



Performance Report Q4 2020-21

Agenda Item 7a

Paper Ref 04b

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

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Date

21 May 2021

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Discussion and Advising

Associated Strategic Objective

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

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Operational delivery - Open

1. Summary

This report sets out an assessment of our performance for Q4 of financial year 2020-21 in the new template that we will be using for financial year 2021-22. We have revised our KPIs for 2021-22 as part of our business planning, and there is a separate paper for the board that sets out the changes. In this last quarter, we are reporting on the old KPIs except for in Fitness to Practise. Quarter 4 has seen an upturn in performance in Fitness to Practise in particular. More widely, work we had planned has been delivered to expected time, cost and quality. In addition to reporting against our strategic pillars, we have included detailed statistical data as an annex for information.

2. Action required

The board is requested to:

- Discuss the report

3. Commentary

In fitness to practise, mitigations we have put in place to reduce the risk that we are unable to meet referral demand and process cases within our resources have resulted in efficiencies and increased productivity. We also saw improvement in call and email response times in the advice service, and also in registration application processing times.

We have had two substantial regulatory audits, a very successful Social Work Week and a smooth transition to a new IT provider for our technology development. Our planning for a blended approach to work continued including trialling technological changes.

Social Work Week in March saw a programme of over 70 events with around 6,000 people and overwhelmingly positive feedback.

4. KPIs for 2021-22

Our KPIs for FY 2020-21 were based on four months of being the regulator and on a set of untested assumptions derived from limited data. Our KPIs were focused exclusively on fitness to practise and registration. We have undertaken a comprehensive review of our performance reporting and data and have worked with Audit Risk and Assurance Committee members to develop a revised set of KPIs and performance report for FY 2021-22. More detail of the changes and rationale are set out in the Performance Reporting 21-22 paper.

5. Annex 1

Statistical data

1 Performance quarter 4

1.1 Our regulatory approach

Registration

KPI ID	KPI Description	Target	Q4	Dir ¹
REG1	Percentage of UK applications with no investigation required approved within 10 working days	≥ 95%	96%	↑
REG2	Percentage of calls answered within 5 minutes	≥ 90%	58%	↑
REG3	Percentage of emails answered within 5 working days	≥ 95%	96%	↑

UK application processing has continued to improve, with a median time between 5 working days and 1 working day. Application volumes for UK graduates has been lower than previous quarters. This has accounted in part for the continued improvement in performance, alongside further development of guidance and systems, and the continuing confidence and effectiveness of the team.

Vacancies in the registration team increased, driven in part by internal movement and secondment opportunities within the organisation, as well as long term planned absence, and some leavers. Recruitment to both fixed term and permanent roles has been challenging and we are working with the people and development team to fill vacancies as quickly as possible, and in advance of the upturn in activity which will commence at the end of Q1 2021-22.

Responding to calls and emails has remained challenging, particularly considering the recruitment issues mentioned above, and balanced against the processing of applications for registration and restoration. The median queue time for calls is less than 1 minute and the time taken to respond to emails has been stable at 2 working days. We have continued to refine our guidance and website messages to help more applicants and registrants 'self-serve'. Calls relating to fitness to practise matters tend to be lengthier and we continue to work with colleagues to ensure these calls are appropriately managed.

We are preparing for UK graduate applications which we anticipate receiving from June 2021. We are working with education providers to understand any changes to the timeline for graduation (for example where students may graduate towards the end of the summer or in early autumn due to changes brought about by Covid restrictions), and how this might affect our resources if this coincides with the 2021 renewal period. We are building on our experiences of processing large volumes of applications last year, and also preparing providers to provide pass lists to us as efficiently as possible so that we can process

¹ Direction of travel: direction of arrow indicates numerical change compared to previous quarter; colour of arrow indicates performance against target (green = trending towards target; red = trending away from target)

applications effectively. We will also continue to ensure that graduating students are given clear expectations in relation to the process for registration with us.

