

Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 10 March 2023, 10.30 - 13.00

at The Don, Social Work England

and by videoconference

AGENDA

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
		Welcome			Deputy Chair
1.	10.30	Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest	Verbal	To note/declare	Deputy Chair
2.	10.40	Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2023	Paper 01	To approve	Deputy Chair
3.	10.50	Matters Arising and Action Log	Paper 02	To discuss and note	Deputy Chair/ Executive Office Lead
4.	10.55	Chair's Report	Verbal	To note	Deputy Chair
5.	11.05	Chief Executive's Report	Paper 03	To discuss, advise and note	Chief Executive
6.	11.15	Remuneration Committee Chair's Report People Engagement Survey 2022	Verbal Paper 04	To note To note	Remuneration Committee Chair; ED People and Business Support
7.	11.25	Policy Committee Chair's Report	Paper 05 *	To note	Policy Committee Chair
8.	11.35	ARAC Chair's Report Effectiveness Review action plan	Paper 06 * Annex 06a	To note	ARAC Chair
9.	11.45	Finance and Commercial Report	Paper 07	To discuss and note	ED People and Business Support; Finance Business Partner
10.	11.55	Report on the Implementation of the Just Disposal of Transfer Cases Policy	Paper 08	To discuss and note	ED Regulation; Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
11.	12.05	Our Strategy 2023 to 2026	Paper 09 *	To approve	Chief Executive, Head of Strategic Development
12.	12.15	Business Plan 2023/24 and Key Performance Indicators (final draft)	Paper 10 *	To discuss, note and approve	Chief Executive, ED, People and Business Support, Head of Business Planning and Improvement
13.	12.25	Sustainability Plan (draft)	Paper 11 *	To discuss, note and approve	ED, People and Business Support
14.	12.35	Budget 2023/24 (final draft)	Paper 12 *	To approve	ED People and Business Support; Finance Business Partner
15.	12.45	Corporate Governance: terms of reference and policy update • Board and Committees terms of Reference • Board Code of Conduct Policy • Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy • Gifts and Hospitality policy	Paper 13 Annex 13a Annex 13b Annex 13c Annex 13d	To discuss, note and approve	Deputy Chair, ED, People and Business Support, Executive Office Lead
16.	12.55	Any other business	n/a	To discuss	Deputy Chair
		Date of Next Meeting: Friday 19 May 2023		To note	Deputy Chair
	13.00	Meeting ends			

* Papers marked with an asterisk are 'private' to protect confidentiality according to our guidance for publishing board papers.

LIST OF ATTENDANCE

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Deputy Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Mark Lam	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Staff in Attendance:	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Berry Rose	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Jonathan Monk	Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Leanne Clarke	Finance Business Partner
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Sponsor Team:	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sue Howson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	Representative	Unison
	Representative	Unison
	Representative	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Elijah King	Case Examiner
	Ioana Roberts	Regional Engagement Lead - East
	Renee Aleong	Regional Engagement Lead
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead
Apologies:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair
	Jennifer Waterhouse	Board Apprentice



Minutes from the Board meeting held on 27 January 2023

Agenda Item 2 Paper Ref 01

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date

10 March 2023

Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

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

Operational delivery - Open

Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting for approval
Friday 27 January 2023, 10.00am
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Deputy Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Jonathan Gorvin	Non-executive Director
	Mark Lam	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Board Apprentice:	Jennifer Waterhouse	Board apprentice
Social Work England staff in attendance	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Berry Rose	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Katie Newbould	Head of Policy (for item 10)
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Sponsor Team:	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sue Howson	Department for Education (DfE)
Public Observers:	June Thoburn	Association of Professors of Social Work
	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Staff Observers:	Gary Ogle	Director's Assistant
	Jonathan Smith	Corporate Communications Manager
	Laura Haggett	Professional Advisor
Minute taker:	Alison Edbury	Executive Office Lead
Apologies:	Lord Patel of Bradford	Chair

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Since apologies had been received from the Chair, Lord Patel, he would be chairing the meeting. Jennifer Waterhouse was welcomed to her first meeting as Social Work England's board apprentice.
- 1.2 Dr Sue Ross declared that she had been appointed as Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Quality, Performance and Practice for Reading Borough Council. The Executive Office Lead reported that this had been recorded on the online register of interests.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on Friday 28 October 2022 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters Arising and Action Log

Paper 02

- 3.1 The Chair reviewed the action log. He reported that all actions closed at or since the last meeting were **approved** as follows:
 - **Action 60:** Chief Executive to follow up on sector roundtable with Board members. Chief Executive to update at 28 October meeting. *Chief Executive reported at 28 October 2022 meeting on work with other regulators of social work and social care in the UK and Ireland towards establishing a partnership arrangement to work together on areas of mutual interest and to share information and good practice in areas of regulation and workforce development. Action closed.*
 - **Action 62:** Business Planning and Improvement team to review EQA reporting against KPI to ensure greater clarity. *Board reviewed the updated report format at 28 October meeting and agreed the report format was now clear about the outcomes of course inspections. Action closed.*
 - **Action 64:** Executive Office Lead to update the register of interests. *Updated on 22 November 2022 and again on 5 January 2023 with Sue Ross's new interests. Action closed.*
 - **Action 65:** Executive Office Lead to circulate the calendar invitation and event details to Board members. *Executive Assistant has set up all the Board and Committee meeting dates for 2023/24. Action closed.*
 - **Action 68:** Executive Office Lead to follow up with Social Work Week team on Board engagement and to circulate slide deck to Board members. *Details published on Board Intelligence 1 December 2022. Action closed.*

The progress on the open actions was noted:

- **Action 54:** Chair to have one to one meetings with non-executive directors. *At 28 October meeting Chair agreed to email the new form to Executive Office Lead. Progress update at 27 January 2023 meeting that forms are completed and one to ones have taken place. Open.*
- **Action 66:** Board members were welcome to contact Executive Director, People and Business Support to discuss the People Strategy in development. *Discussions have taken place. Executive Director was open to further discussions up to 6 February 2023 ahead of Remuneration Committee on 16 February 2023. Open.*

- **Action 67:** Executive Director, People and Business Support and Executive Office Lead to arrange a seminar style meeting with the Board to discuss the People Strategy. *A date to be agreed with the Board, following Remuneration Committee meeting on 16 February 2023. Note, the Chair had proposed that this business would be discussed as part of an awayday in June. Open.*

4. Chair's Report - verbal

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed the opportunity for the Board to host boardroom apprentice, Jennifer Waterhouse, for the next 12 months. Following the induction that had taken place, Jonathan Gorvin would provide support as board buddy.

5. Chief Executive's Report

Paper 03

- 5.1 The Chief Executive also welcomed Jennifer Waterhouse; he was pleased to report he had met Jennifer at the launch of the UK Board Apprentice programme in December 2022, organised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 5.2 Since the last Board meeting, the registration renewals period had closed. The vast majority of social workers had responded positively to the additional requirement for continuing professional development (CPD) and had completed the renewal process by the 30 November deadline. A lessons learnt review would be undertaken in quarter 4.
- 5.3 Impact was being monitored following the changes to the Social Workers Regulations 2018 and the associated changes to our rules that came into force on 16 December. The Chief Executive thanked colleagues and members of the Department for Education (DfE) sponsor team for their collaborative achievement.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive thanked the Board for their input into the new strategic plan. Work was on track to publish the strategic plan in March along with a data and insight strategy, and a people strategy.
- 5.5 Social Work England would be referenced in the Government's response to the Independent review of children's social care - "Children's Social Care Reform: Implementation Strategy and Consultation". The Chief Executive would be a member of the national practice group.
- 5.6 The Board discussed Social Work England becoming a prescribed person and the powers now in place to accept whistleblowing disclosures from members of the public. The Board requested a report on our approach to dealing with whistleblowing disclosures. The Board agreed that it would receive and review a report on whistleblowing annually.

Action: Executive Director, Regulation (tbc) to implement an annual whistleblowing disclosures report for reporting to the Board.

6. Policy Committee Chair's Report

Paper 04

- 6.1 At the last meeting on 30 November 2022 National Advisory Forum representative Isaac Samuels had been welcomed as a new member of the Policy Committee. The Committee had discussed developments regarding the national implementation plan for the children's social care review, sector workforce issues, the growth in numbers of overseas applicants to

the Social Work England register and the significant increase in the amount of diversity data that had been collected from social workers. An in-person Committee meeting was planned to focus on upcoming issues and horizon scanning.

6.2 The Board welcomed the approach to horizon scanning and **noted the report**.

7. Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair's Report - verbal

7.1 Ann Harris, ARAC Chair reported the Committee had met informally in January to review the ongoing work on our assurance process, with specific regard to Fitness to Practise (FtP). This area of operation was selected to focus on first, in light of the changes made to our legislation in December. The Committee identified that assurance at level 1 was clear, and assurance at level 2 will be added to. It was noted that this assurance approach for FtP could be modelled and applied across other areas of the business.

7.2 A new internal audit team, RSM UK, were appointed in January. It was noted that RSM have experience of auditing fitness to practise operations.

7.3 The Chief Executive noted that the National Audit Office (NAO) had been appointed as Social Work England's new external audit team. The new audit teams from RSM and NAO would attend the next ARAC meeting in February.

8. Finance and Commercial Report

Paper 05

8.1 Head of Finance and Commercial reported that the year-to-date underspend was due to 2 main factors - the level of fee income was higher than budgeted due to the number of overseas applications; and the timing of hearing activity relating to legacy cases had been delayed at the start of the year due to the delay in funding being confirmed by DfE. The plan to conclude the legacy cases remained on target for June 2023.

8.2 In quarter 4, it was planned to commence amortisation of the related development cost of phase 1 of our Forge case management system. This would be subject to the approval of the Digital Programme Board at its next meeting in February.

8.3 Tenders for our new Digital Development partner had been received and were being evaluated.

8.4 ARAC Chair noted that the variance forecast target had not been met for the quarter performance, though it was expected that the 1.5% variance forecast would be achieved at the year-end point for business as usual activity. The Chief Executive noted that subject to DfE approval, the underspend on legacy cases would be used in Q1 2023/24 to enable completion of the project. **The Board noted the financial position.**

8.5 The Chair recorded the Board's thanks to Haines Watts, current internal audit providers. The audits they had conducted had been valuable to the organisation during its set-up phase.

