

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

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Author

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Date

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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

At our meeting this month we will be reporting on our Q3 performance to the end of December 2021. This report contains a dashboard overview of trends in key areas (see Annex 2), more detail is contained within the Q3 performance report.

For registration and advice, the key focus has been on the renewals period ending on 30 November 2021. Overall, 96,909 social workers renewed this year including 479 who applied for restoration, 2,139 social workers did not renew and have been removed from the register. For the small number of people who needed to be restored to the register following the renewal period the team worked to ensure all restorations were completed within 5 days. With the focus on renewals response times for calls reduced beyond the KPI for a relatively short time, this was to be expected and response times have recovered as we start the new year.

The number of social workers who had not completed their CPD on 30 November was 804 and after the 21-day grace period this number had reduced to 65. On 5 January 2022 2.5% of eligible social workers were randomly selected for a CPD review, that is 2,354 social workers. They have been informed and their records will be reviewed by the end of March 2022 by a team of independent assessors. On 11 January 2022 the new CPD form and requirements became live. This follows public consultation. We have replaced the 2 previous forms with a single form. We have introduced a requirement to record at least 2 pieces of CPD, at least 1 of which must include a peer reflection.

Focus for Fitness to Practise (FtP) is on building resilience and capacity in the Triage Team with the aim of bringing case numbers down towards the target of 300 by year end. This target may be a challenge to achieve by year end however important to continue to bring the caseloads down over time. Also, a focus is timeliness in adjudications. It is good to note that the number of cases in investigations continues to reduce and is likely to be below target by year end. The additional funding for FtP cases is now being applied with a timeline through to June 2022. No update yet on the phase 2 aspect of the funding for hearings in legacy cases which may come through in the next financial year.

A small number of proposed amendments to the regulations and rules have been identified which include processes in FtP that may benefit timeliness and output in adjudications. These will be worked on in the next financial year. On 15 December 2021 a consultation on remote hearing and digital communication was launched which should see remote hearings become a permanent part of the adjudication process.

As part of the agenda for the meeting there will be an update report on the cross-directorate fitness to practise upstreaming project. This will include the Single Point of Contact network and the pilot work on local resolution which is part of the prevention and early intervention work on FtP referrals.

The performance review notes our communications in relation to the 2 tragic cases of child death which have received significant profile in the past few months, Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. Both cases are subject to serious case reviews, and in the former, a national review, and we will work with the review teams as required.

In my last report I noted the work that had begun on addressing our high level of fixed term contracts, I am pleased to follow up that this work has made good progress and we will be significantly reducing the number of fixed term contract positions within the organisation. Financial management forecasts for year-end are within target, work on the Framework Document has now been completed and it is nearly ready for signing and good progress is being made on drafts of the Business Plan and Budget for 22/23. The board members will be involved in the development of these documents by email correspondence in time for sign off at the March meeting.

2. Looking Back

Professional Standards Authority Performance Review

The performance review commenced on 18 October 2021. This review will look at our performance against the standards during the period 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021. We received the Authority's questions as part of the targeted review on 22 December 2021 and are drafting our response which will be shared with the authority by 28 January 2022. We expect to receive the final decisions about each of the Standards during the week commencing 21 February 2022.

Performance review consultation

The Authority began a process of consultation into how it carries out its performance reviews in December 2020 which began with a public consultation. Based on the feedback from this consultation in October 2021 the Authority launched a second consultation on their proposed changes to the performance review that closed on 21 December 2021. To summarise, the Authority is proposing to:

- Introduce a cycle of periodic reviews which cover all standards in detail (length of cycle to be determined - either 3, 4 or 5 years, the authority currently favours a 3-year cycle), with annual monitoring in the interim years. Reports will continue to be produced each year, and with an aim of publishing these within 3 months of the end of the reporting period.
- Gather and analyse evidence throughout the year and engage with the regulator more frequently raising concerns as they are identified.
- Engage more closely with stakeholders to understand how they perceive the work of the regulators.
- Change the way they undertake audits and expand these to cover other areas of the regulators' work.

The Authority expects to publish its decision on the new performance review approach in January 2022 and to adopt its' new process in April 2022.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

On the 17 December 2021 we published our equality, diversity and inclusion action plan which is fundamental to our work as the specialist regulator for social workers in England. We hosted a roundtable discussion with Skills for Care in December as part of the continued debate on anti-racism in social work. Our two organisations regularly discuss issues of equality and diversity, and anti-racist practice and the impact of racial inequality on social workers. Our partnership with the Principal Social Worker network and What Works for Children's Social Care continued, with a focus on planning a series of engagement events on anti-racism to start early in the new year.

