

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

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Author

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Date

13 May 2021

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO9: We will establish robust infrastructure, systems and processes that promote trust and confidence.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategy - Hungry

1. Introduction

This report looks back at the key areas of focus for the organisation since the last Board meeting in February. It also looks forward to the months ahead and highlights areas of challenge and opportunity for Social Work England. In doing so it will touch briefly on agenda items that will be covered in more detail during the Board meeting. The brief dashboard has been updated with data to the end of March which is addressed in more detail in the quarter 4 performance report and the final section lists the main external meetings I have attended since the previous Board meeting.

2. Looking back

Fitness to Practise

A key area of focus for the organisation in the past few months has been on implementing the restructuring plans for all the stages of our Fitness to Practise process to address the increase in the number of new complaints being received and to improve the progression rates of the transition cases. The data to the end of March shows significant positive progress in performance in all stages of the process which has been sustained into April, but we must be mindful it is early days.

We have a clear trajectory for case management throughout the year with the resources we have put in place for Fitness to Practise. This will be monitored closely to ensure we remain on track to manage the caseload down which is important for many reasons not least in the interests of those who are waiting for an outcome to their case.

It should be noted that we received the highest monthly number of new complaints into the service in March since we became the regulator. It is very important that we work to understand this trend. We have in place a cross departmental project team to explore the nature of the complaints coming to Social Work England and to look at ways in which we can work with partners to find solutions. The Board will receive updates on this work as it progresses.

Social Work Week

Our Social Work Week in March was very successful and helped us to engage with thousands of people with an interest in social work in England. Promoting public confidence in the social work profession is one of our key responsibilities and to have the opportunity to communicate with such a large number of social workers and others in this way has been a major boost. The team developed a very useful evaluation framework which will be reported on as part of the agenda for this meeting. This event was a collective effort across the organisation and has provided us with numerous learning points, all those involved are to be commended for the work and talent they brought to the event.

People and Business Support

Corporate enabling functions are now under one Directorate as planned.

I would like to thank Greg Ross-Sampson for his work with Social Work England and his overall support through the set-up phase of the organisation. We wish him well in his new post.

This time of year is always a very busy time for corporate with the financial year end, external audit and preparations for the Annual Report and Accounts, and publishing a new business plan and performance management framework. Within this context we are pleased to have gone live with our new central systems platform Enable. Enable will make a great difference to the efficiency, effectiveness, and flexibility of our systems in HR, Commercial and Finance.

On people, our continued investment in learning and development has focused on supporting new and our more experienced managers. We have had a higher level than usual of people leaving us but that is mainly due to the end of a number of fixed term contracts.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Ahmina Akhtar has been appointed as our first Head of EDI, Ahmina has worked for Social Work England as a Regional Engagement Lead. Ahmina has a wealth of experience and expertise and will bring her energy and talent to leading our ambition in EDI as outlined by our statement of intent.

Professional Standards Authority Performance Review

After a period of positive collaborative work with the Authority we have reached an agreed position on our Voluntary Removal process and we will be reintroducing the process back into our services. The number of cases to which this process is likely to apply is relatively low.

We sent the PSA data report the week beginning 17th May.

We have been working with the Authority in a number of areas in relation to their performance review. We have received and responded to draft reports on our accepted outcomes process and the audit completed by the Authority on a number of our closed cases. The timeframe for the Performance Review report is August/September, although it is our understanding once completed, the Authority will publish the report on accepted outcomes separately in late May or early June.

3. Forward look

DHSC Consultation on regulating healthcare professional

The DHSC has launched its consultation '[Regulating healthcare professionals, Protecting the Public](#)' which outlines the legislative reforms being sought by the Department for the regulators of the healthcare professionals. While Social Work England are not in the scope of the reform or the legislation, we have an interest in the proposals and will respond to the consultation accordingly. The consultation will end on 16th June.

As an initial response to the consultation the Public Standards Authority published '[Our first look at the Government consultation, 'Let's get it right for public protection'](#)' which focuses on their concerns in relation to proposals within the consultation for accepted outcomes.

The DHSC are also launching an Independent review of the number of healthcare regulators to commence in June. Again, Social Work England is not within the scope of the review but have an interest in it. The review will examine the following areas:

- How the UK healthcare regulators might be reconfigured to achieve maximum public benefit.
- An assessment of existing research on regulatory reform, a comparison of regulatory structures in other jurisdictions and a summary of the evidence gathered during the review;
- A review of current oversight arrangements, including analysis of regulatory fees and distribution of costs;
- Consideration of the future workforce needs of the health service including flexibility of roles and scope of practice;
- The economic and efficiency case for any change in the number of regulators within the Health sector in the UK;
- The alternatives considered and the pros and cons of various models including costs and benefits;
- The role of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) were the number of regulators to be reduced.