- 9.1 Executive Director, Regulation reported that the number of registration applications from overseas continued to increase significantly. The recent withdrawal of the Gov.uk verification system had added to the length of time to process overseas applications in the short term. Additional resource had to be allocated to the registration, enquiries and advice team to manage this increase and the system changes. Executive Director highlighted the impact of the registration renewals process during quarter 3. Overall, the renewal period had been successful with 96% of social workers renewing their registration and 97% of social workers on our register voluntarily sharing their equality, diversity and inclusion data with us. Phone calls had increased in December, following the end of the renewal period, as a small minority of social workers applied to be restored to the register.
- 9.2 The Chair thanked the team for the successful renewal period. He noted that the Policy Committee would continue to support the work on equality, diversity and inclusion data and the approach overall to Social Work England's data and insight strategy.
- 9.3 Executive Director reported that staffing availability during quarter 3 had impacted on FtP performance. The team had sought to balance the timeliness and risk of the caseload whilst stabilising the volume of cases. The legacy caseload at the investigations stage was mostly complete. Quarter 3 had seen good progress against target FTP3 (Legacy cases concluded) and most outstanding cases were now awaiting a hearing. It was noted that the average length of hearings had increased; this was potentially a consequence of holding more remote hearings, which enabled better engagement with social workers throughout, contributing to greater efficiency in the process overall. Social Work England would continue to monitor the throughput of our caseload, ensuring that we achieve the most efficient and fair disposal of cases. It was expected that legacy cases would be concluded in the first quarter 2023/24.

The social work profession

- 9.4 Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement reported that the Social Work in England report would be published in March to coincide with Social Work Week. Our education and training standards for approved mental health and mental capacity professionals were now published and the accompanying guidance would follow in quarter 4. Our response to the consultation on readiness for professional practice would also be published in the next quarter. YouGov had recently been appointed to carry out independent research regarding public perceptions of social work and of Social Work England as a regulator.
- 9.5 Education and training work with the profession was supported by Associate, Dr Kevin Stone who will chair the new Education and Training Advisory Forum. The call for expressions of interest for our new Education and Training Advisory Forum was about to be published. An invitation to tender for research to explore the models of practice education and the role of the practice educator would be published in quarter 4. Working with the DfE, commissioned research was planned in quarter 4 to explore workforce issues around vacancies, recruitment and retention and the contributing factors.

- 9.6 Work continued with our sponsor team to consider the recommendations from the independent children's care review that directly affect Social Work England.
- 9.7 Whilst the target for reapproval decisions for education and training courses had not been met for quarter 3, the Executive Director was confident in the agreed plan to conclude the outstanding inspections for this year. All inspections within the 3-year reapproval cycle would be achieved.
- 9.8 Regional engagement leads' contribution to the renewal process was noted in relation to the increased requirements for social workers' continuing professional development. Social Work Week would take place in March, tickets were performing well.
- 9.9 The new Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight was invited to report on communications. She reported 47 positive mentions in the media. There had been some critical challenge following the end of the registration renewal period, to which we had responded with a robust statement and news story published on Social Work England's website. Next year, communications activities would focus on accessibility, including the promotion of greater understanding about the role of Social Work England. The Chair agreed to share a presentation from the King's Fund, an exemplar of how to explain systems, that he thought would help to support this activity.

Our organisation

- 9.10 Executive Director, People and Business Support reported that all key performance indicators had been met this quarter, except, for reasons noted previously, the financial variance target. Though we met our retention KPI, we were continuing to see increased levels of movement as the organisation matures. We have continued to invest in our people's professional development and staff networks. The development of our People Strategy was on target for discussion at Remuneration Committee in February and sharing with the Board in quarter 4.
- 9.11 The renewals process had placed additional demand on our digital capacity and infrastructure which had been planned for and met successfully, with all systems remaining functional throughout the renewals period. Unforeseen technical issues had delayed the roll out of documentation management functionality. This was now planned for quarter 4. The updated digital roadmap would be reported to the next ARAC meeting in February.
- 9.12 There had been an increase in the number of complaints received. This was mainly due to processing timescales for overseas applications to join the register, due to the higher volume of such applications, and social workers who had not managed to complete the annual renewals process and found themselves needing to restore registration.
- 9.13 The internal audit plan was on target for completion by the end of the financial year. In response to a question from the Board regarding planning for emergencies, it was reported that one of the final tranche of audits related to Business Continuity and this had received adequate assurance. All outstanding audit outcomes would be presented to ARAC in February and then reported to the Board in March. The external audit plan was progressing well. The final report from the Professional Standards Authority was expected in March 2023.

9.14 The Board asked what impact, if any, the recent industrial action had had on Social Work England. The Executive Director said that Social Work England was not unionised but there may be some indirect impacts, such as hearings having to be adjourned.

9.15 The Board approved the quarter 3 performance report.

(Katie Newbould, Head of Policy joined the meeting)

10. Social Work in England Report - verbal

[Slide deck](#)

10.1 Head of Policy provided an update on the development of and plans for publishing the 'state of the nation' Social Work in England report. A steering group had supported the planning and content had been informed via feedback from a series of public engagement events and the National Advisory Forum. Regional engagement leads and National Advisory Forum members had drawn case studies together. The report would be published ahead of Social Work Week in March 2023.

10.2 The Chair thanked Head of Policy for her report.

(Katie Newbould, Head of Policy left the meeting)

11. Any other business - verbal

11.1 There was no other business to report. The Chair thanked all Social Work England staff for their hard work and all our stakeholders for their support over the last period.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 10 March 2023 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 11.39am.

Summary of Actions

- Executive Director, Regulation (tbc) to implement an annual whistleblowing disclosures report for reporting to the Board annually.

Paper for the
Social Work England Board

Sponsor
The Chair

Author
Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date
10 March 2023

Reviewed by
Colum Conway, Chief Executive

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

Operational delivery - Open

1. Summary

The actions below provide an audit trail of items closed at or since the last meeting on 27 January 2023. Actions still in progress or yet to complete since the last meeting are listed on the log that follows.

Closed actions recorded at and following the last meeting:

- **Action 66:** Board members were welcome to contact Executive Director, People and Business Support to discuss the People Strategy in development. *Discussions have taken place. Executive Director was open to further discussions up to 6 February 2023 ahead of Remuneration Committee on 16 February. Action closed.*
- **Action 67:** Executive Director, People and Business Support and Executive Office Lead to arrange a seminar style meeting with the Board to discuss the People

*Strategy. The Chair had proposed that the business would be discussed as part of an awayday in June. This was now arranged for Thursday 15 June. **Action closed.***

Updates on open actions are noted in the action log that follows.

2. Action required

The Board is asked to note the progress against the actions.

Social Work England Board Action Log

Action no.	Date of Meeting	Action	Owner	Due By	Update	Next review	Status
54	28/10/22	Chair to have one to one meetings with Non-executive Directors.	Chair	23/01/23	Chair has informed Executive Office Lead his report was in progress.	10/03/2023	Open
69	27/01/23	Executive Director, People and Business Support to implement an annual whistleblowing disclosures report for reporting to the Board annually.	Executive Director, People and Business Support	31/03/24	Planning in progress.	22/03/2024	Open

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Colum Conway

Date

1 March 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

Since our last Board meeting, we have had meetings of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee, the Policy Committee, and the Remuneration Committee. Each of the Chairs will be reporting at our meeting today. The Board has been updated on the Strategic Plan and will be asked today to sign it off for publication later this month. The draft business plan for the first year of the strategy 23/24, which has been presented to ARAC, is also being presented today for discussion alongside the proposed budget for the year ahead. In terms of the budget, the level of Grant in Aid has not been confirmed with DfE however, we have based the budget on the income we are anticipating at this stage. In the year ahead we are focused on our core regulatory work and have applied our capacity and resources to have an impact on our key performance objectives in these areas. We will continue our focus on improving timeliness in the triage and investigation stages of fitness to practise and ensure that we are able to deliver effective and efficient throughput at case examination and hearings. As always, we will ensure our regulatory work is delivering fair and transparent outcomes, in the public interest.

To note a change in our sponsor team at DfE, Catherine Pearson and Madeleine Percival (job share) having taken on the role as Deputy Directors for children's social care workforce, strategy, practice and evidence, and SROs for Social Work England, taking over from Felicity Allen. The rest of the sponsor team remain in place with Louise Woodward as Assistant Director of Social Work Regulation and Evidence, Sonia Mosley as Social Work England sponsor lead, and Sue Howson Social Work England sponsor manager.

Also, to note Social Work Week begins on the 20 March with more than 10,000 tickets distributed for the event.

2. Professional Standards Authority performance review 2021/2022

At this stage we have received a draft report from the Authority and have updated the Board. We are expecting the final outcome report by the end of this month.

3. People engagement survey update

Part of the People report to the Remuneration Committee in February was an update on the People engagement survey. The outcome of the survey for 2022 was presented to the committee in September. This survey was followed up in October with a 'deep dive' survey on purpose and values. While the response rate for this survey was lower than expected the outcome was positive with 87% of respondents saying the purpose and values are clear and easy to understand, 90% feeling the values provide a good fit with the things they consider

important, and 82% saying the values help inform how they approach their roles and daily actions. This is a good outcome and will feed into our people engagement survey for this year.

4. National Workforce Roundtable

The first meeting of the newly formed National Workforce Roundtable which is being facilitated by Social Work England and chaired by Sarah Blackmore was held on the 20th February. This is a high level, strategic group which will look at priority issues relating to the social work workforce across the whole of the profession. Its purpose will be for system leaders to provide expert reflections on policy and delivery issues, agree collective action and steer work carried out by agreed delivery sub-groups/workstreams.

5. Education and Training Advisory Forum

Recruitment to the new Education and Training Advisory Forum is now well under way with 32 applications received for a position on the forum. The forum will be chaired by our associate Dr Kevin Stone and will focus on giving oversight and advise on the delivery of our education and training strategy.

6. Just disposal policy

The meeting today includes an agenda item on the implementation of the just disposal policy on cases transferred to us from the Health and Care Professions Council. It is important to note that as we come near to the conclusion of these legacy cases the application of this policy is also now coming towards an end. The implementation of this policy has been deemed a success with positive findings throughout. Notably it has meant that; unnecessary proceedings have been avoided in 65% of the cases concluded, the just and proportionate disposal of legacy cases has been supported, success against Key Performance Indicators has been achieved, and we have reduced the personal impact of fitness to practise cases on social workers and other case parties with cost avoidance estimated to be around £1.7 million. The most recent audit on just disposal cases assigned a result of substantial assurance regarding the application of the policy.

The process has been tightly monitored throughout by the leadership team and has proved a very effective, fair and proportionate way in addressing the legacy case profile.

7. CLEAR conference – Dublin May 2023

The Council on Licensure Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) is one of the few global organisations with a focus on professional regulation. It is a membership organisation that promotes regulatory excellence through conferences, education programmes, webinars, and seminars. Its main annual event, the International Congress on Professional and Occupational regulation is being held this year in Dublin. It is for regulatory leaders looking for the chance to examine how global trends in professional and occupational regulation impact their own organisations. I have been asked to contribute to the programme with a presentation on our model of governance. Not far for me to travel so a good opportunity given that most of their events are in USA, Canada or Australia!

8. National practice group

“Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation Children’s Social Care Reform 2023” was published on the 2nd February 2023. As part of the approach to implementation, a National Practice Group has been established made up of experts in practice, evidence, lived experience and multi-agency working. I have been invited to be part of this group which has a role in supporting the development of the Children’s Social Care National Framework and Dashboard, Practice Guides and the Early Career Framework.