Temporary Registration and renewed calls to return to Social Work

At the start of the pandemic, we were given emergency powers to enact temporary registration. This meant that many previously registered social workers in England were temporarily registered and able to return to practise should they wish to do so. Given the concerns about workforce capacity due to the Omicron variant of COVID 19, we joined the messages across the holiday period and into the new year to remind Social Workers that they can use their temporary registration status to apply for roles with local authorities, health trusts and other employers in England, helping to protect the public amidst staff shortages.

Working from Home

In previous meetings I have been reporting on our work towards a hybrid approach to working following on from our learning from working arrangements during the pandemic. On the 8 December 2021 the Prime Minister confirmed the move to Plan B in England, which included asking people to work from home if they can, as a result of the rapid spread of the Omicron variant in the UK. We immediately moved to the previous working from home arrangements we had in place earlier in the pandemic.

3. Forward Look

Business Plan

Our 2022-23 business plan covers the third year of our corporate strategy for 2020 to 2023. During the autumn, the Executive and Senior leadership teams worked together to reflect on our learning from this year to agree our resources, priorities and focus for improvements for the forthcoming year. It has been an intense period of planning and whilst we have been focused on the near future, we also have our next corporate strategy in mind. Conversations

about our ambitions have already begun. The business plan is on track to be shared in draft with the Board in March.

AMHP and AMCP

We have prepared course approval standards for approved mental capacity professional (AMCP) courses. This role will be introduced by new DHSC-sponsored legislation in 2022 as part of the new legal framework around deprivations of liberty for people who lack mental capacity to consent. We have worked closely with the DHSC to prepare these standards alongside the regulations, in order to maximise the amount of implementation time available to course providers to prepare and seek approval for their courses. We will be publishing these for consultation as soon as the DHSC has done the same for the new mental capacity regulations and code of practice which underpin the new law.

Alongside the new AMCP standards we will publish revised course approval standards for AMHPs, to bring the standards into line with our own education & training standards and professional standards (this review was planned for 2019 but delayed because of the pandemic).

These areas of work will lead into further consideration of how we can most effectively regulate these and potentially other areas of specialist social work in the coming period.

Social Work Week

Social Work Week 2022 is taking shape and we have a strong core programme planned involving members of the National Advisory Forum, the chief social workers, chief executives from the other UK regulators and a range of sessions on topics from the impact of COVID to the use of art in social work and anti-racist practice. We have also had interest from the sector in delivering their own independent events as part of the programme across the week. Our regional engagement leads are planning local online events based on the broad experience of people who use social work services from young people to asylum seekers and many more. This is a landmark event in our engagement with those with an interest in social work and we are confident that it will be well received again and give us a chance to communicate key messages about our strategic vision for the profession.

Consultation timelines

Work is ongoing in relation to a number of consultations that will take place over the coming months – these will be discussed further at the Policy Committee and a firmed-up timeline will come to the Board however it may be useful to touch on them here. As already noted, we currently have a consultation open on rules changes to facilitate ongoing use of remote hearings and digital communications in FtP and Registration and the next consultation will be the education and training standards for AMHP and AMCP following the Government resurfacing the liberty protection safeguards work. Later in February we're

