

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

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Date

19 January 2023

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

The Board meeting today will include the performance report for Q3 of this year. The third quarter of each year presents a challenge to some of our key performance indicators as the focus of our activity in the quarter has necessarily been on the renewals process to 30 November, and any subsequent restoration of registration activity in the final weeks of December.

We are satisfied that the renewal process this year, as in previous years, ran smoothly, and the vast majority of social workers completed all three steps of the renewal journey by the 30 November deadline. Additionally, we can see that social workers responded well to the additional requirement for continuing professional development (CPD) this year. What has also been a great success is the very high numbers of social workers submitting their equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) information as part of the renewals journey, and this will give us a strong platform for benchmarking and analysis using this data. Further information about the outcome of renewals is available on our [website](#).

We have noted that the number of social workers who leave renewing to the last minute is increasing, with the graph curve for renewals rising more steeply in the last few weeks and days with each year that passes, and this is something we are keen to address. A focus of our renewal communications and engagement activity each year is to ensure that social workers renew in good time, and we know completing the renewal process close to the deadline has contributed to the small number of social workers who were disappointed that they did not meet the requirements for renewals and have subsequently applied for restoration. As in previous years, we will complete a review of the renewal process in the coming weeks, to identify any learning that we can take forward as we prepare for the 2023 renewal cycle.

The Q3 report shows the challenge in this quarter for Fitness to Practise (FtP) to achieve timeliness targets in some areas. This is due in part to increased recruitment activity to fill vacancies, and the resulting lag in bringing teams to full capacity. Also, timely progression of cases continues to be balanced against progressing cases with a higher risk profile. As would be expected we keep all aspects of our KPIs under constant review, and it is the case that the overall caseloads have decreased, and there is now capacity to have an impact on the targets into the future. Work on the legacy caseload is progressing fairly close to plan and it is anticipated that with agreement on the rollover of project funding the targets for this work will be achieved as planned by June 2023.

The Q3 report also highlights preparations for [Social Work Week](#) and on our third report on social work in England which will be published to coincide with social work week.

2. Amendments to the Rules and Regulations 16 December 2022

The changes to the Social Workers Regulations 2018 and the associated changes to our rules came into force on 16 December 2022, including new powers of voluntary removal and to review case examiner decisions. The revised [regulations and rules](#) are published on our website.

A lessons learned review of the rules and regulations project will take place internally and with the Department for Education in Q4.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order 2022 came into force on 15 December 2022. This enables whistle-blowers to make certain types of disclosures of wrongdoing to Social Work England about matters within our regulatory remit and to be protected from adverse actions by their employers. We will use our existing powers to take forward any such concerns.

3. Boardroom Apprentices Scheme

As you will know Social Work England have agreed to be a host board as part of the Boardroom Apprenticeship Scheme sponsored by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities. The host board is to provide practical hands-on experience by facilitating a 12 month placement for the boardroom apprentice as a board level observer, with support of an assigned board member as their buddy.

I attended the launch event at Woburn House, London on 9 December and was delighted to be introduced to our new board apprentice Jennifer Waterhouse, who is attending our meeting today. Jennifer will be supported in her role by her board buddy Jonathan Gorvin. Jennifer is also supported by the scheme through a support and training programme. Welcome Jennifer, we look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

4. Planning

This time of the year there is a focus on reporting and planning as we reach the financial year end. We are also coming to the end of our first strategic planning phase and will be launching a new strategic plan before the end of March for the period 2023 to 2026. We recently completed a consultation period on the draft plan and will be publishing the outcome of the consultation shortly. Alongside the strategic plan we will be publishing a data and insight strategy and a people strategy. We will shortly be publishing our response to the consultation on our vision for education and training including our plans for readiness for professional practice. Also, final drafts are being prepared of our business plan for 2023/2024, and the financial budget and risk register to accompany it. Over the next couple of months, we will be sharing drafts with ARAC and the members of the board with a view to sign off at our March Board meeting. We will also be sharing drafts with the department.

To note work is well under way on our annual report and the preparation work on external audit with NAO for the year to March 2023 and also to note we have appointed RSM as our new internal auditors.

5. Policy

Engagement with the departments has been ongoing in relation to policy developments in adult social care, mental health, and children's social care. I have had a series of meetings with senior people at the Department of Health and Social Care and have requested to meet with the Minister for Adult Social Care.