9. Conclusion

As we complete the key documents that will form the basis of our planning, monitoring and reporting over the year ahead, and in the case of our strategic plan, three years ahead, it is important to note that our focus is on our core regulatory activity and how we can realise the benefits and impact against the delivery of our objectives.

6. Annex

Annex 1: Chief Executive's meetings

Senior officials at Department of Health and Social Care

Senior officials at Department for Education

Members of the National Practice Group

Members of the National Workforce Round Table

Senior officials of the UK regulators of social work and social care

Chief Executive Officer of Skills for Care

Senior officials of the Health Care professional regulators

Chief Executive Officer of Professional Standards Agency

The Institute of Regulation

Health Education England

Chief Social Worker for Adults

Chief Social Worker for Children

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Committee Chair

Author

Jane Marr, Head of People and Development

Date

10 March 2023

Reviewed by

Chief Executive Officer

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO6: We will create spaces for people to support the development of our organisation, including policies, communication and engagement.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

People and culture - Open

1. Summary

This paper provides a brief update on recent people developments, including the final outcomes from our 2022 people engagement survey and follow up deep dive survey on purpose and values, which were discussed by the Remuneration Committee in February.

2. Action required

For assurance and noting.

2. Commentary

Support with the cost of living:

In October 2022, we updated the Board on how we were supporting employees to manage the rising cost of living and look after their health and wellbeing in challenging times. In summary:

- An overall salary increase for 2022-23 of 3% on average across the organisation, with people on lower salaries receiving the highest percentage increase.
- a one off pay award of £650 (before tax) and continuation of our Applause monthly performance recognition scheme.
- Health Assured, our employee assistance scheme
- Smart Health mental health support service and qualified mental health first aiders

This month, we launched a new employee benefits portal which includes discounts and offers that employees can access themselves directly. The portal also includes a cycle to work scheme and a policy to enable our people to purchase additional holiday days.

People Engagement Survey

Our engagement survey takes place annually and is central to understanding how our people feel about working here, and in helping us to maintain and further build our positive, innovative culture. Actions continue throughout the year to enable us to embed improvements.

In May 2022, we conducted our third people engagement survey. The survey was open for 2 weeks and we achieved an 81% response rate (180 people) which was a +3 percentage point increase on the previous year and +1 percentage point higher than our target.

Throughout the autumn, service-level feedback was shared and discussed within teams. This has informed the development of service-level action plans. A targeted 'deep dive' survey took place in October 2022, to help us understand responses to the 'purpose and values' question which scored lower than we anticipated (*Social Work England sets goals that are important, meaningful and help keep me motivated* - 55% positive, with 30% of people answering 'neither agree nor disagree').

Headline feedback:

- Our overall Engagement Index score of 76% indicates that our people have a high level of engagement and are generally positive about their experience in the workplace (*the public sector benchmark for engagement is 64.6%*)
- 70% of our staff would recommend Social Work England as a great place to work

In the follow up deep dive survey on purpose and values:

- 87% of respondents said our purpose and values are clear and easy to understand
- 90% feel the values provide a good fit with the things they consider important in life
- 82% said our values help inform how they approach their role and daily actions
- 67% feel that everyone across the organisation demonstrates our values

Learning and improvement

Learning from this year's survey has informed the planning for our 2023 survey, which will launch in May. As a result of this learning, in 2023 there will be:

- Earlier sharing of results at directorate and team level
- A clearer process and timeline for developing action plans
- Discussion within teams to explore responses, in preference to follow-up surveys
- A 'you said, we did' approach to communicate changes that have been made as a result of the 2022 survey



Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee Effectiveness Review Action Plan

Agenda Item 8 Paper Ref Annex 06a

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Committee Chair

Author

Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date

10 March 2023

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

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

Operational delivery - Open

1. Summary

As part of ARAC's terms of reference, the Committee should review its own effectiveness annually and report the results of that review to the Board.

ARAC conducted a review in autumn 2022 using the ARAC Effectiveness Tool developed by the National Audit Office (NAO). The tool is primarily based on guidance from central government, principally HM Treasury's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook.

Trialling the NAO ARAC Effectiveness Review tool has enabled a timely assessment of how ARAC fits with Social Work England's purpose and is performing in meeting our needs and demonstrating good practice.

The findings have informed a number of recommendations, which have been agreed by ARAC. These are summarised in the action plan and timeframe at annex A.

2. Action required

The Board is asked to note the recommendations, actions and timeframe from the ARAC effectiveness review.

3. Commentary

ARAC adopted the NAO effectiveness tool to assess its effectiveness against its core responsibilities and aspects of good practice, concerning for example, cybersecurity, climate change, project management, procurement and continual improvement.

10 members and regular attendees of ARAC were invited to complete the questionnaire. Nine responded, including all 3 non-executive directors.

Overall, the responses indicate that ARAC is performing effectively against the essential criteria and also demonstrating many aspects of good practice. Particular strengths were identified in relation to good use of time, risk management and external audit.

The review identified scope to further strengthen the Committee's work in the following areas:

- Opportunities to enhance the range of skills and experience available to ARAC from sources other than the Board;
- Diversity of membership, skills mapping co-opting members and procuring specialist skills where required;
- ARAC's strategy for training and development so that it is able to take full account of developments in corporate governance and emerging risk areas;
- Clarification on the resources available to support the above;
- The opportunity for deep dives to be undertaken in key and emerging risk areas, and to ensure that these are sufficiently detailed so the ARAC can understand the risk and challenge management appropriately;
- Oversight and assessment of our net zero strategy with sufficient detail, and at regular intervals;

- Ensuring that the terms of reference properly reflect the role and scope of ARAC, are proportionate to the way it operates and are publicly available.
- Provision of an annual report of ARAC activity to the Board.

4. Recommendations

The recommendations, action plan and timeframe are detailed in annex A.

Annex A

Recommended action	Proposed Owner	Approved by	Proposed Timescale
1. Better understand the skills and experiences which are available to the Committee through its current membership, and identify any gaps and/or opportunities to strengthen this further, via:			
1.1 A diversity and skills review, followed by consideration of the need to co-opt additional permanent or temporary members;	ARAC Chair	Board	Q1 2023-24
1.2 A training needs analysis, based on outcomes of the skills review, to identify mandatory / optional training requirements.	ARAC Chair	Board	Q2 2023-24
2. Identify cost and ringfence budget for ARAC training and delivery of the annual ARAC programme.	Executive Director, People and Business Support with ARAC Chair	Chief Executive	Q1 2023-24
3. Executive Director, People and Business Support to meet with Chief Executive and ARAC Chair to discuss the best approach for deep dives to add value to ARAC and agree workplan with Chief Executive.	Executive Director, People and Business Support	ARAC Chair and Chief Executive	In advance of 5 May 2023 ARAC meeting
4. Review draft Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility plan at February 2023 ARAC meeting and agree monitoring and reporting requirements.	Executive Director, People and Business Support, supported by Executive Office Lead	ARAC and Board	17 February Committee meeting 10 March Board meeting

Recommended action	Proposed Owner	Approved by	Proposed Timescale
5. Review and update terms of reference to reflect best practice, where this can be identified, for example, government guidance and from other ALBs	ARAC Chair supported by Executive Office Lead	ARAC and Board	Q1 2023-24
6. Ensure the terms of reference are accessible on our website.	Executive Office Lead	Executive Director, People & Business Support	Q3, in light of any change to membership
7. ARAC to provide an annual report timed to support the preparation of the governance statement.	ARAC Chair	Board Chair	Q1 2023-24

	Q4 2022-23	Q1 2023-24	Q2 2023-24	Q3 2023-24	Q4 2023-24
Review draft Sustainability and CSR plan at February 2023 ARAC meeting and agree monitoring and reporting requirements.					
Identify cost and ringfence budget for ARAC training and delivery of the annual ARAC programme.					
Explore approach to co-opting permanent or temporary members to ARAC, in line with terms of reference, identifying skills needs and gaps temporary/permanent, and working with DfE on best practice re. <u>Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan</u> specifically					
ARAC to provide an annual report as a review of the year, timed to support the preparation of the governance statement.					
Committee to discuss the best approach for deep dives to add value to ARAC and agree workplan with Chief Executive.					
Conduct a skills review and a review terms of reference with a view to be able to co-opt members.					
Conduct a training needs analysis, based on skills review and mandatory / optional training requirements covering governance and risk.					
Prepare and implement an annual training and development plan					
Review and update terms of reference to reflect best practice, where this can be identified, for example, Gov.uk and from other ALBs					
Ensure the terms of reference are accessible on our website.					

Paper for the

Audit Risk and Assurance Committee

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

Richard Simpson, Head of Finance and Commercial

Date

10 March 2023

Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

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

Finance - Cautious

1. Summary

This paper provides an update on the management accounts for the period ending 31 January 2023, amortisation of intangible assets and an update on the status of our commercial activity.

2. Action required

N/A

3. Commentary

Management accounts

A summary set of the Management Accounts for the year to 31 January 2023 can be found in Annex A.

Key highlights are:

Year to date expenditure, net of fee income, is £10,077k compared to the budgeted amount of £11,429k. This represents a year-to-date underspend of £1,351k, which is consistent with the trend established in Q3. The main drivers for this underspend are as follows:

- fee income is £370k higher than budget primarily due to an increased level of overseas applicants and a higher than expected level of restoration fees.
- expenditure is underspent by £981k which is due to the timing of hearing activity relating to the legacy cases project; resulting in a delay of expenditure into the new financial year.

For the reasons above we anticipate that the level of underspend will increase to £1,510k by the end of the financial year, which is a similar amount to that forecast in December. We have asked the DfE to include the underspend relating to legacy cases, expected to be £1.2m, in our budget for the 2023/24 financial year.

Year to date capital expenditure is £2,137k, which is £189k lower than budget. In the final two months of the financial we are procuring additional IT equipment and increasing expenditure on digital development. As a result, we expect capital expenditure to end the year close to budget.

Amortisation of intangible assets

The digital programme board agreed at its meeting on 2 February 2023 that version 1 of our forge development is now complete, meeting the tests set out in the relevant accounting standard - IAS 38. The cumulative value of this investment is c£8.3m and we will commence amortisation during Q4 of the current financial year, applying a 5 year straight line basis which is in line with our current accounting policy. The estimated amortisation value for this financial year is £400k which has been included in our full year forecast.

Commercial update

In 2022 the board approved business cases for the procurement of digital development services and telephony. The following provides a brief update on the status of these procurements:

- Digital Development:
Following a detailed selection process, we have awarded the contract to the incumbent supplier and expect to exchange contracts by the end of March 2023.