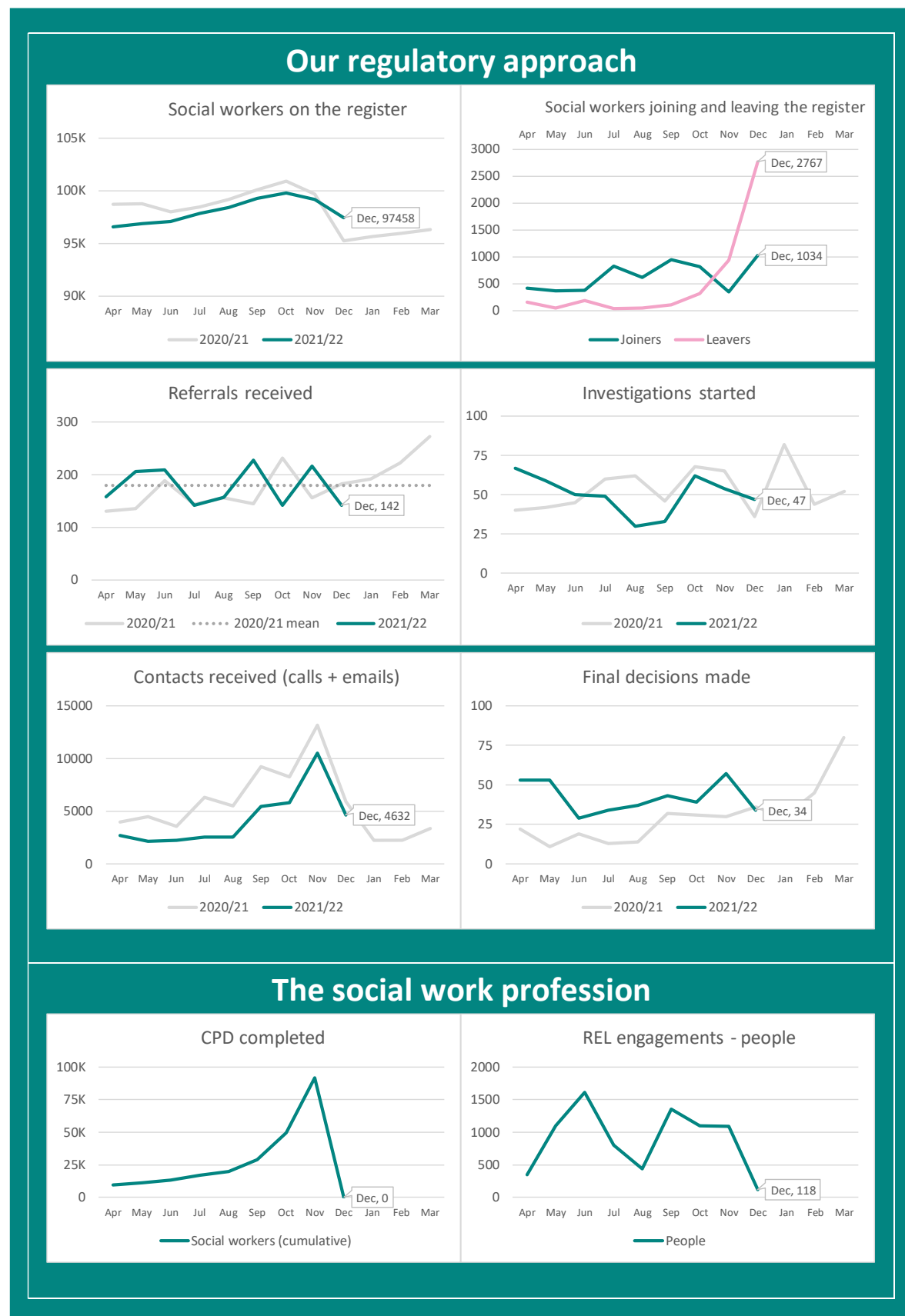
expecting to undertake the first of our Rules changes consultations which is aimed at correcting and improving the Rules we drafted for go-live. In April/May we have the publication of the education and training strategy along with the first of its associated consultations on the learning outcomes. We also have penned in for May the social media guidance which we have held two sessions on with social workers after a call for expressions of interest. In July, we have both FtP guidance changes consultation alongside the second Rules consultation which follow the DfE's consultation on our Regulations. Later in the year we have Rule amendments to give us the powers in Rules to approve AMCP courses. Over and above this we may also consider consultations on the corporate strategy and smaller areas like legally qualified chairs.

4. Conclusion

Our performance report for Q3 indicates that overall performance is strong. There are a few important areas where we are just falling short of the KPIs in this quarter, however the reasons are fully understood, and everyone is working hard to bring them closer for year end. The second annual renewals period has been successfully navigated and indicates a settling into process by the sector, although this was underpinned by a strong campaign on our behalf across of activity to ensure social workers were well informed supported through out. January marks the new calendar year and we have been reflecting on what has been achieved last year and the challenges and opportunities that are presented for the year ahead. This will be captured in the work currently under way on our annual report for year end and on the business plan and budget 22/23 which will be completed in the coming months.

