity and inclusion which sets out our 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. We are building our capacity in this area of work; we know we still have further work to do but we expect to make good progress in the year ahead.

## Fitness to Practise

As our Director of Fitness to Practise will report at this meeting while the number of concerns reported to Social Work England remains high the case progression, particularly through Triage, is improving which points to initial progress being made on the plan for improving through put of cases. This remains an area for constant monitoring and it will take time, however it is also worth noting that many of the challenges we are facing in Fitness to Practise are mirrored across the regulatory sector. Part of our challenge is to understand the context and key themes in the complaints coming to us.

## Emerging Concerns Protocol

We recently made arrangements in collaboration with the Care Quality Commission to become signatories to the revised version of the Emerging Concerns Protocol. This protocol was developed under the governance of the Health and Social Care Regulators Forum in 2018 and is currently supported by ten signatories from health and social care regulation. The purpose of the protocol is to provide a clearly defined mechanism for organisations, which have a role in the quality and safety of care provision, to share information quickly and effectively that may indicate risks to people who use services, their carers, families or professionals.

## Planning and Risk Management

At this time of year, the internal focus is on preparing for reporting on this financial year and planning for the new financial year. I am inclined to place our work on the business plan, the corporate risk register and risk appetite statement, and the budget for 2021/22 in both this section for areas of progress and the next section for areas that need greater focus - we have made good progress significant challenges remain and time is limited. Drafts of the business plan, the corporate risk register and risk appetite statements and the budget for 21/22 will be considered by the Board at this meeting.

### 3. Areas for focus

#### Temporary Registration

We are planning a review of the temporary registration arrangements following the annual renewals process. All those who did not renew their registration at the end of last year, for whatever reason, have been put on the temporary register which means this register now holds 14,113 social workers. This will include a small but important number of social workers who are intending to restore to the full register but have yet to do so. We are keen to understand better the number of social workers on the temporary register and who are willing to return to employment to address any capacity issues that may arise in the current pandemic. The current and potential need for additional capacity in social work services remains uncertain and as such there is general agreement that the temporary register should remain in place for the time being, although kept under review.

#### The Further Development of Forge

Following a recent procurement process a new contractor has been secured to take forward the ongoing development of our Forge system. The Business Case has been reviewed by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and approval is being sought at this Board meeting. There will be a period of transition from the previous contractor over the coming months and although we will have a robust project plan in place to manage the transition it will always carry an element of risk. The transition should be completed in the end of April.

#### The development of the new central system, Enable, for Finance, People and Commercial

Work is progressing well on the development of the new central system for finance, people and commercial known as Enable, however we are currently monitoring the relatively high levels of internal capacity the process is consuming through the current testing phase.

## Planning and Risk Management

As noted above work is ongoing on the development of our approach to risk management, our business plan and the budget for 21/22. Members of the Board and Executive Leadership team held two workshops focused on risk management in January and we continue to consider improvements in our format for risk management. A draft of the business plan for 21/22 has been completed for an initial review by the members of the Board. More work is ongoing on how we build on and improve our approach to monitoring, performance measures, and identifying and articulating indicators of success.

A particular challenge at this time is planning the budget for 21/22. We are building capacity in the key areas of Fitness to Practise, Education and Training Quality Assurance while at the same time maintaining the progress we have made in all other key areas. Our fee income from registration will be largely similar to this year so we have been considering with our sponsor team how the additional spend to meet our need to build capacity will be met in the year ahead.

#### Impact of Covid-19 and the current lockdown

We are continuing to review the impact of Covid-19 on social work and social work training and education with the key stakeholders. Tracking capacity for frontline social work, addressing the potential for 'hidden harms' in families and in communities in lock down and responding to the experience of social work students (with particular reference to placements) remain central considerations within the sector and a challenge for local and national responses.

We are also working to respond to the impact of the current lockdown on our own staff and how their own personal and family challenges are impacting on their working life and vice versa. Some indicators, like sick leave for example, are showing increasing signs of potential stresses and strains for our staff at this time.

#### Professional Standards Authority Performance Review

We are currently working on our targeted review responses to the questions put to us by the Professional Standards Authority Performance Review Team. These are due for return at the end of this month (February). An arrangement for the audit of cases has also been established with the review team. As this is our first performance review by the Authority it is a challenge and a learning process, we are endeavouring to be as thorough and responsive as possible. We are keen also to respond to the Authority's current consultation on its approach to performance review and on its report on the initial response of the professional regulation sector to Covid-19.