- Telephony:

In our business case of September 2022, we estimated the cost to be £701k over a 5 year period. With additional information we have identified a more efficient option involving a hybrid use of the telephone function available in Microsoft Teams and a dedicated solution for incoming calls for our registration and public facing functions.

Whilst we are yet to finalise our costings, we anticipate a significant saving.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

N/A

5. Annexes

Annex A – Management accounts as at 31 January 2023

Income and Expenditure Statement

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance	% Variance	Full Year Original Budget	Full Year Forecast	Variance
Fee Income	(8,370,579)	(8,000,000)	370,579	(4.6%)	(9,600,000)	(10,100,579)	500,579
Executive Leadership Team							
Wages & Salaries	544,081	553,283	9,202		663,940	627,931	36,009
Support	33,861	8,333	(25,528)		10,000	35,528	(25,528)
Total	577,943	561,617	(16,326)	(2.9%)	673,940	663,459	10,481
People & Business Support							
Wages & Salaries	1,989,405	1,940,969	(48,435)		2,344,279	2,411,132	(66,853)
Seconded & Agency Staff	94,442	93,333	(1,109)		112,000	113,109	(1,109)
Support	1,963,811	2,098,708	134,897		2,518,950	2,494,853	24,097
Total	4,047,658	4,133,011	85,353	2.1%	4,975,229	5,019,094	(43,865)
Regulation							
Wages & Salaries	4,517,259	4,462,220	(55,039)		5,354,664	5,448,054	(93,390)
Seconded & Agency Staff	52,681	0	(52,681)		0	59,681	(59,681)
Support	7,386,900	8,305,809	918,909		10,358,876	9,090,806	1,268,071
Total	11,956,840	12,768,029	811,188	9.8%	15,713,540	14,598,541	1,114,999
Professional practice and external engagement							
Wages & Salaries	1,544,057	1,455,546	(88,511)		1,749,051	1,880,332	(131,281)
Support	321,940	511,417	189,477		689,333	629,623	59,709
Total	1,865,997	1,966,963	100,966	5.1%	2,438,384	2,509,956	(71,572)
Total Expenditure	18,448,438	19,429,619	981,181	5.0%	23,801,093	22,791,050	1,010,043
Expenditure, net of fee income	10,077,859	11,429,619	1,351,760	11.8%	14,201,093	12,690,471	1,510,622

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance	% Variance	Full Year Original Budget	Full Year Forecast	Variance
Depreciation/Amortisation	454,768	1,171,131	716,363	61.2%	1,405,357	865,822	539,535
Net Expenditure inc Depreciation	10,532,627	12,600,750	2,068,123	16.4%	15,606,451	13,556,293	2,050,157
Capital Expenditure	2,137,547	2,326,667	189,120	8.1%	2,792,000	2,669,500	122,500
Total	12,670,174	14,927,417	2,257,242	15.1%	18,398,451	16,225,793	2,172,657

Balance Sheet

	Cost £	Depreciation £	N.B.V £
Fixed Assets			
Buildings	1,264,299	(985,691)	278,607
RoU- Asset Additions	324,875	(20,100)	304,775
IT Equipment	1,318,709	(881,599)	437,110
Fixtures & Fittings	318,851	(318,851)	0
Forge System (WIP)	7,945,119	0	7,945,119
	<u>11,171,853</u>	<u>(2,206,241)</u>	<u>8,965,612</u>
Current Assets			
Prepayments			543,596
Staff Advances			261
Bank			7,548,130
			<u>8,091,987</u>
Current Liabilities			
Accruals			(2,694,445)
Deferred Income			(4,629,937)
Trade Payables			(450,745)
			<u>(7,775,128)</u>
Working Capital (Current Assets less Current Liabilities)			316,860
Non-Current Liabilities			
Lease liabilities			(254,812)
Total Assets and Liabilities			<u>9,027,660</u>
Reserves			
Taxpayers Equity			<u>(9,027,660)</u>



Report on the implementation of the Just Disposal of Transfer Cases Policy

Agenda Item 10 Paper Ref 08

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Philip Hallam, Executive Director, Regulation

Author

Charlotte Lees, Fitness to Practise Performance Manager

Date

2 March 2023

Reviewed by

Philip Hallam, Executive Director, Regulation

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO2: Our fitness to practise process will be responsive, collaborative and proportionate.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Regulatory functions - Cautious

1. Summary

This report aims to give an understanding of how the Just Disposal of Transfer Cases Policy ('the policy') has been applied to legacy cases within the fitness to practise (FTP) function at Social Work England. In order to achieve this, the report provides key statistics on use of the policy, an assessment of the impact of the policy and consideration of methods in place to measure the quality of decisions made under the policy.

Overall, the use and application of the policy is deemed to have been successful, with positive findings throughout all areas considered.

Upon transfer of regulation to Social Work England on 2 December 2019, there were 1,459 legacy cases at the pre and post case examiner stages (1,269 at the pre case examiner stage and 190 at the post case examiner stage).

As of 6 February 2023, 165 legacy cases remained open between the investigations and pre-hearing stages of the FTP process. Although these cases remain open, the majority of them have already been considered under the policy and deemed not eligible for closure or referral back to the case examiners, meaning very few additional cases will now be considered under the policy.

Between December 2019 and the time of writing therefore, 1,294 legacy cases have concluded (nearly 89% of the original caseload) and 850 of these have had a recommendation under the policy to either close the case or refer it back to the case examiners agreed¹.

Application of the policy has meant that unnecessary proceedings have been avoided in 65% of the concluded cases and 57% of the total number of legacy cases that transferred to Social Work England from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)².

This has supported the just and proportionate disposal of legacy cases, contributed to success against key performance indicators, reduced the personal impact of fitness to practise cases on social workers and other case parties and avoided additional costs estimated to be around £1.7 million.

Measures in place to assess the quality of decision making under the policy have returned positive results. The Decision Review Group (DRG), which samples the quality of administrative and statutory determinations in fitness to practise, revised its terms of reference so that just disposal cases were no longer required to be reviewed by the group as standard (cases can still be escalated where required). This was because the outcomes of reviews on just disposal cases provided assurance to the group on the quality of decision making. In addition, the most recent audit on just disposal cases assigned a result of 'Substantial Assurance' regarding application of the policy. Some complaints have been received regarding cases assessed under the policy and the volume and outcomes of these are given in the report. However, with no comparison data with other case types available, the volume of complaints received cannot be used as a contributory factor when assessing the quality of decision making and case management under the policy.

¹ This figure includes 12 post case examiner cases where the final outcome at case examiner was the same as it would have been without the policy in that the case was ultimately referred to a hearing.

² These percentages do not include the 12 cases in footnote 1 as 'unnecessary proceedings' were not avoided in those cases, despite having the recommendation under the policy agreed.

2. Action required

The Board is invited to note this report.

3. Commentary

Background

The [Just Disposal of Transfer Cases Policy](#) enables Social Work England to determine how fitness to practise cases that transferred from the HCPC on 2 December 2019 should proceed to ensure that they are handled in a risk based, just and proportionate manner.

The policy applies to all fitness to practise cases transferred to Social Work England by the HCPC which commenced but did not conclude by 2 December 2019 ('legacy cases'). This includes all cases that had not progressed to the HCPC's Investigating Committee Panel (ICP), all decisions made by the ICP and all cases referred to hearing by the ICP where a hearing did not commence before 2 December 2019.

Where appropriate, the policy enables Social Work England to conclude legacy cases that were pre-the HCPC's ICP (Social Work England's equivalent stage is the pre case examiner investigation stage) at the point of transfer without referring them to the case examiners. Cases that were post-ICP (our equivalent stage is the post case examiner stage) at the point of transfer can be referred back to the case examiners in certain circumstances. The policy is applied to all legacy cases falling within these categories to determine if a case should be closed, referred back to the case examiners or proceed to the next statutory decision maker.

Recommendations for closure or referral back to the case examiners are reviewed by a decision making group (DMG) which consists of two senior members of fitness to practise staff. The DMG reviews the details of the case and determines whether the case is appropriate to be disposed of in accordance with the just disposal policy.

The policy will remain in place until all legacy cases are determined.

Purpose

In accordance with the policy, the executive leadership team receive an update on the implementation of the policy at least four times a year.

This report will provide the Board with an overview of the use of the policy and an assessment of its impact now that the majority of the cases to which the policy applies, have been concluded.

Overview of legacy case volumes

Upon the transfer of regulation from the HCPC to Social Work England on December 2 2019 there were:

- 1,269³ pre case examiner cases that transferred into the investigations function
- 190 cases that transferred into the hearings functions⁴

These cases were or are eligible for consideration under the just disposal policy .

To 6 February 2023, there remain 165 open legacy cases between the investigations and pre-hearing stages of the fitness to practise process. They comprise:

- 38 legacy cases open within the investigations function
- 4 legacy cases open in the case examiner function. These cases are not eligible for conclusion through the just disposal policy.
- 123 legacy cases open within the hearings team. Of these, the majority were referred by the case examiners and are therefore no longer eligible for just disposal.

As it is expected that all but a very small number of cases that can be considered under the policy, have now been considered, this is an appropriate time to provide a retrospective overview of the use of the policy as a whole and this is the aim of this report.

Statistical report on the use of the policy

- 58% of total legacy cases have had a just disposal recommendation agreed by the DMG⁵.
- As of 7 February 2023 the DMG had considered recommendations for closure or referral back to the case examiners under the policy in 906 individual cases:
 - 94% of the 906 cases (853 cases) were pre case examiner cases.
 - 6% of the 906 cases (53 cases) were post case examiner cases

This proportion has remained generally stable over the period of time that the policy has been in place.

- Based on the most recent position of the cases, the recommendation for closure or referral back to the case examiners was agreed with in 850 cases (94% of the total of 906). This is made up of 47 post case examiner cases and 803 pre case examiner cases.
- The recommendation for closure or referral back to the case examiners was rejected by the DMG in 45 cases (5% of the total of 906), with 4 being post case examiner cases and 41 being pre case examiner cases.
- Of the remaining 11 cases, 9 pre case examiner cases and 2 post case examiner cases (1% of the total of 906) were adjourned at the time of writing.

³ Some earlier papers state a figure of 1,282 pre case examiner transfer legacy cases. The current agreed figure is 1,269, which excludes cases that required immediate closure on transfer.

⁴ Some initially were assigned to the case examination stage of the process but were subsequently moved to the hearings stage.

⁵ 850 cases had a recommendation agreed out of 1,459 pre and post CE legacy cases

- Quarterly volumes of decisions made were highest during Q3 of 2021/22 (115 decisions) and Q4 2021/22 (131 decisions). For context, the average for all other full quarters was 64 decisions. This is likely due to focus at the end of the last financial year to conclude as many cases as possible in support of meeting key performance indicators and priorities set out in the business plan. Quarterly volumes of decisions have been lowest during Q2 and Q3 of 2022/23 as fewer eligible cases remained in the caseload.
- Although the volume of decisions has changed in each quarter as described above, the proportion of all decisions where the recommendations for closure or referral back to the CEs have been agreed or not agreed has remained stable since Q1 2020/21. This is a positive finding as it shows overall consistency in decision making when team members are recommending cases for DMG and also shows consistency in decision making at DMG.