Fitness to practise

We have considered and discounted reporting fitness to practise performance against the old KPIs. We have taken this decision in recognition of their severe limitations in articulating our performance in this area and the complexities of the cases we inherited from the HCPC.

KPI ID	KPI description	Target	Q4	Dir ²
FTP1	Number of open cases in triage stage	300 by March 2022	723	↑
FTP2	Number of open cases under investigation	1,230 by March 2022	1276	↓
FTP3	Legacy cases progressed beyond investigation	80% by March 2022	39.9%	↑
FTP4	Time taken to conclude cases received since our inception following an investigation	Monitor (median weeks)	48 weeks	↑
FTP5	Time taken to approve interim orders once need identified	Median of ≤ 20 working days	23	↑
FTP6	FTP internal quality score	≥ 90% of cases meet internal standards	91.2%	↑

This has been a challenging year for reasons detailed in previous reports to the Board. Those challenges resulted in a rising caseload in the triage service in Q2 and Q3 and prevented effective progression of an ageing legacy caseload. Mitigations we have put in place include an end-to-end restructure, process improvements, and recruitment and training of people who were assigned caseloads by February 2021.

Our assumptions that these changes would result in an approximate 30% increased capacity by the end of Q4 have been realised. Case progression levels within the service improved significantly in March 2021 and are currently being sustained. The increase in progression rates has resulted in the overall caseload being reduced by 111 cases to the lowest level since November 2020.

Notwithstanding this, referral rates into the service remained about 35% higher than forecast at the start of the year. We have initiated work to better understand the reasons for the high referral rates and to work with key partners in the sector to identify solutions.

Within the investigations service productivity increased across the quarter to almost double the average output for the year in March with a corresponding sustained reduction in caseloads

² Direction of travel: direction of arrow indicates numerical change compared to previous quarter; colour of arrow indicates performance against target (green = trending towards target; red = trending away from target)

The case examiners also achieved a sustained increase in productivity doubling the rate of decision-making across the period and resulting in a reduction in the time taken for decisions to be made.

Higher numbers of hearings have also been completed and adjournment rates have been reduced. The service concluded a monthly average of 14 hearings which is more than double the completion rate for the previous quarter and the overall caseload awaiting hearings was reduced to the lowest level since March 2020.

Within the quarter the target for time taken to approve interim orders was exceeded as a result of a small number of adjourned hearings that were outliers in terms of timescales.

The quality of decision making has been subject to ongoing monitoring through a monthly sampling and review process. The Decision Review Group (DRG) meets monthly to oversee this process and engage with feedback from key stakeholders, including the Professional Standards Authority.

1.2 The social work profession

In January we published 'Social Work in England: First reflections', the first of two interim reports that will culminate in a state-of-the-nation publication in our third year. The publication shared insights spanning education and training, social work practice in response to Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as continuing professional development and fitness to practise. The publication served as an important marker of our first year in regulation and has supported transparent conversations about social work and regulation in the public domain.

We completed our first cycle of CPD validation. This involved checking 2.5% of social workers who successfully renewed their registration and completed CPD. Assessors reviewed the CPD records of 2,205 social workers. They gave an 'advice given' outcome to 89 social workers. We have replicated our year 1 CPD requirements to year 2 to provide continuity of expectations as social workers continue to support Covid-19 responses. We have committed to developing our approach through consultation in the 2021/2022 business year the take effect from December 2021 onwards.

Social Work Week in March was a success. We co-produced a programme of over 70 events, had over 10,000 logins and around 6000 people attended. We had 430,000 impressions on Twitter and gained over 170 new followers. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. It is worth noting that this reach would not have been possible without moving the event online. The overall objective of the week was 'To look back at social work in England 2020, collaboratively capturing reflections on the impact of significant events on the social work profession and people and to co-produce a platform for sharing examples of practice innovations, trends, and solutions adopted in social work.' Most attendees were social workers (70%) and they primarily said they attended to learn and record continuing professional development. They fed back that the area in which they most increased their

knowledge was around social work perspectives on equality, diversity, and inclusion which we were really pleased to hear.