## 4. Forward look

#### Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

The review was launched by the Secretary of State on the 15 January announcing that Josh MacAlister will lead the review. Josh will take up his position with the review in March and will resign from his current role at Chief Executive of Frontline. The terms of reference identify seven key themes that will be addressed by the review, one of which is on delivery – 'what are the key enablers to implement the review and raise standards across England, such as a strong, stable and resilient workforce, system leadership and partnerships, and what is needed so that this change can be delivered?' Given that the social work profession is a central part of the workforce in children's social care it will be important for Social Work England to be well tuned into developments in the review.

### Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Approved Mental Capacity Professional (AMCP)

The government recently responded to the 2018 review of the Mental Health Act with a White Paper and work is continuing in Mental Capacity on the establishment of Liberty Protection Safeguards. This feeds into the work of Social Work England on drafting new education and training standards for Approved Mental Capacity Professional and Approved Mental Health Professional. We have established a professional expert group to support us in taking work on the standards forward. It is a real opportunity to work with experts in the sector on establishing these new standards however the timeframe presents a challenge, particularly for the new AMCP role. We have commissioned a study into the experiences of AMHPs and BIAs and those they support to explore possible connections between the regulated profession an AMHP/BIA belongs to and the experiences of those professionals and people with experience of their services.

### The White Paper for the Health and Care Bill

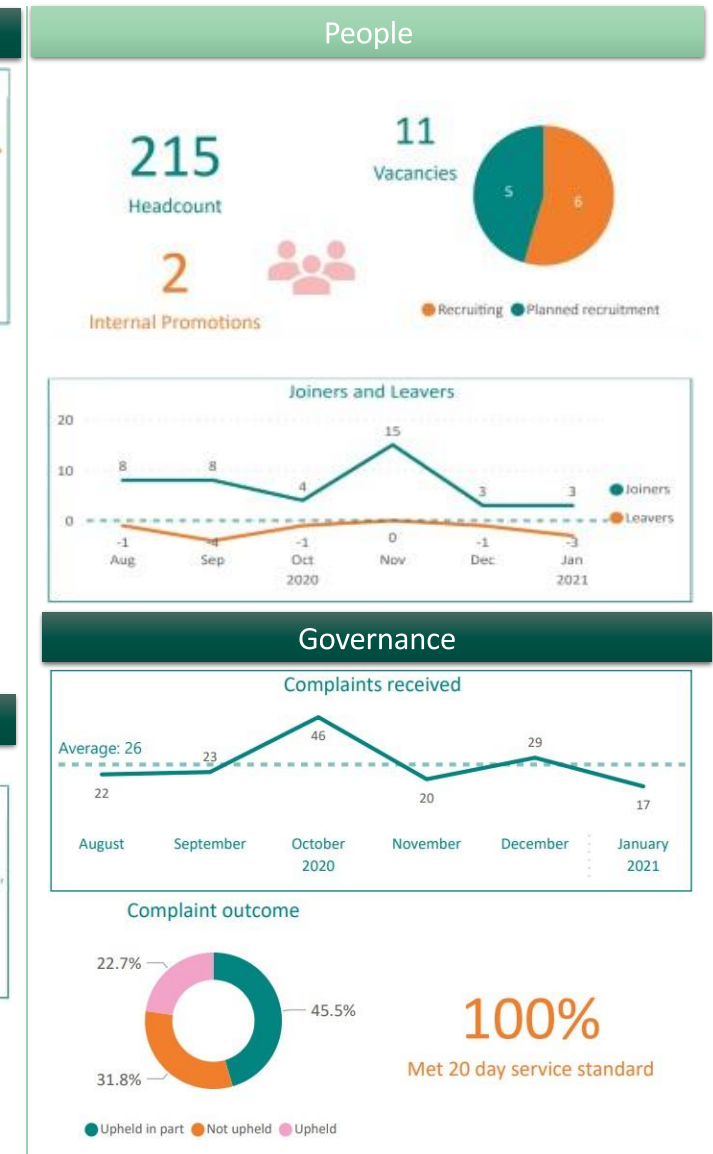
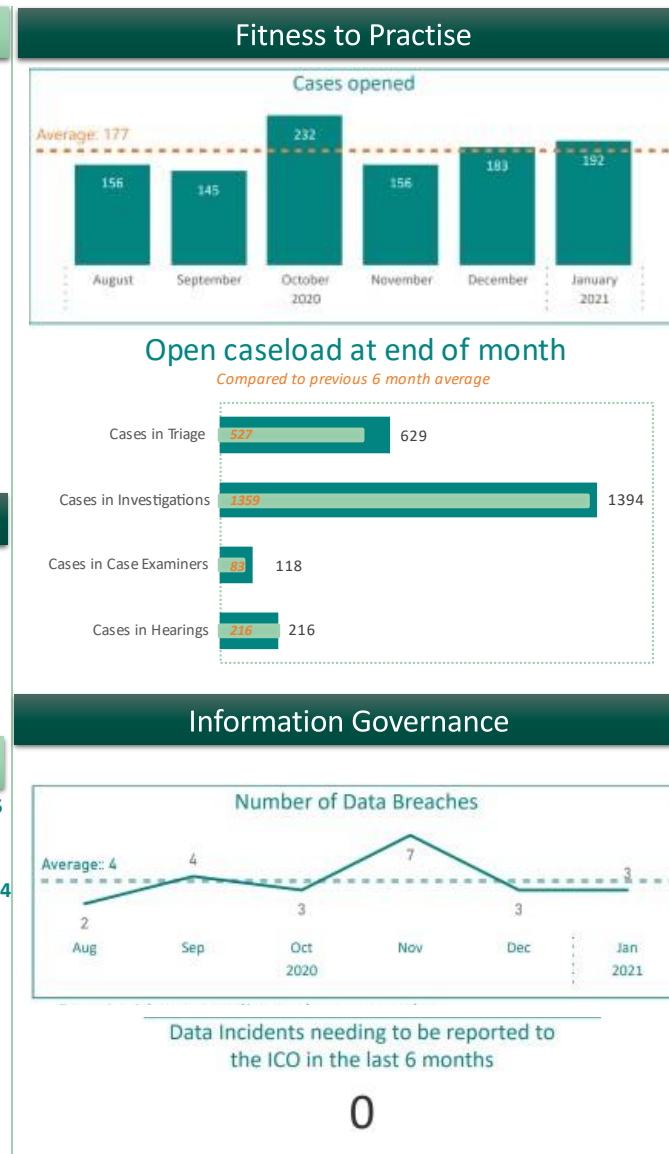
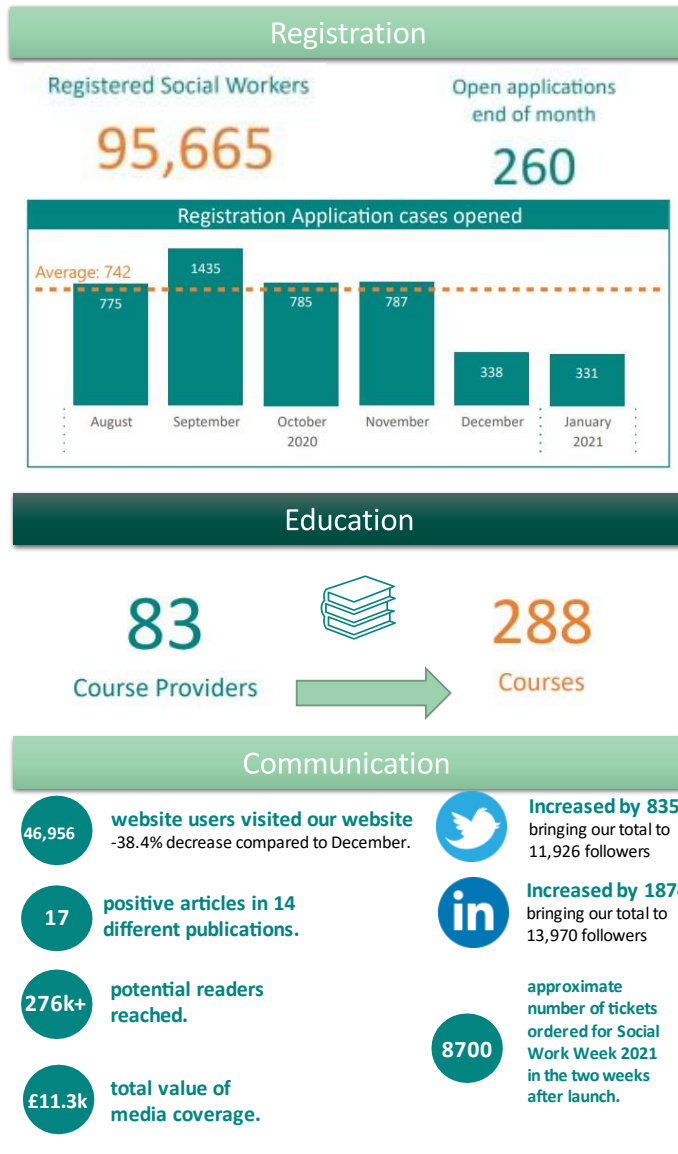
A section of the recent White Paper for the Health and Care Bill refers to professional regulation and in particular the scope of Section 60 of the Health Act 1999. Proposals to extend Section 60 to include – closing down a regulator, removing a profession from regulation, removing restrictions on delegation of functions of a regulator, and clarifying other categories of workforce who may come under regulation (particular reference to NHS Managers and Senior Leaders). It should be noted that Social Work England does not come under Section 60 of the Health Act 1999.