Impact of the use of the policy

Pre case examiner cases:

The number of pre case examiner cases that have had a recommendation for closure agreed (803) represents:

- 63% of the total legacy caseload that was in the pre case examiner stage at the point of transfer (1,269 cases)

Impact on Key Performance Indicators

85% of the 803 pre case examiner cases where the recommendation to close the case was agreed by the DMG were made before the end of the 2021/22 financial year⁶.

They were therefore a large contributory factor in the success achieved against the following 2021/22 KPIs:

- FTP2 – ‘number of open cases under investigation, aiming for fewer than 1,230 by March 2022’. The figure at the end of March 2022 was 773 open cases under investigation, which was 457 better than the target. The 679 closed under the just disposal policy were therefore a key component of this success.
- FTP3 – ‘the number of legacy cases progressed beyond the investigation stage, aiming for 80% or more by March 2022’. The position at the end of March 2022 was that 84.2% of legacy cases had been progressed beyond the investigation stage (c. 1,079 cases and 4.2 percentage points better than the target). The 679 closed under the just disposal policy by the end of the financial year therefore accounted for 63% of these progressed legacy cases; it is highly unlikely that this KPI would have been achieved without use of the policy.

Ongoing use of the policy into the 2022/23 financial year will also contribute towards achievements against the 2022/23 KPI of concluding 95% of legacy cases by the end of March 2023.

⁶ This is when the decisions were made. All cases may not have closed in the year, though the vast majority will have done.

Financial impact

It is estimated the total cost avoidance as a result of the policy on pre case examiner cases is around £1.1m.

In addition, it is estimated that approximately £600k of costs have been avoided as a result of the post ICP cases being referred back to the case examiners for a decision under the policy.

Therefore total avoided costs associated with the just disposal policy are estimated to be in the region of £1.7m.

Impact on social workers and other case parties

For every case that has closed under the just disposal policy and has not had to go through additional unnecessary proceedings, time, energy and likely, personal stress has been saved for those parties involved. The policy has allowed for the just resolution of appropriate cases at a much earlier stage than would have been the case in the absence of the policy.

Appropriate conclusion of legacy cases at the investigations stage, has meant that resource has been able to be given to other pre CE cases within the investigations caseload, meaning that they have also been able to be investigated more quickly; a benefit for the parties involved with those cases and also internally to Social Work England in terms of staff pressures and the age of the overall caseload within the function.

Quality

Judicial reviews

There is no right of appeal of a just disposal decision, but parties may apply to the High Court for judicial review. To date, there have been no applications for judicial review of a just disposal decision.

Corporate and local complaints

Corporate complaints:

In total, 17 corporate complaints have been received in connection with cases where the policy was applied⁷. All of these were received before the end of March 2022⁸.

Investigations of these complaints have not included a review of decisions made under the policy as this is not within the remit of the corporate complaints process, but have considered matters such as whether the investigation was sufficient.

Of the 17 complaints:

- 3 were upheld (18%)
- 10 were upheld in part (59%)
- 3 were not upheld (18%)

⁷ To 16/02/23

⁸ The link with cases associated with the policy has been established based on information in the summary of the complaint field ('special notes') and also the response given.

- 1 was closed as further required information was not provided (6%)

The nature of the complaints varies but includes concerns such as:

- The complainant being unhappy about not being informed of the closure of the case
- A complaint about the length of time taken to progress a concern
- A lack of updates on the progress of an investigation

Regulatory decision complaints:

There have been 11 complaints raised with the internal quality and assurance team about a regulatory decision⁹ under the just disposal policy. All were regarding pre case examiner cases and all were received before the end of March 2022.

Again, these complaints vary in nature but include concerns such as:

- Concerns about the quality of an investigation
- Disagreeing with the decision to close the case

All complaints were responded to by the investigations team, but the original outcomes to close the cases under the policy remained in all cases.

Decision Review Group (DRG)

Ninety-five just disposal decisions have been reviewed by the DRG and been RAG rated following review. Ninety-three were rated 'green' (98%) and 2 were rated 'amber' (2%). This includes reviews conducted up to October 2021 and there have been no further just disposal cases considered by DRG since then.

A green RAG rating means that the DRG had no concerns about the decision made or the process followed in reaching the decision. An amber RAG rating means that the DRG was not concerned about the decision that was made, but issues were identified with the process that was followed in reaching the decision and/or that the decision was not drafted as well as it could have been.

DRG no longer routinely review just disposal decisions due to the high level of assurance about the quality of decision-making in these cases.

Audit

Audits since 2020 have consistently provided a good level of assurance in relation to decision making under the policy.

The most recent audit of just disposal cases was completed in June 2022 by the internal quality improvement team. The internal quality and improvement audit a range of Social Work England's regulatory activity in order to provide assurance.

The audit assigned an assurance level of 'Substantial Assurance' regarding the application of the policy.

This means that 'most / all of the outputs meet the quality criteria set out within the audit with limited / no opportunities for improvement identified'.

⁹ To 16/02/23

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Conclusions can be found in the summary section of the report. No recommendations are given as part of this paper.

5. Annexes

There are no annexes as part of this report.



Corporate Governance: Board terms of reference and policy update

Agenda Item 15 Paper Ref 13

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

Date

10 March 2023

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Decision

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

In accordance with good corporate governance practice Social Work England conducts an annual review of the Board and Committee terms of reference and board-related policies. These documents have been reviewed as part of our corporate governance internal audit in September 2022 and have been updated to ensure they align with our Framework Document, official guidance and best practice.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Board and Committees are supplied as a single document and are now due for review and reapproval by the Board.

The **Remuneration Committee** requested and approved the amendments to **terms of reference** as follows:

- the Committee’s responsibilities regarding assurance on
 - remuneration and performance;
 - regarding people and culture.
- In addition, it was agreed the level of quoracy needed to be updated to a minimum of 2 Non-Executive Director members of the Remuneration Committee being present, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director Committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the role), rather than 3.

The **Policy Committee** requested and approved the amendments to **terms of reference** to accommodate membership by “Two members of the National Advisory Forum.”

The single terms of reference for the Board and Committees includes the amendments as noted above.

Related Policies

The related policies that are due for review and reapproval at this time are:

- **Board code of conduct policy**

Amendments to this policy are:

- adjustments to the order of items to reflect the code of conduct guidance;
- a reference to the principles of this policy (see 1.3);
- inclusion of a clause regarding social media (see 4.5)

- **Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy**

- **Gifts and hospitality policy**

This policy has been amended to change the delegated responsibility of monitoring the reporting of gifts and hospitality from the Accounting Officer to the Head of Finance and the Executive Director, People and Business Support as follows:

- To provide a quarterly report of all gifts and hospitality to the – Head of Finance and the Executive Director, People and Business Support for review (see 4.2).

The updated terms of reference and related policies will be published on Social Work England's website or intranet as appropriate, following reapproval by the Board.

2. Action required

The Board is invited to review and approve the terms of reference and policy documents contained in the annexes that follow.

3. Annexes

Annex 13a: Board and Committees terms of reference

Annex 13b: Board code of conduct policy

Annex 13c: Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy

Annex 13d: Gifts and hospitality policy

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Social Work England was established under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (“the Act”) to be a new single-profession regulator for social workers in England. It is a separate legal entity, administratively classified by the Cabinet Office as a non-departmental public body (“NDPB”) and operates at arm’s length from Government.

Social Work England was established on 1 April 2018. It took on its regulatory functions on 2 December 2019.

Social Work England regulates all social workers in England.

The Board is the governing body for Social Work England.

Purpose

The Board provides leadership, direction and a steer on the overall strategy for the organisation. It is responsible for overseeing the full range of Social Work England’s regulatory functions, including setting professional standards and standards for education and training for all social workers; establishing and running a fitness to practise system; and holding a register of social workers in England. The Board ensures effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control.

Responsibilities

The Board’s specific responsibilities include:

- establishing and taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of Social Work England consistent with its overall strategic direction in its corporate plan
- providing effective leadership of Social Work England within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enables risk to be assessed and managed
- ensuring the financial and human resources are in place for Social Work England to meet its objectives
- reviewing management performance against Key Performance Indicators and other deliverables
- ensuring that the Board receives and reviews regular financial and management information concerning the management of Social Work England
- ensuring that the Board is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of Social Work England’s Board or on the attainability of its targets, and determining the steps needed to deal with such changes and where appropriate bringing such matters to the attention of the Secretary of State and Principal Accounting Officer via the executive leadership team, sponsor team (DfE) or directly
- ensuring that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority

and any delegated authority agreed with the DfE, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds (Annex A); and that, in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account guidance issued by the DfE

- supporting the executive leadership team in the development and effective use of a data and insights strategy as part of our business plan objectives
- ensuring that as part of the above compliance it is familiar with:
 - the Framework Document,
 - any delegation letter issued to Social Work England
 - any elements of any settlement letter issued to the DfE that is relevant to the operation of Social Work England
 - any separate settlement letter that is issued to Social Work England from the DfE, and
 - that it has appropriate internal mechanisms for the monitoring, governance and external reporting regarding any conditions arising from the above documents and ensure that the Chief Executive and Social Work England as a whole act in accordance with their obligations under the above documents
- demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including by using the independent audit, risk and assurance committee to help the Board to address key financial and other risks
- assessing and approving risk appetite annually
- setting remuneration terms for the Chief Executive which give due weight to the proper management and use and utilisation of public resources, to be approved by the Secretary of State
- appointing, with the Secretary of State's approval, subsequent Chief Executives
- contributing to the annual evaluation of the performance of the Chair, to be led by the DfE
- determining all such other things which the Board considers ancillary or conducive to the attainment or fulfilment by Social Work England of its objectives, and
- establishing and maintaining a publicly accessible register to list all the interests of its Board members.

Therefore, the Board will ensure effective arrangements are in place to:

- Provide strategic direction and challenge to the Chief Executive, and through the executive leadership team, in running the organisation.
- Ensure Social Work England's strategic direction and corporate objectives are in line with our overarching objective, the protection of the public.
- Provide assurance and ensure effective systems are in place for managing performance, risk, governance and internal control.
- Maintain probity in, and public accountability for, the exercise of Social Work England's functions and the use of public funds.

Membership

The Chair and non-executive members are appointed by the Secretary of State under paragraph 2, Schedule 3 of the Act. These appointments are subject to the [Public Appointments Order in Council](#) 2019 and as such must comply with the [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). All such appointments should have regard to the principle that appointments should reflect the diversity of the society in which we live, and appointments should be made taking account of the need to appoint boards which include a balance of skills and backgrounds.