It is anticipated that the review will take 6 months to report.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

The Panel has published its [annual report for 2020](#) which sets out their views about how effectively the system of reviews across England, including Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR), is operating. In addition, the Panel have published a joint analysis of safeguarding partners yearly reports and a commissioned analysis of LCSPRs and rapid reviews. There is a wealth of information within these reports and point to areas potential improvements in social work practice particularly in relation to assessment and decision

making. It is useful for us to review these reports particularly with the context of Education and Training and CPD.

Development in Forge – our core operating system

The move of supplier for the further development of our 'Forge' core operating system to Cognizant has been a smooth one. While the system is working well in its core functions further development is needed and this is often referred to in reviews and audits. We have a prioritised development plan in place for the year, whilst it is a challenging plan that has little resilience built in and will require close monitoring, it offers an opportunity to mitigate risks in key operational areas and presents potential to explore further developments in our use of technology.

Moving out of Lockdown

The next couple of months will hopefully see the country move out of lockdown and return to more familiar social interactions. While the current government advice remains to work from home if you can, we are preparing for when that advice is likely to change. A phased and planned approach to a new blended arrangement to working in the office and from home is currently being developed by our team at Heads of function level within the organisation.

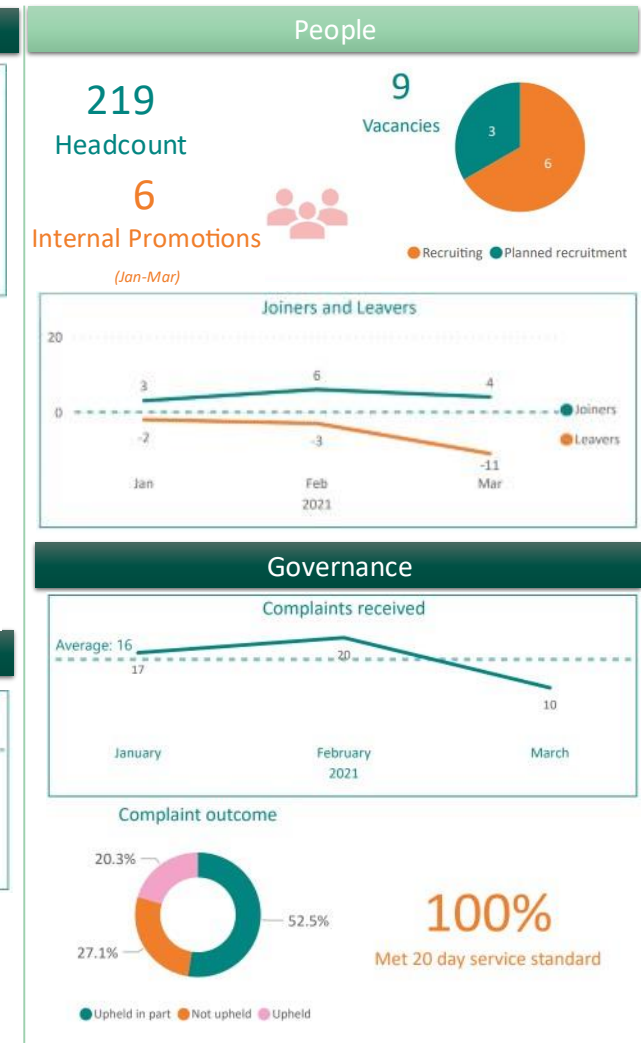
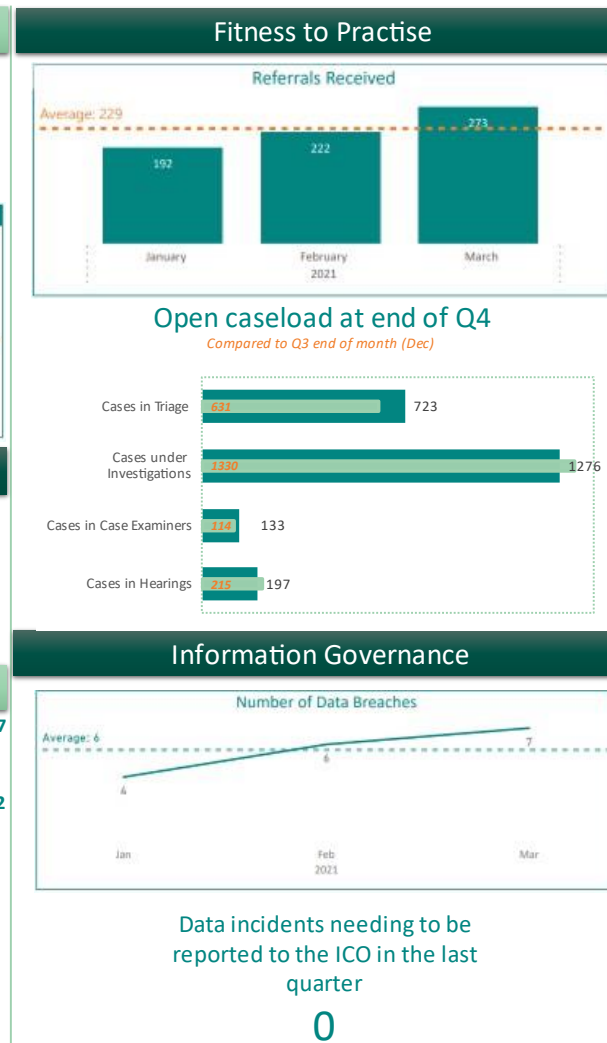
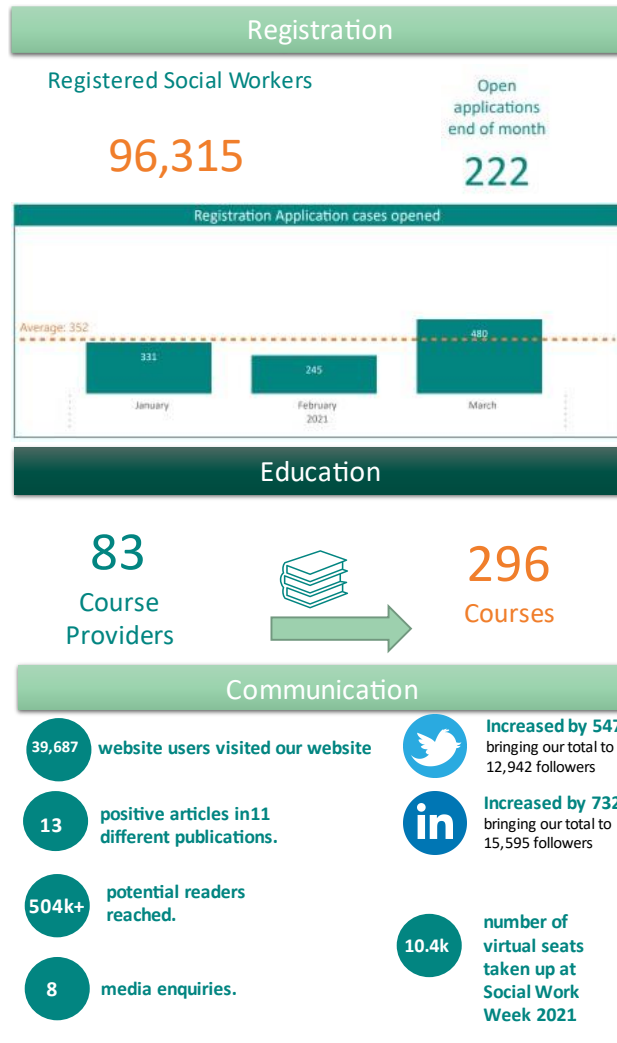
There is an opportunity to create a new business model for Social Work England based on what we have learned from working from home for over a year. We are currently testing new approaches to office layout, the use of technology and managing different working patterns. At this stage we cannot be clear on the timescale and what the final model will look like, however we are keen to ensure it is a planned and managed process that finds the right balance that meets the needs of individuals, teams, directorates, and the overall business needs of Social Work England.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