Outside of Social Work Week, we have continued to build relationships across all key stakeholders, regularly engaging in conversation on key aspects of the social work profession and our vision for raising standards, protecting the public, and developing the professionalisation social work in England. We have laid a firm foundation for the ambitious plans we have to develop the post-qualifying landscape, and to consolidate social work education and training over the remainder of this strategic planning period. We will also be using the feedback from our engagement to begin to plan for our next corporate strategy.

Equality, diversity and inclusion has remained a key area of focus. We have published our statement of intent, setting out our plans across all aspects of our activity. We have appointed a Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, who, as a member of the senior team, will work closely with our Professional Associate, our leadership and across the organisation to ensure principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded and visible in everything we do. We have continued to work with the Principal Social Worker Network on anti-racism in social work, and this workstream will continue over the coming months.

1.3 The people we work with and for

The National Advisory Forum continues to go from strength to strength. They co-produced Social Work Week from the beginning; their suggestions ensured the tone and focus of the week including hosting the opening session. They have also consistently contributed to the Decision Review Group and bring invaluable insight from the perspective of lived experience, reminding us of the impact that social work has on people's lives.

We expanded our conversation with student social workers. We have four students who sit on our National Advisory Forum and Education and Training Advisory Forum and we met with them to discuss how we can most effectively engage students with their specialist regulator. The result was a plan to deliver introductory sessions to all students at the beginning of their course through the engagement team, and to speak to them about becoming registered near the end of their course. This will be implemented in 2021/22. We will build a network of connections through this activity to ensure we are also engaging with students around our policy developments and wider consultations.

Our Education and Training Advisory Forum also progressed through this quarter, continuing to meet regularly. Our two Professional Associates have presented their work on the Professional Learning Outcomes that will support the embedding of our standards. Outside of this forum, we have also continued to meet with the Anti-racism in Social Work Education group. This is a group of academics who have coalesced on this important issue, and we have had constructive discussions with them on social work education and training.

To inform our work and involve the voices of people with lived and learned experience of social work in our work, we have a programme of research underway. We have appointed

research partners and managed research across education and training, continuing professional development, and approved mental health professionals and best interests assessors. These projects are due to report in the 2021/2022 business year.

We tested our thinking on consultation for 2021/2022. We held six pre-consultation online workshops with professionals, educators, students and people with lived experience of social work on our approach to CPD, practice placements and education and training standards for approved mental health and mental capacity professionals. Alongside our research activity and work with the National Advisory Forum, this provided rich insight, feedback and challenge to our early proposals.

We have continued to engage with sector and practice leaders around the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and associated social restrictions on social work professionals and their practice. We have worked with the Principal Social Workers' network to consider guidance on practice and challenges experienced by the workforce, including professional wellbeing. We've also maintained engagement in cross-regulatory forums on Covid-19 and engaged with the PSA's review of regulators' responses to the pandemic. Examples of our Covid-19 response activity were highlighted in the PSA's ['Learning from Covid-19' report](#).

1.4 Education and training

There were no new approval decisions made within the quarter, and one inspection undertaken. We completed the analysis for the first annual monitoring exercise and this is included as a separate paper for this meeting.

We have continued to develop and revise our guidance relating to the education and training standards, including work with professional experts to review our practice placement guidance, and we have advanced our work to revise and develop the standards for approved mental health professionals. We continue to prepare for the creation of the approved mental capacity professional role, and the need for education and training standards in this area.

We continue to prepare for the start of the three-year reapproval cycle which will begin in September 2021.

1.5 Our organisation

Internal Audit

Our internal audits resulted in substantial assurance in Registration and Education Quality Assurance and adequate in risk management and audit follow up.

