Chief Executive's Report

Agenda Item 5 Paper Ref 03

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
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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 - Open

1. Introduction

At our Board meeting today, we will be reporting on the committee meetings held since our last Board meeting in July, the Quarter 2 performance overview, focusing on quality assurance in fitness to practise (FtP) and the plans in place for our next social work week.

We are now well into the annual renewals period for 2022, the numbers of social workers who have completed their renewal is behind the trend for the past two years. It is difficult to pinpoint why that might be the case, although the subject raised the most at the engagement events held by our Regional Engagement Leads team is the CPD requirement for this year. A discussion on risk at ARAC highlighted the plans we have in place to mitigate any risk there may be in our capacity to respond to a high volume of activity towards the end of the renewal period in November. It is positive to note that we have had a significant increase in the EDI data we now hold on registrants as the renewals process progresses.

The Quarter 2 report indicates the progress being made on through put of the FtP case load at all stages for both legacy cases and those cases that have been raised with Social Work England since go live. Planning for case management through to March 2024 is now well under way and will be reported to the Board in the new year. Capacity has been increased in the hearings team and we anticipate additional efficiencies to be generated in Quarter 4.

To that end we pleased to report that the Statutory Instrument (SI) for amendments to our regulations as per the consultation earlier in the year was laid before both Houses on the 17 October and as a result we remain on target for implementation in mid-December. The draft SI can be found here. This represents a significant level of work and collaboration over many months between our team and our sponsor team at DfE. Alongside the amendments to the Regulations, we will publish revised Rules related to the amendments on the date that they come into force.

2. Temporary registration

As you know, due to the exceptional circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we were given emergency powers by the UK government to allow us to invite previously registered social workers in England who had recently left the register to return to practice should they wish to do so. We did this by giving them temporary registration status.

As the end of this emergency response has now arrived and the powers were revoked on 30 September 2022, we removed everyone with temporary registration status from the register as planned on Friday 14 October.

3. Alliance partnership – Ireland Social Work and Social Care

We have been working with the other regulators of social work and social care in the UK and Ireland to establish a partnership arrangement that would support us to work together on areas of mutual interest and to share information and good practice in areas of regulation

and workforce development. The partnership has emerged from what used to be a social care sector skills council called Skills for Care and Development which also included Skills for Care and the Early Years Alliance. There is little capacity to underpin the partnership, however at our most recent meeting in the Social Work England offices in Sheffield it was agreed to consider joint work on the impact of regulation and how it has been applied to the social care workforce, common messages to raise the profile and improve understanding of the social care workforce and the use of data and insight to inform policy and practice.

4. Liberty safeguarding

The Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) will replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and make provision for the creation of the new approved mental capacity professionals (AMCPs) role. This will replace the current best interest assessor (BIA) role.

We recently completed a public consultation on our new education and training approval standards for approved mental capacity professionals (AMCPs), the response to which we intend to publish in the coming weeks.

5. Consultation

It's been a busy period for consultations. Following the recent closure of consultations on further amendments to our rules and some of our fitness to practise guidance and policy, we are now preparing our submission to the DfE to secure sign off on the final version of our rules. Though response rates were not high, we received feedback from several key stakeholders, including the PSA, BASW, UNISON and Ofsted. We will publish the changes to the rules, guidance and policy in December 2022.

We also recently completed our consultation on readiness for professional practice which sets out our expectations of what a social worker should be able to demonstrate on completing their initial education and training. We received 64 responses to the consultation, including from BASW, ADCS, Skills for Care and JUCSWEC. We are now preparing our response to the consultation, which we intend to publish in the coming weeks. We will also use the learning to inform the next stage of our approach to social work education and training.

The consultation on our strategy for 2023-2026 went live at the beginning of September. So far, we have received 22 responses to the consultation and are the process of analysing the feedback to inform amendments to the strategy. The consultation closes on 1 December 2022, and we will publish the new strategy in Spring next year.

6. Board apprenticeship

Social Work England made an application and have been accepted to be a host board on the Boardroom Apprentice UK pilot programme. The programme is an initiative between DEFRA and DLUHC and aims to build a diverse pipeline of talent for boardroom appointments. Host boards provide practical hands-on experience by facilitating a 12-month placement of a

Boardroom Apprentice as a board-level observer, with the support of an assigned Board Member as their Board buddy. There is also a likelihood of a second year for the programme, which we could be involved in. Applications for apprentices open on Monday 24 October, closing 14 November with an official launch event to be held on 9 December where we would meet our apprentice. More information can be found in this publication[1] and the programme website[2].

7. Employee wellbeing

At Social Work England we offer a range of benefits to help manage the rising cost of living and to look after health and wellbeing in challenging times. Our annual pay remit has been agreed and signed off the Minister which confirms an overall salary increase of 3% with people on lower salaries receiving 3.6% and those on higher salaries 2.5%. We also have a range of wellbeing initiatives including Health Assured which is an employee assistance scheme proving independent support to address personal and professional challenges and access advice on health wellbeing and work issues. Our approach to hybrid working allows for a good level of flexibility and autonomy in terms of work patterns and location.