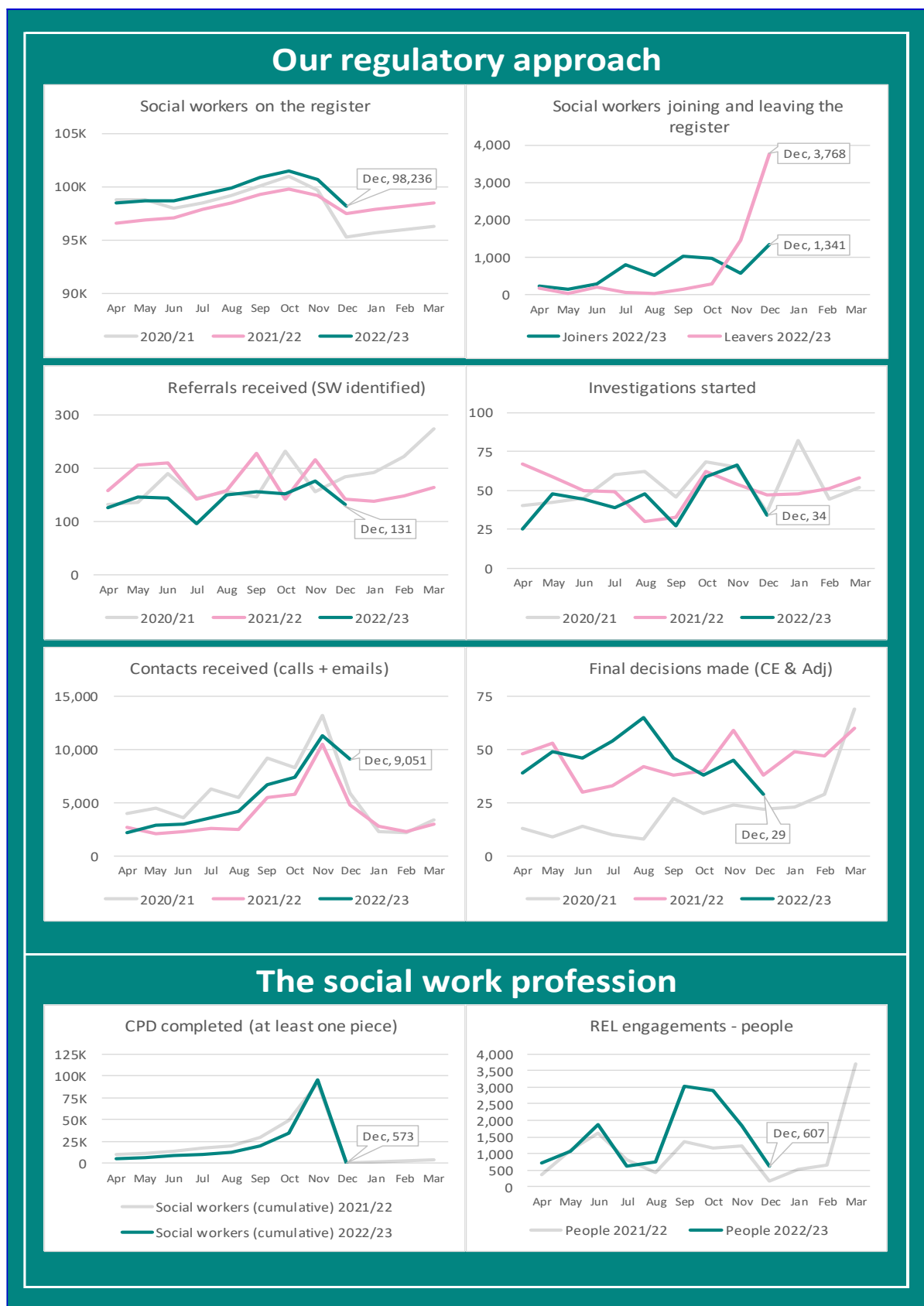
It is anticipated that a consultation on a high-level implementation plan will be published soon, in response to the recommendation in the recent review, to include the national practice framework for children's social care. We have worked with the Department for Education on areas where Social Work England have been referenced in the review and have contributed to the partnership delivery board and the national practice group.

6. Conclusion

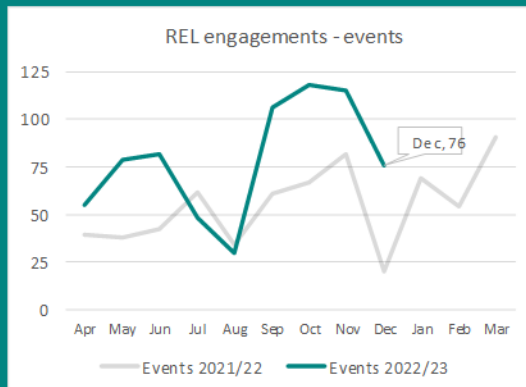
Coming towards the end of a year is always a time to reflect on the positive progress made in the previous year, the challenges that remain and to be assured the plans and strategies that are being developed for the years ahead are the right ones. The past few months have seen a high level of consultation activity for the organisation, and we have engaged extensively within the organisation and with our key stakeholders to build consensus around our new strategy and our business plan for 2023/2024. The next few months will see us finalise the drafts and have our plans and resources in place for the new year and the new strategic phase. We can see from our Q3 report that we are on target for this in most areas but also that we have some operational challenges to overcome. We are looking forward to the engagement opportunities presented by the publication of the Social Work in England report and Social Work Week.