Alongside the White Paper the DHSC will be consulting on the legislative changes required for the reform of professional regulation in the Spring and will be establishing an independent review on the number professional regulators.

### Post Qualifying Framework for Social Work

We have been exploring with key stakeholders the current professional landscape for social workers and how it is complicated, at times confusing with multiple standards and frameworks, and lacks coherence and integration. It is generally agreed what is needed is robust, credible, simple professional standards as the golden thread which runs through all professional activity and is integrated within a broader system architecture which both supports delivery and enables change over time to be accommodated within this system. The expectation on social workers as a regulated professional is, they understand and act upon their personal responsibility to demonstrate their ongoing fitness to practice. And, of course, as they grow in experience, the sophistication of their practice will increase. But the corollary to this is social workers have a right to expect a professional landscape which supports this and not inhibit or act as a barrier. This is important for building public confidence in social work and underpinning public protection. This is a significant challenge for the sector and will take some time, however we are keen to support a strategic and collaborative approach to the development of a post qualifying framework for social work. We will be bringing more detail on this work to the Board later in the year.

## 5. Dashboard Overview



Chief Executive's meetings with external organisations since the last Board meeting:

- 11/01 Met with the Chief Executive of Australian Association of Social Workers
- 12/01 Attended a meeting with a number of key stakeholders – DfE, DHSC, HEI sector representatives.
- 15/01 Attended the launch by the Secretary of State for Education of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- 15/01 Met with representatives from the Children's Residential Workforce team at DfE
- 18/01 Meet with officials from DfE and DHSC on Standards
- 19/01 attended a free webinar on Good Practice in Corporate reporting presented by the Chartered Governance Institute
- 26/01 Met with the Anti-Racist Social Work Education Group
- 27/01 Met with Barefoot Coaching Limited
- 29/01 Attended the Chief Executives of Regulatory Bodies meeting
- 29/01 Attended the new professional expertise group for the development of standards for education and training of AMCP and AMHP
- 01/02 Attended a regular Vulnerable Children and Young People's National Board meeting
- 01/02 Met with the Chairperson of the Independent Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- 08/02 Attended a regular meeting of the Education and Training Advisory Group
- 09/02 Met with the Chairperson of the Workforce Committee at the Association of Directors of Children's Services and members of our Sponsor Team at DfE
- 09/02 Met with a Director at the Good Governance Institute
- 10/02 Met with the Permanent Secretary at DfE.
- 11/02 Attended a meeting called by DHSC with representatives from the other professional regulators on the Health and Care White Paper.
- 12/02 Met with the Director of Workforce Improvement Learning and Workforce Directorate – Children's Social Care – DfE
- 17/02 Attended the Children's Commissioner final event as Commissioner – Building back better: Reaching England's left behind children.
- 18/02 Met with the Chief Social Worker for Children