We have launched our positive action mentoring pilot as part of our ambition to embrace and facilitate the diversity of our workforce as outlined in our Equality Diversity and Inclusion action plan. Our pilot is based on the reciprocal model which focuses on better understanding diverse perspectives and experiences and encourages both parties to learn from each other.

Employee wellbeing was discussed at the recent Remuneration Committee meeting.

8. Conclusion

A half year review indicates a good level of progress being made against the business plan objectives, it is important to note that we will be presented with internal and external challenges to maintain our progress against our key operational and policy targets.

From an external perspective the policy, practice and service delivery context for social work is complex and relatively uncertain at this time. We are working alongside the leaders in the system to help build consensus around an agreed direction of travel for some of the most immediate challenges for the services as well as the more medium to long term reform proposals.

Internally we are expanding our capacity to deliver on our operational goals to deliver effective and responsive services supported by good management and governance. We are also continuing to work on our strategic plan through this consultation phase ensuring it is underpinned by high-level three-year delivery, development and financial plans. The second part of the year has a busy agenda.

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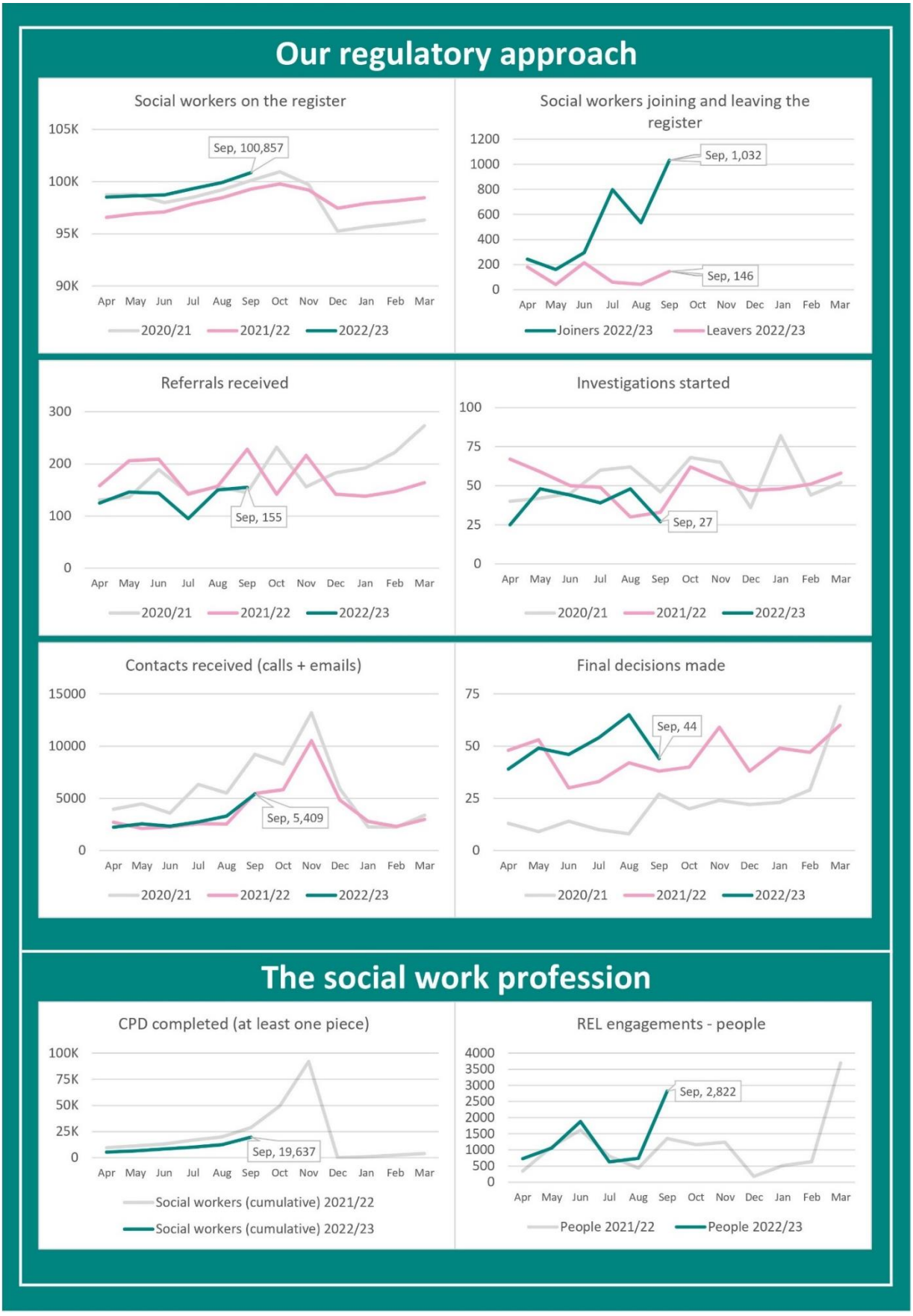
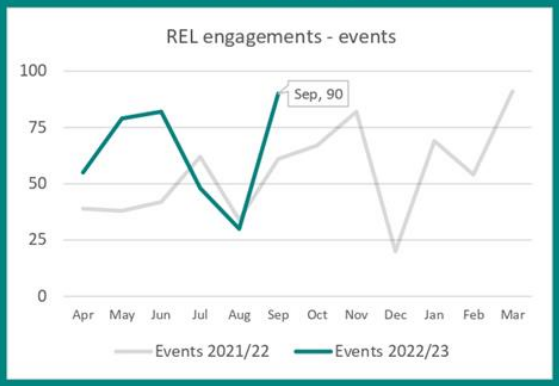
[1] New programme aimed to boost diversity in boardrooms - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[2] Boardroom Apprentice | Get On Board