6. Annexes

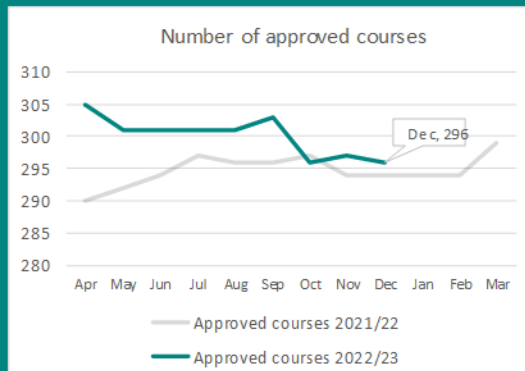
Annex 1: Dashboard Overview



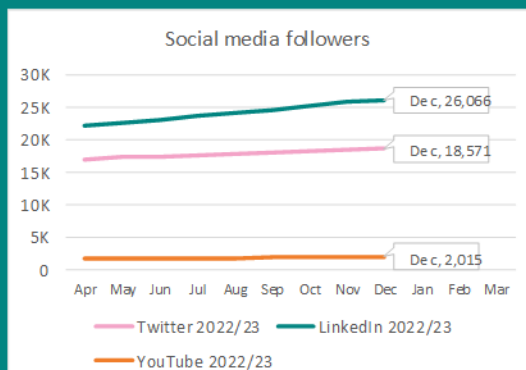
The social work profession



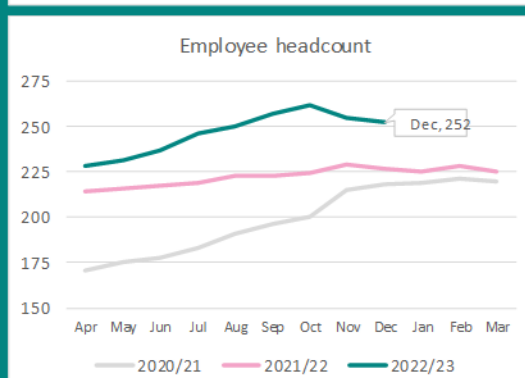
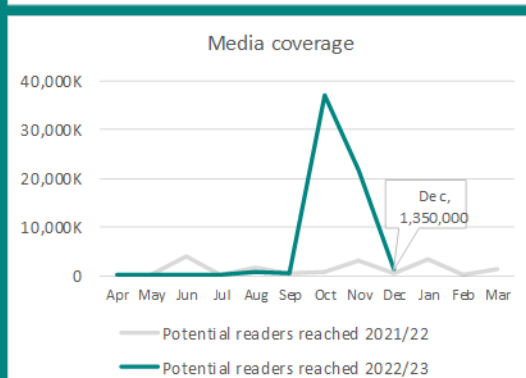
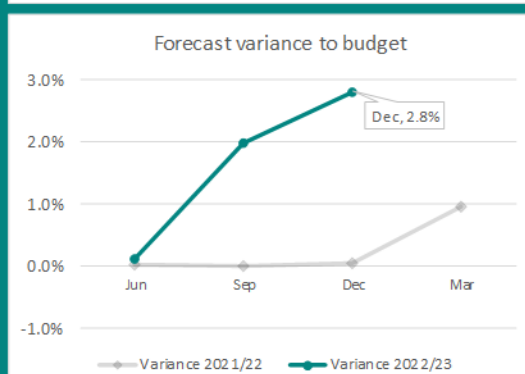
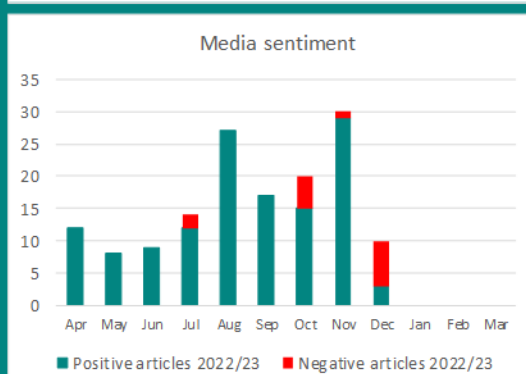
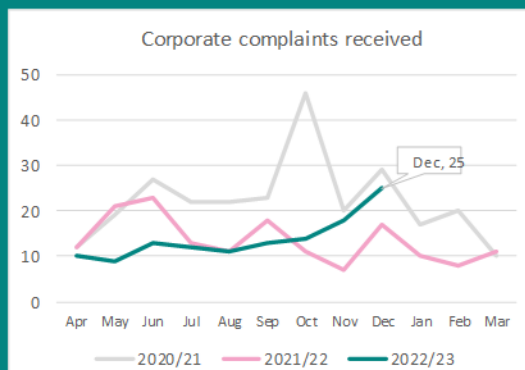
Education and training



The people we work with and for



Our organisation



Annex 2: Chief Executive's meetings

Ofsted National Director, Social Care

Chief Executive BASW

Chairs and CEOs of the UK Social Care Professional and Workforce Regulators

Chief Executive Professional Standards Authority

Regular meeting with the DfE Permanent Secretary and ALB CEOs

Regular meeting with the CEOs of the Health Care professional regulators

Centre Director for IMPACT - UK centre for implementing evidence in adult social care

Chief Social Worker – Adults

Chief Social Worker – Children