5. Annexes

Annex 1: Dashboard Overview



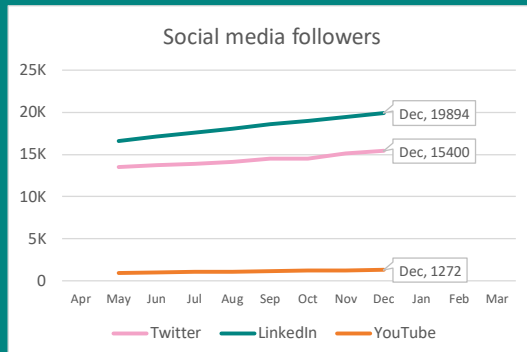
The social work profession



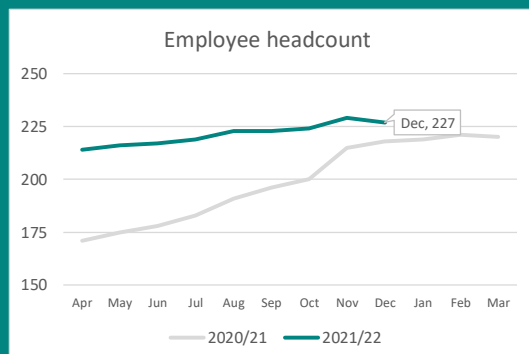
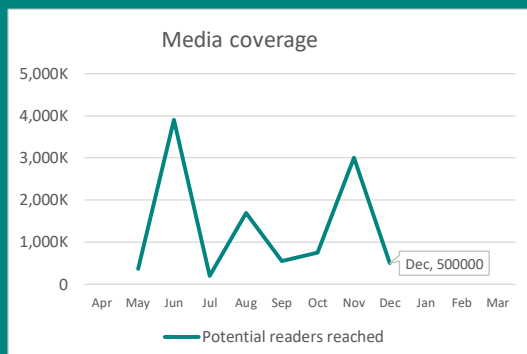
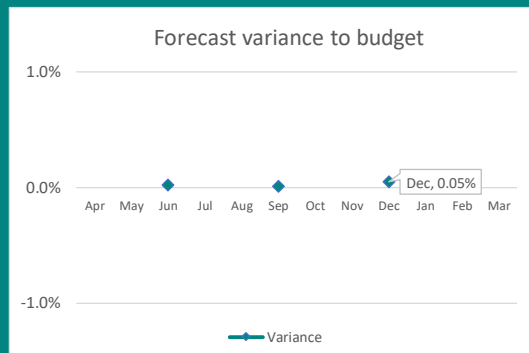
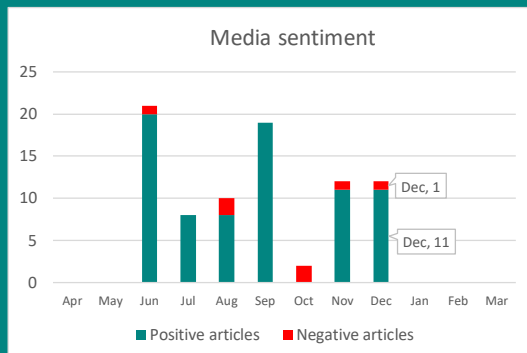
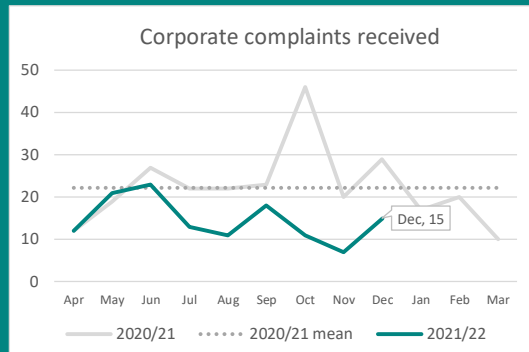
Education and training



The people we work with and for



Our organisation



Annex 2: Chief Executive's meetings with external organisations since the last meeting

Social Care Workforce Round Table discussion – Health Education England

Vulnerable Children and Young People National Board

National Children's and Adult Social Services Conference

Chair of the Independent Review on Children

Anti-Racism in Social Work Round Table

Chief Executive of BASW

The regular meeting with the Chief Executives of DfE ALBs with the Permanent Secretary

The regular meeting of the Chief Executives of Health and Social Care Professional Regulators

Secretary of the Association of Chief Executives

Chief Executives of the UK Social Work/Social Care Regulators

Long Term Strategy Framework Deliberative Event – Health Education England