The Secretary of State may remove a member, by notice in writing. Appointment processes will be carried out in line with the [Governance Code for Public Appointments](#). The Board operates in accordance with the [Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance](#).

The membership of the Board consists of:

- The Chair
- The Deputy Chair
- Non-Executive Directors, one of whom will be an appropriately qualified finance director as described in Annex 4.1 of [Managing Public Money](#).
- The Chief Executive

There are three sub committees made up from the members of the Board: the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee, the Remuneration Committee and the Policy Committee.

Social Work England will comply with all the requirements for an NDPB and the principles of good governance for public bodies in ensuring that non-executive members will always be in the majority on the Board. This is to ensure that the organisation's executive is supported and constructively challenged in their roles.

Decision-making

Decisions by the Board are normally be made by consensus and in accordance with the [Social Work England Board Code of Conduct](#).

The decisions made by the majority of Board members will be considered as if made by the whole group. Decisions and actions will be recorded within the minutes of the meeting. While the Board may make use of committees to assist its consideration of appointments, succession, audit, risk and remuneration it retains responsibility for, and endorses, final decisions in all of these areas.

Where there is disagreement between the relevant committee and the Board, adequate time should be made available for discussion of the issue with a view to resolving the disagreement. Where any such disagreement cannot be resolved, the committee concerned should have the right to report the issue to the sponsor team, Principal Accounting Officer, and Secretary of State. They may also seek to ensure the disagreement or concern is reflected as part of the report on its activities in the annual report.

Meetings

Meeting arrangement are as follows:

- the Board meets 5 times a year
- the Chair, or Chief Executive, may convene additional meetings, including strategy meetings, as they deem necessary
- the minimum number of non-executive members for the Board to be quorate is 3 plus the Chair, or if delegated, the Deputy Chair
- Board meetings will normally be attended by the executive leadership team and the sponsor team (DfE)
- other members of Social Work England's staff may be invited to attend the Board meetings as and when required
- as part of our commitment to openness and transparency, members of the public are welcome to attend and observe Board meetings held in public. Places for members of the public to attend Board meetings as a guest will be allocated on a first come first served basis and will be limited according to capacity.

Reporting and Administration

The Executive Office will provide the secretariat function for the Board. Papers for all Board meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The minutes of all Board meetings will be recorded including the recording of decisions made by the Board.

The minutes of the meetings and papers, as appropriate, will be published on the Social Work England website.

The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair and Deputy Chair. The Chair, or if delegated, the Deputy Chair, is asked to agree the minutes before they are presented to the Board for approval at the following meeting.

Access

The internal auditors, external auditors or their representative and the Sponsor Team will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Board.

Information requirements

After the end of each financial year, the Board must prepare and publish an Annual Report and Accounts. This sets out its activities together with an account of corporate governance in its annual governance statement, including the Board's assessment of its compliance with the Corporate Governance in [Central Government Departments Code of Good Practice](#); and its audited accounts

Review and Evaluation

The Chair will review the effective working of the Board and its members on an annual basis as set out in the [Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance](#). The Chair will usually do this

annually, with an externally facilitated board evaluation conducted at least every three years, in line with the [UK Corporate Governance Code](#) (Provision 21).

The terms of reference of the Board shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Annex A

Matrix A – Purchases	
Maximum authority levels (including VAT)	Role of authoriser
£10,000	Budget Holder
£25,000	Head of Function
£100,000	ELT Director
£500,000	Chief Executive
£500,000+	Board
Unbudgeted expenditure within agreed DfE budget allocations	Chief Executive
Unbudgeted expenditure out with agreed DfE budget allocations	Board and DfE together
Notes: 1 Authority levels represent the gross value of an order (including VAT) or contract rather than value of individual invoices. 2 Business cases are required for amounts of £25,000 and above.	

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board has established an Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee as a sub-committee to support them in their responsibilities for providing assurance in the areas of audit, risk management, governance and internal control.

Responsibilities

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee provides assurance to the Board and Accounting Officer on:

- the strategic processes for risk management, governance, levels of assurance activity and the annual Governance Statement
- the accounting policies, the accounts, and the annual report of the organisation
- the Scheme of Delegation and in line with this, proposed expenditure over £500,000
- management's letter of representation to the external auditors
- planned audit activity and results of both internal and external audit
- adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter
- assurances relating to the management of risk including data protection risks and compliance with data protection obligations, and corporate governance requirements for the organisation
- the proposals for tendering and appointment of internal auditors or for purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services
- the strategy, remuneration and the work of the National Audit Office for the audit work undertaken on the annual accounts
- compliance with [Government Financial Reporting Manual](#) and [HMT Managing Public Money](#)
- anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes, and arrangements for special investigations.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. The membership consists of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director who is neither the Chair of the Board nor the Chair of the Remuneration Committee); and
- Non-Executive Directors who are not existing members of the Remuneration Committee.

The Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) also attends Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meetings

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee may also:

- procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Board.

Meetings

Meeting arrangement for the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee will be as follows:

- the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meets at least four times a year. The Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary
- a minimum of 2 Non-Executive Director members of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the chair role).
- Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meetings will normally be attended by the:
 - Internal auditors
 - National Audit Office (External Audit) and / or their representatives
 - Sponsor Team (DfE)
- the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee may ask any other member of staff within Social Work England to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter
- as part of our commitment to continuing professional development, members of staff are welcome to attend and observe Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meetings. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis and will be limited according to capacity
- the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members to withdraw from a meeting to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters
- the Board or the Accounting Officer may ask the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee's advice.
- if the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director Committee member.

Decision-making

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Reporting and Administration

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee will report to the Board through the Chair of the committee. The Executive Office will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Board meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair of the committee.

Access

The internal auditors, external auditors or their representative and the sponsor team (DfE) will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

Social Work England's Data Protection Officer will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and / or any Non-Executive Director of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

Review and Evaluation

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee will also review its own effectiveness annually and report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Remuneration Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board has established a Remuneration Committee as a sub-committee of the Board to support the Board, the Chair and Deputy Chair of Social Work England in their responsibilities for providing assurance in the areas of remuneration and performance; people and culture

The work of the Remuneration Committee is bounded by the levels of remuneration and terms and conditions of service (including pensions) within the general pay structure approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and HM Treasury and on the understanding the Secretary of State's approval is required to amend these terms and conditions.

As outlined in the [Framework Document](#), the Board's Remuneration Committee advises the Secretary of State annually on the remuneration of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive can take part in discussions but cannot take part in the Remuneration Committee's decision-making process and cannot attend or take part when the Committee is discussing the Chief Executive's own remuneration.

The Department's Director of HR may attend meetings of the Remuneration Committee, as the Secretary of State's representative, to advise on senior remuneration policy across the public sector and how this has been applied in other non-departmental public bodies ("NDPB"s). Social Work England should have regard to Chapter 5 of the [Cabinet Office's Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments](#) that provides guidance on staff issues in public bodies including the CEO.¹

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Remuneration Committee are to provide assurance to the Board regarding remuneration and performance; people and culture.

In providing assurance regarding remuneration and performance, the Committee

- Reviews the Chief Executive's annual performance report.
- Advises the Board who then advises the Secretary of State annually on the remuneration of the Chief Executive.
- Provides oversight on the setting of annual objectives for the Chief Executive.
- Reviews the Chief Executive's performance assessment of the Executive Leadership Team.
- Advises the Board on the remuneration of the team of Executive Directors.
- Reviews job specifications for Executive Directors and the Chief Executive.
- Supports the succession planning for the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.

¹ Social Work England Framework Document 2022

- Advises the Board on appointing the Chief Executive.
- Considers workforce development and strategy relating to the workforce.
- Provides assurance to the Board that the organisation is compliant with relevant legislation, appropriate external requirements, and policies.
- Reviews key workforce indicators including, but not exclusively, sickness absence, continuous professional development, turnover, and mandatory training.

In providing assurance regarding people and culture, the Committee

- Provides a steer on strategic direction and monitors implementation programmes for workforce issues and service delivery in line with the people and culture strategy and wider strategic objectives.
- Observes the concept of ‘attract, develop, and retain’ to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.
- Provides a focus on workforce activity, role design, development, well-being, and people engagement.
- In line with the corporate risk approach reviews, assesses and identifies risk within the workforce portfolio, ensuring appropriate mitigation and escalation.
- Works collaboratively on the direction of the overall workforce change programme ensuring that resources are appropriately planned and managed to ensure sustainability and ability to fulfil organisational purpose.
- Oversees the benefits realisation of workforce initiatives and processes.

Decision-making

The Remuneration Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

The membership of the Remuneration Committee is comprised of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director who is neither the Chair of the Board nor the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee).
- Two Non-Executive Directors who are not existing members of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

The Chair of Social Work England and other Non-Executive Directors will attend as appropriate apart from the Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.

The Chair of the Board should attend meetings, as appropriate, to discuss the Chief Executive’s remuneration and performance.

Meetings

- the Remuneration Committee will meet at least once a year

- the Chair of the Remuneration Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary
- a minimum of 2 Non-Executive Director members of the Remuneration Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director Committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the role)
- if the Chair of the Remuneration Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director committee member.

The Department of Education's ("DfE") Director of HR may attend meetings, as the Secretary of State's representative to advise on senior remuneration policy across the public sector and how this has been applied to other NDPBs.

The Remuneration Committee Chair, on behalf of the Remuneration Committee members may:

- invite the Chief Executive to attend any parts of its meetings excluding when the Committee is discussing the Chief Executive's own remuneration, and to take part in discussions excluding Remuneration Committee's decision-making process
- ask any other member of staff within Social Work England to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter
- ask any or all of those who normally attend, but who are not members, to withdraw from a meeting to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters
- ask the Remuneration Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee's advice.

Reporting and Administration

The Remuneration Committee Chair will report to the Chair of the Social Work England Board after each meeting. The Executive Office Lead will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Board meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair.

Access

The Department for Education will have free and confidential access to the Chair of Remuneration Committee.

The internal and external audit teams will have access to the Chair of the Remuneration Committee and its members.

Review and Evaluation

The Remuneration Committee will review its own effectiveness annually and will report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Remuneration Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Policy Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Board provides leadership, direction and a steer on the overall strategy for the organisation. It has established a Policy Committee as a sub-committee of the Board to support the Board, the Chair and Deputy Chair with oversight of the positioning of Social Work England as the single-profession regulator for social workers in England, in relation to matters of public policy.

This includes the organisation's programme of policy development, consultation, research and publications in delivering the current and future corporate strategy. The Committee will provide the Board with assurance with regard to the process and content of the organisation's policy programme, enabling the Board to delegate detailed scrutiny of the policy process, but also to receive regular reports and advice from the Committee.