We are working on the final drafts of the Annual Report and Accounts to be ready for the next ARAC and Board meetings, this is giving us a useful opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved in our first full year in operation. We are trying to capture the lessons learnt in all areas and focus on the ways in which we can improve moving into our second year. This is articulated in our recently published business plan for 20/21. One area of challenge has been the way in which the Executive has reported performance information to the Board and other key stakeholders. We are proposing a new performance reporting template to the Board at this meeting. The work on the performance template has been assisted by the members of the Board who attend ARAC.

We have made good progress in many of the key mitigations associated with our organisational risks. In managing the FtP case load the signs are positive in terms of the impact of the changes and additional resources, equally we know it is early days. It is essential that we manage down the transition cases, and we are continuing to model our scenarios that might accelerate this process if resources were available. We should see good progress in this in the reporting period ahead.

5. Annexes



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

Since the last meeting I have meet with:

New Chair of the Professional Standards Authority

Chief Executives of the Healthcare professional regulators

Chief Social Worker Children

Chief Social Worker Adults

Permanent Secretary DfE and Chief Executives of DfE Arm's Length Bodies

Chief Executives of the Social Work and Social Care Regulators across the UK

Chair of the independent review of children's social care

New President of ADCS

Chief Executive of BASW

Chief Executive of the Australian Association of Social Workers

Social Work Education Anti-Racist Network

Editor of Community Care

Representatives of Unison

New Commissioner for Children in England