9. Annexes

Annex 1: Dashboard Overview

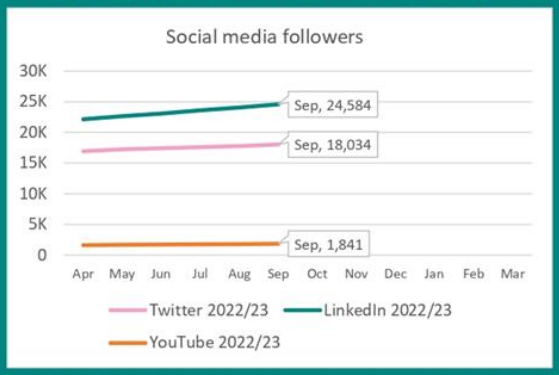


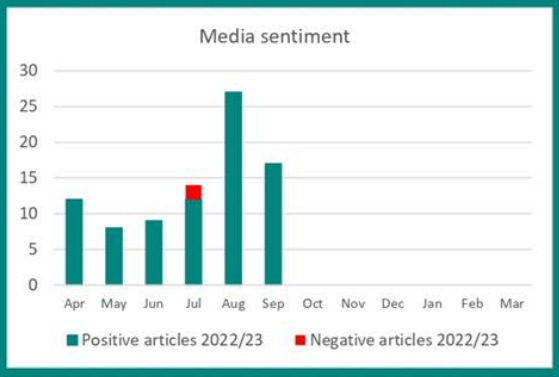
The social work profession

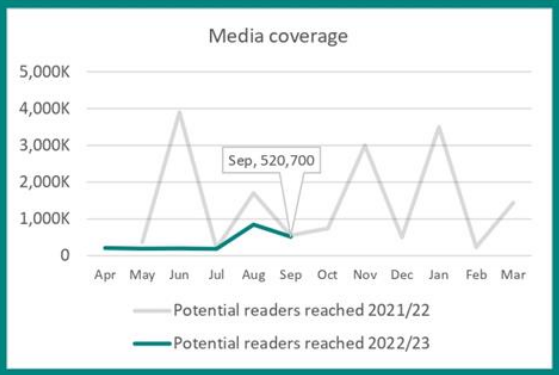


Education and training

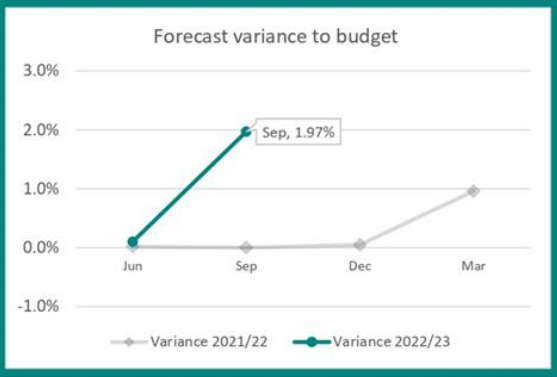
The people we work with and for

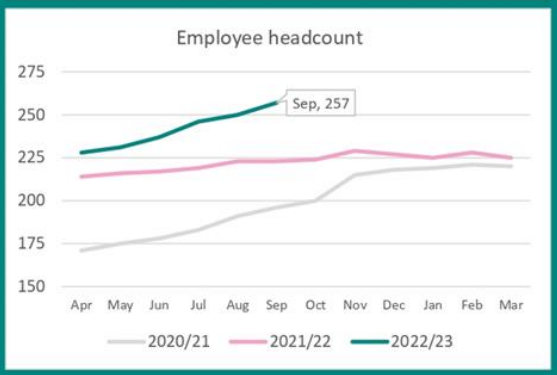






Our organisation





Annex 2: Chief Executive's meetings

Ofsted National Director, Social Care

Chief Executive of BASW

Chair of the Bradford Children's Trust

Chair of the National Safeguarding Board