Responsibilities

The Policy Committee

- Advises the Board on developing external policy, significant changes to existing policy, presentation of policy and relations with key stakeholders.
- Advises the Board on research priorities, procurement and progress of research partnerships, and recommendations and action issuing from research activity.
- Advises the Board on the programme of public consultation, to ensure inclusive and widespread engagement with people and agencies who may be affected by proposals and those who have an interest in our work.
- Advises the Board on matters relating to the link between policy and legislation, understanding the legal basis for developing policy and significant changes to regulation.
- Assures the Board on the development of a data and insights strategy.
- Reflects the Board's views on major policy publications, including but not limited to, state-of-the-nation or landmark policy publications and advises the Board on horizon scanning, progress to delivery and the impact of policy outputs.
- Works alongside the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee to advise the Board on matters relating to regulatory risk, developing 'right-touch' mitigations, and monitoring and evaluating measures taken to protect the public.
- Agrees the executive's strategic aims on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and then advises the Board on the executive's progress towards delivery.
- Considers wider contextual issues that could impact us and relevant policies both social work specific and generic (e.g. workforce, regulation, health and social care).
- takes account of Stakeholder management. i.e. how we relate to stakeholders in our policy arena tactically and strategically to achieve maximum appropriate impact.

Decision-making

The Policy Committee acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Membership

The Chair of the Board is responsible for appointing the Chair of the Policy Committee.

The membership of the Committee is comprised of:

- The Chair (a Non-Executive Director)
- At least one other Non-Executive Director
- Two Executive Directors with responsibility for regulatory functions
- Two members of the National Advisory Forum.

Meetings

- The Policy Committee will meet at least four times a year.
- The Chair of the Policy Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary.
- A minimum of 3 members of the Policy Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate, including the Committee Chair (or a Non-Executive Director Committee member to whom the Committee Chair has delegated the role).
- If the Chair of the Policy Committee is absent for a meeting, the role of chairing the meeting will be delegated to a Non-Executive Director Committee member.

Reporting and Administration

The Policy Committee Chair will report to the Board after each meeting.

The Executive Office will provide secretariat facilities to the Committee.

Papers for all Committee meetings will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

The minutes of meetings will be confidential and will not be reported at the public element of any full Board meeting. The minutes shall be made available within 10 working days to the Chair of the Committee

Access

The Chief Executive will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Policy Committee.

Review and Evaluation

The Policy Committee will periodically review its own effectiveness annually and will report the results of that review to the Board.

The terms of reference of the Policy Committee shall be reviewed and reapproved annually.

Last reviewed: February 2023

Signed off by the Board: (10 March 2023)

Next review date: February 2024

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

Annex 13b

Board code of conduct policy

1 Why do we need this policy?

Social Work England was established under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act) to be the single-profession regulator for social workers in England. Our powers and obligations are set out in part 2 of the Act¹ and The Social Workers Regulations 2018. Our over-arching objective is the protection of the public. The pursuit of our over-arching objective involves the following objectives:

- (a) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- (b) to promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England; and
- (c) to promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

1.2 We are a separate legal entity in the form of a non-departmental public body (NDPB). We operate at arm's length from government and comply with all of the requirements for an NDPB and the principles of good governance for public bodies.

1.3 The principles of this policy have been adapted from the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies² (last revised in 2019) and apply to all Non-Executive Directors.

1.4 The Code of Conduct for our Board members provides guidance on the responsibilities and standards of conduct expected of all Board members, including those that sit on the Board's sub-committees – Audit Risk and Assurance Committee, Policy Committee and Remuneration Committee. Board members are expected to subscribe to this Code of Conduct and comply with it while carrying out their duties.

2 Who needs to follow this policy and why?

All Board members, including those that sit on the Board's sub-committees.

3 What's our policy and how will we implement it?

Duty to follow principles of public life

Individual Board members must follow the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life³. These principles should inform your actions and decisions as a Board member. The principles are:

- Selflessness

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/part/2/enacted>

² [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

General conduct

Duty to safeguard public funds

Board members have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public funds. You must comply with the rules set out in your term of appointment letter and Social Work England's travel, subsistence and expenses policy. It is your responsibility to ensure compliance with all relevant HM Revenue and Customs' requirements concerning payments, including expenses.

Board members must take appropriate measures to ensure that we conduct our operations as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible, with full regard to the relevant statutory provisions and to relevant guidance⁴.

Board members should not misuse official resources for personal gain or for political purposes.

Duty not to accept benefits from third parties

Board members should follow our Gifts and Hospitality Policy⁵. You are responsible for your decisions on the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and for ensuring that any gifts or hospitality accepted can stand up to public scrutiny and do not bring your public office and Social Work England into disrepute. You must never canvass or seek gifts or hospitality.

Board members must not accept any gifts or hospitality which might, or might reasonably appear to compromise their personal judgement or integrity or place them under an improper obligation. No inducement of any amount or value may be accepted under any circumstance. Any overt or covert offer of any inducement (of whatever value) for some action pertaining to a contract with an external third party individual or organisation, or concerning a future decision of the Board must be referred immediately to the Chair and/or the Chief Executive.

The Executive Office Lead shall keep a Register of Gifts and Hospitality. This will cover all invitations and offers of hospitality extended to staff and Board members, whether they are accepted or declined. All individuals should maintain a personal record of gifts and hospitality. The register shall be available for periodic inspection by internal audit and will be made available at Year End for review by external audit. All offers of gifts and hospitality involving the Board and Executive Directors will be published within the annual

⁴ For more guidance on how to handle public funds, please refer to Managing Public Money <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-public-money>

⁵ [Gifts and hospitality policy \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

report and website and could be disclosed to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Duty to preserve confidentiality

Board members may receive information which is not in the public domain. It is the responsibility of each individual member to ensure that this information remains confidential, unless prior authorisation has been given by the Chair for this to be discussed elsewhere. This duty of confidentiality continues to apply after members have left the Board.

Board members must never use confidential information for their personal advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of anyone known to them or to disadvantage or discredit the Board. Board members must not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for political purpose.

Duty to act in the public interest

Board members must act in good faith and in our best interests. They should not use their position to promote their personal interests or those of any connected person, firm or organisation.

In their public role, Board members should be, and be seen to be, politically impartial. Board members should not make political statements or engage in political activity related to our role or activity.

Duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to register interests

Board members should avoid being influenced by others or placing themselves under obligation to any individual or organisation which might affect, or be perceived to affect, their ability to act impartially and objectively.

Board members must ensure that conflicts do not arise, or appear to arise, between their public duties and their private interests, whether these are financial or otherwise. It is the personal responsibility of all Board members to declare any personal or business interests which may or may reasonably appear to conflict with their responsibilities.

Board Members are expected to declare an interest at the start of a meeting or at the very latest the start of the agenda item to which the interest arises.

Board members may be asked by the Chair to remove themselves from the discussion or determination of matters in which they have, or may be perceived to have, a financial interest. In matters in which they have a non-financial interest, Board members should not participate in the discussion or decision on a matter where the interest might suggest that the Board was biased.

Board members' interests will be published on our website.

Board members will declare any other employment.

Where there is potential for interests to be material or relevant to us such interests should be declared and recorded in the register held and maintained by the (Chair/Executive Team). Examples of interests which should be declared, though not exhaustive, are:

- Directorships, including non-executive directorships, of private companies or PLCs.
- A paid or unpaid position on an advisory or other decision-making group that could influence how we spend taxpayers' money.
- Ownership of private companies, businesses or consultancies, or shareholdings in the same; likely or possibly seeking to do business with us.
- A position of authority in another statutory, professional, commercial, charity, voluntary or other body, which could be seen to influence our work within operations.
- Any other interests or connection with public, private or other organisations that may have reason to work with us.
- Any close family member, or business associate who has any interests that may influence or be seen to influence us.

Duty to promote equality, diversity and human rights

The Equality Act 2010 created a 'public sector equality duty' covering all forms of discrimination, and which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relation between different people when carrying out their activities.

Therefore, Board members have a duty to promote equality, diversity and human rights and not discriminate unlawfully against any person, treating all people with respect, regardless of their race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, age, disability, marriage and civil partnership.

Failure to comply with Code of Conduct

If any Board member fails to perform the duties required of them or display the standards of conduct expected of them, they may be judged as failing to carry out the duties of their office. This could lead to them being removed from the Board.

Failure at any time by a Board member to disclose information about their personal or professional history or conduct, which could cause embarrassment or bring us into disrepute, would constitute a serious breach of this Code.

If this policy isn't followed, the most appropriate course of action will be agreed between the policy owner and the Chair, dependent on the circumstances.

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Chair of the Board

The Chair is responsible for overseeing the Board's Code of Conduct by specifically:

- encouraging and promoting high standards of propriety;
- ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the Board takes proper account of guidance provided by Ministers and the sponsor department (Department for Education) and the Board's sub-committees;
- maintaining a register of declared interests;
- representing the views of the Board to the general public; and
- ensuring that all decisions are only made where the Board is quorate.

The Chair will ensure that the Board meets at regular intervals throughout the year and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and matters discussed. The Chair should ensure that all Board members feel able to contribute to the Board's discussions.

4.2 Board members

The responsibilities of Board Members in relation to the Code of Conduct include ensuring that:

- high standards of corporate governance are observed by the Board at all times;
- we operate within the limits of our statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with Ministers and the Department for Education (sponsor Department), and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and
- we comply with any duties imposed on public bodies by statute, including obligations under health and safety legislation, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and data protection principles (as set out in Article 5 of the UK GDPR and section 35 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (which relates to data processing for law enforcement purposes). Board members have a collective duty to ensure that their decision-making processes are transparent. When a decision is made in private, there must still be transparency around the process, which resulted in a decision being made. Each Board member has a personal responsibility to ensure that they have sufficient understanding and information to participate in the decisions that are made by the Board.

Board members' engagement with the public should be based on the core principles of integrity, competence and confidentiality. Any public statements should accurately reflect our policies and practices and not compromise or threaten our reputation as the independent social work regulator.

4.3 Conducting Board meetings

Board meetings must be well-conducted, and the decisions taken should be well-informed. Therefore, Board members should:

- take account of the views of others, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions;
- be as open as possible about their actions and decisions, being prepared to give reasons for their actions and willing for their decisions and actions to be scrutinised and challenged in a constructive way;
- allow everyone to take part, respecting the contribution of other members and not interrupting when someone is speaking, nor be dismissive of views expressed by others; and
- respect the impartiality and integrity of other Board members, never being derogatory in their speech or manner. Members should not use language which could be construed as discriminatory or offensive to others;
- act in alignment with our values, behaviours and culture.

4.4 Responsibilities towards employees

You will treat any colleagues employed by Social Work England, temporary agency workers, and contracted partners with courtesy and respect. It is expected that you will be shown the same consideration in return.

You will not ask or encourage employees to act in any way which could conflict with their own Code of Conduct.

4.5 Social media

Social media is a public forum and the same considerations, including the provisions in this Code, apply as if speaking in public or writing something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity. When engaging with social media you should at all times respect confidentiality, financial, legal and personal information.