Legal

Our legal team's work includes a focus on possible amendments to our governing Rules and Regulations following our first year of operation; the development of our data and insight strategy, and our guidance relating to, and provision of, advice on individual regulatory and corporate matters.

Corporate Complaints

We received 47 corporate complaints, a 42% decrease, and 18 pieces of feedback, a 51% decrease. The number of complaints received in each month in this quarter was less than the average in the 2020/21 year. We processed 31 Freedom of Information and 97 individual data rights requests, and these were processed within statutory timeframes. We dealt with 28 data incidents, none of which met our threshold for referral to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Systems

We continued to test and develop our new corporate system ready for launch on 1 April 2021. We had a smooth transition to our new IT developer and have quickly established a collaborative working relationship.

People

As of 31 March, our FTE headcount was 219, against a budgeted headcount of 210. The additional people have given us greater capacity in investigations and registration. Increased payroll costs have been offset against savings in other areas including travel and subsistence.

29% of people are on fixed term contracts, the majority to 31 March 2022 and within fitness to practise; others are covering maternity leave and internal temporary moves. We remain alert to the risk of fixed term contracts, where people may seek permanent roles elsewhere. We had 6 internal promotions that reflects our ongoing commitment to development. We have had 4 joiners and 16 leavers; 7 end of fixed term contract, 7 for new roles and 2 for unspecified reasons. We are working with registration and advice to ensure a full complement of people in preparation for the busiest period of the registration year.

Our sickness rates have fallen in this quarter, from 0.4 average per employee in January to 0.2 in March, following return to work of most long-term sickness cases.

We issued 81 Applause vouchers recognising outstanding contribution and demonstration of our values and behaviours.

Learning and development

In addition to our Aspiring Managers programme that began in January, we commissioned a management development programme for our managers. The programme is supported by an action learning approach and internally trained facilitators.

We have procured a new learning platform, Grow that will form the cornerstone of our learning and support our aspirations to be a learning organisation. It will enable knowledge sharing, innovation, ownership of learning, accessibility, and a blended approach to learning.



71 different
courses attended



110 sessions
delivered



429 hours of
learning



27 internal
courses for
groups, 44
external courses
for groups or
individuals



997 attendees



Focus on Aspiring Manager's Programme

The programme was designed in-house and centred around three pillars, ManagingSelf, Managing Others and Managing Tasks and Activities. The design enabled participants to discuss and practise skills in a facilitated group setting, giving an introduction to topics that they could follow up on through self-led learning. This was supported by online access to CMI Management Direct.

Launched
January
2021

6
sessions
over 3
months

28
people
signed up

Key Highlights:

Sign up from across all directorates
Strong links to 1:1s, TRACKS and TRACKED

"I have really enjoyed having the opportunity to participate in the course and have got a lot from the sessions which I feel able to apply to both practical and theoretical work in management. The programme has allowed me to gain insight of the skills and knowledge needed to progress into a management role."

Annex A

Statistical Data 2020-21

Registration			Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Number of registered social workers			98,738	98,780	97,991	98,493	99,210	100,117	100,942	99,701	95,251	95,665	95,950	96,315
Number of temporarily registered social workers			7,996	8,096	8,993	8,993	9,327	9,192	9,213	9,656	14,359	14,183	14,065	13,922
Number of social workers joining the register			183	147	223	591	843	1151	924	431	840	432	303	420
Number of social workers leaving the register			85	105	1012	89	126	244	99	1672	5290	18	18	55
New registration applications	Number received	All graduates	205	234	398	1174	775	1435	785	787	338	331	245	480
		UK graduates	176	200	355	1131	722	1385	710	712	255	265	177	412
		EU/EEA graduates	10	11	15	6	10	11	13	18	31	n/a	n/a	n/a
		Non-EU/EEA graduates	19	23	28	37	43	39	62	57	52	66	68	68
	Median time taken to process (working days)	All graduates	25	23	36	12	16	10	8	5	7	5	4	1
		UK graduates	17	16	22	12	16	9	8	4	7	4	1	1
		EU/EEA graduates	85	94	95	63	45	95	71	70	56	38	28	16
		Non-EU/EEA graduates	78	67	87	83	80	60	42	34	23	31	21	11
Restoration applications received	Number received	All graduates	37	25	67	98	75	72	76	215	700	138	111	91
	Median time taken to process (working days)	All graduates	40	35	61	28	33	38	38	1	7	24	23	15

Registration		Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Registration appeals	Number received	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1
	Number concluded	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	2	3	2	1	0
	Upheld	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
	Rejected	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	1	2	0	1	0
	Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Median time taken to complete (weeks)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31	33	25	30	24	42	n/a
Misuse of title cases	Number	10	3	10	13	8	7	6	7	16	13	6	6
	Median time taken to complete (working days)	20	30	23	26	48	47	166	50	18	9	26	12
Number of phone calls received		1630	2683	2510	4340	4188	6747	6988	11014	5023	1475	1416	2234
Median call queue time (minutes)		2	10	9	9	6	9	9	24	10	1	0	0
Percentage of calls answered (of all calls received)		62%	44%	46%	45%	59%	51%	51%	35%	43%	70%	73%	59%
Number of emails received		2325	1788	1075	1986	1305	2468	2147	2173	901	783	824	1143
Median response time to emails (working days)		4	6	10	10	8	5	9	6	7	2	2	2

CPD		Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Number of social workers who have completed CPD (cumulative)		10,500	12,451	14,319	18,570	24,155	34,855	49,548	91,989	2,176	4,054	5,951	7,593
Total number of valid CPD items recorded		6288	6813	7606	13496	15287	28969	36199	87931	2499	3431	4,426	5,903
Percentage of social workers who have completed valid CPD		11%	13%	15%	19%	24%	35%	49%	92%	2%	4%	6%	8%
Education and Training		Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Enquiries received		53	29	36	26	21	45	40	57	17	47	21	21
Concerns received		3	3	2	2	2	1	0	1	0	8	3	0

Inspections conducted		0	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Outcome of inspections	Approved	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Approved with conditions	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
	Not approved	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Request for approval withdrawn	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Complaints	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Complaints received	12	19	27	22	22	23	46	20	29	17	20	10
Complaints Closed	17	13	30	17	19	16	41	32	17	22	18	19
Met 20-day service standard %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%	100%	94%	100%	100%	100%

Fitness to Practise	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Concerns received	103	98	141	153	142	126	142	170	183	155	170	203
Referrals received (SW identified)	131	136	189	144	156	145	232	156	183	192	222	273
Number of cases awaiting pre-triage at end of month	56	53	18	8	34	6	28	8	25	56	66	152
Average time to complete pre-triage (calendar days)	29.6	42.5	22.1	20	20.4	23.9	19.3	23	22.8	39.2	32.5	36.7
FTP cases opened	120	93	209	136	112	173	181	155	143	154	202	152
Percentage of cases closed at triage	51.9%	49.4%	45.9%	48.1%	28.2%	41.5%	43.9%	54.5%	51.6%	35.6%	51.4%	60.3%
Number of cases entering investigation from triage	40	42	45	60	62	46	68	65	36	82	44	52
Number of cases closed in/progressed from investigation	33	48	56	77	54	80	70	71	46	48	66	107

Fitness to Practise	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Substantive hearings concluded/final decisions made	3	0	1	0	0	1	4	6	9	11	11	20
Interim Order application hearings held/decisions made	9	7	4	6	7	6	13	16	13	10	8	4
Interim order reviews held/decisions made	36	9	25	31	17	41	29	23	44	25	38	41
Substantive order reviews held/decisions made	3	5	8	6	6	6	4	6	3	6	8	3