Where any personal social media accounts used by you or link to your public role, you should take care to ensure that it is clear what capacity you are acting in.

5 Raising concerns

If a Board member wishes to express a concern about the behaviour of another Board member, they should in the first instance raise the issue with the Chair. If the concern involves the Chair, the Board member should raise the matter with the Chief Executive.

Where a Board member has reason to believe that a very serious wrong-doing has taken or is taking place, (e.g. a criminal offence or a staff member is failing to comply with a legal obligation) they should raise this immediately with the Chair and/or the Chief Executive.

6 Related policies, procedures and information sources

[Board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy](#)

7 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact our Executive Office Lead

8 Definitions

8.1 Non-departmental public body (NDPB)

According to www.gov.uk, a NDPB is a “body which has a role in the processes of national government but is not a government department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm’s length from ministers.”⁶

8.2 Code of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities of, and or proper practices for, an individual.

Last reviewed: January 2023

Next review: January 2024

Signed off by Board: (10 March 2023)

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-bodies-reform#ndpbs-executive-agencies-and-non-ministerial-departments>

Annex 13c

Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy

1 Why do we need this policy?

The Declaration of Interest and Conflict of Resolution policy for Social Work England Board members provides guidance on recognising and disclosing activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts and ensures that any such conflicts are properly managed or avoided.

2 Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all Social Work England Board members.

3 What's our policy and how will we implement it?

We place great importance on ensuring our Board members demonstrate the highest standards of conduct. Board members must always demonstrate high standards of professional conduct, impartiality, honesty and integrity.

All Board members are required to identify and disclose activities and relationships that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts and to ensure that such conflicts are properly managed or avoided.

If properly managed, a Board member's activities can proceed as normal whilst at the same time upholding the person's obligations to Social Work England and protecting the integrity and reputation of the organisation. However, if conflicts are not reported or managed effectively it may jeopardise public confidence in Social Work England and cause serious damage to the credibility of the organisation and of the individual(s) concerned.

Our values also reflect our statutory public sector equality duty. This requires us to, in carrying out our functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination; to advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and to foster good relations between different groups. Therefore, Board members must behave in a manner which is compatible with our values.

Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest can arise where the commitments and obligations owed by a Board member to us are compromised or may appear to be compromised. This may include:

- A Board member who has competing interests or loyalties that are, or could potentially be, at odds with each other.

- A Board member's private affairs or financial interests (or those of a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship) are in conflict or could result in a perception of conflict with those of Social Work England.
- A Board member's actions that could give rise to an appearance of bias or favouritism towards another person within or outside Social Work England or an external agency.

There can be situations in which the appearance of conflict of interest is present even when no conflict exists. It is important for all Board members, when evaluating a potential conflict of interest, to consider how it might be perceived by others.

Financial Conflicts of Interest

A financial conflict of interest, for the purposes of this policy, is one where there is or appears to be opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship), or where it might be reasonable for another party to take the view that financial benefits might affect that person's actions.

Financial interest means anything of monetary value, for example:

- payments for services;
- equity interests (for example, stocks, stock options or other ownership interests); and/or
- intellectual property rights (for example, patents, copyrights and royalties from such rights).

Non-Financial Conflicts of Interest

Non-financial interests may come into conflict, or be perceived to come into conflict, with a person's obligations or commitments to us.

Non-financial interest may include any benefit or advantage, including, but not limited to, direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career or gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship).

Guidance on managing conflicts of interest

All Social Work England Board members will be required to update their declaration of interests for each Board meeting and to submit a signed record of their register annually.

Some guidance on the type of information which Board members should consider declaring as potential conflicts of interest is set out below. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and it is impossible to list every potential situation or circumstance that could give rise to a conflict of interests. Therefore, Board members should use their judgement to decide whether any of their interests should be disclosed.

- Directorships and committee appointments: Both paid and unpaid directorships (including non-executive directors or senior employees) of any public or private company or other body, together with any roles or positions with other committees.

- Other remunerated work: Any paid employment or other sources of income outside their normal work. Examples might be paid consultancy or advisory positions with government departments or private companies.
- Gifts, benefits and hospitality: This includes any substantial gift or material advantage received by a member, which in any way relates to his/her role as a Social Work England Board member. For further guidance on this, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality policy.
- Shareholdings or other positions: Declaration of the name of any public or private company (including any not-for-profit), business, partnership or consultancy activities in the field of social care or certain other sectors where a conflict of interest might arise (for example, healthcare) in which the Board member holds significant shareholdings, interests or control.
- Indirect social/business relationships and family interests: These would include any close association with an individual who has a financial interest, a non-financial professional interest or a non-financial personal interest (and any other interests) of close family members/friends/business partners that might be considered relevant to an individual's position as a Social Work England Board member.
- Potential conflicts arising from the possession of confidential information.
- Miscellaneous and unremunerated interests: This includes other interests which do not fall clearly within any of the above categories, for example, membership of, or work for, other bodies such as charities, which could possibly influence a Board member's position.

At each Board meeting and sub-committee meetings (Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee, Policy Committee and Remuneration Committee) a copy of all declared interests of Board members will be made available. The Chair will ask whether there are any new interests to be added or any potential conflicts of interest specific to the issues being considered at the meeting. This is to confirm, and to potentially add to, the interests that have already been identified before the meeting.

Declarations of interest and actions arising from any declarations will be formally recorded within all Board meeting and sub-committee (Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee, Policy Committee and Remuneration Committee) minutes. A written record of all disclosures will also be maintained by the Secretariat of the Social Work England Board. All declarations of interest will be published on Social Work England's website.

It is the responsibility of each Board member to inform the Chair as soon as possible if a conflict arises, or if a conflict might be perceived. If a Board member has an actual or potential conflict of interest, the Chair will consider the following approaches and ensure that the reason for the chosen action is documented in minutes and/or records:

- requiring the Board member not to attend the meeting and potentially excluding the member from receiving meeting papers relating to their interest;

- excluding the Board member from all or part of the relevant discussion and decision; or
- noting the nature and extent of the potential conflict of interest but judging it is appropriate to allow the Board member to remain and participate.

If this policy isn't followed, the most appropriate course of action will be agreed between the policy owner and the Head of Finance and Commercial / Executive Office Lead, dependent on the circumstances.

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Board members (as individuals)

- On appointment to the Social Work England Board, every Board member must make a written disclosure of activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts.
- It is the responsibility of each Board member to recognise situations in which he or she has a conflict of interest or might reasonably be seen by others to have a conflict, to disclose that conflict and to take such further steps as set out in this policy.
- If in doubt the Board member should declare the activity or relationship in the interests of transparency.

5 Related policies, procedures and information sources

[Board code of conduct policy](#)

Board related parties transaction form

Gifts and Hospitality Policy

6 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

7 Definitions

7.1 Conflict of interest

A 'set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest.' (National Audit Office "Conflicts of interest", 23 January 2015).

Last reviewed: February 2023

Next review: February 2024

Signed off by Board: [10 March 2023]

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

Annex 13d

Gifts and hospitality policy

1 Why do we need this policy?

This policy aims to provide guidance to all individuals when receiving, accepting and/or providing gifts and hospitality.

2 Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all Board members, employees and partners.

3 What's our policy and how will we implement it?

You must declare all offers of gifts and hospitality, made to or by you, regardless of value in your role. Such offers must be declared whether accepted or declined.

Receiving Gifts

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are not placed in a position that risks or appears to risk compromising your role or our organisation's statutory obligations. The general principle is that gifts should be refused or returned with a carefully worded covering letter, especially where a contractor relationship is involved or is being considered.

Seasonal or modest gifts, such as diaries, pens or calendars, may be accepted. Trade or discount cards, through which a member of staff might personally benefit from reduced prices, are classified as gifts that cannot be accepted.

Gifts of alcohol should not be accepted under any circumstances.

Where the refusal or return of a gift is likely to offend or embarrass the donor, and dependent on the nature, value and origin of the gift, discretion may be exercised as to the handling and retention of the gift. Guidance should be sought from the Executive Office Lead, to whom the acceptance of any such gift should be reported.

A distinction should be made between items offered as gifts or hospitality and those offered in substitution of fees for speeches, lectures, or other work done in an official capacity. Offers of this kind may be acceptable where the item is of a trivial nature or value and should be reported accordingly.

All offers of gifts must be recorded in the gifts and hospitality register, regardless of value.

Receiving Hospitality

In determining whether it is proper to accept hospitality offered, each individual case should be considered on its merits. Consideration will include the following:

- Nature of the hospitality: For example, approval is generally not required for a working lunch which is regarded as acceptable practice, whilst a more formal lunch or dinner by prior invitation should be approved by a member of the Executive Leadership Team, Chief Executive and/or Chair;
- Representation: Care should be taken to ensure that the organisation is not over-represented when invited to formal events where hospitality is accepted; and
- Risk of expectation of reciprocal hospitality or business: Care should be taken not to accept or offer hospitality creating an expectation of the same in return.

When refusal of an invitation or offer of hospitality may cause embarrassment or appear discourteous, prior guidance should be sought from the Executive Office Lead.

Further Guidelines for Offers of Hospitality

Offers of hospitality should only be accepted where there is a direct link to working arrangements and a business reason can be demonstrated, for example:

- attendance or speaking at a conference, which provides complimentary subsistence, travel and accommodation (this does not need to be declared on the register except where a gift was received)
- attending a free training course; or
- attending a drinks reception to network

It is recognised that, in the course of carrying out your duties, you will need on occasion to ensure good relationships with existing and future stakeholders and contractors and that this may involve for example, the receipt of modest working lunches and dinners. These are acceptable where there is a business reason.

Hospitality invitations to events which are purely social events should be considered very carefully before accepting; in such circumstances it may be much more difficult to substantiate a genuine business reason.

The following provides guidance in dealing with the approval and the records required for the acceptance of hospitality:

Hospitality	Prior Approval?	Further Action?
Modest conventional hospitality (working lunch)	No	None
More formal lunch/dinner by prior invitation	Prior approval required from an Executive Director, Chief	Record in Gifts and Hospitality Register

Hospitality	Prior Approval?	Further Action?
	Executive and/or Chair	
Commemorative or similar organised by contractor, consultant or supplier e.g. to celebrate a hand over, or opening	Prior approval required if it takes the form of a formal lunch or dinner by prior invitation; otherwise no approval required	Record in Gifts and Hospitality Register
Annual dinner of a professional institute where the officer is a guest of the institute or association	No	Record in Gifts and Hospitality Register
Annual dinner of a professional institute where the officer is a guest of a consultant, contractor or supplier	No	Record in Gifts and Hospitality Register
Cultural or sporting event as a guest	Prior approval required from an Executive Director, Chief Executive and/or Chair	Record in Gifts and Hospitality Register

Gifts and Hospitality Register

The Executive Office Lead shall keep a Register of Gifts and Hospitality. This will cover all invitations and offers of gifts and hospitality extended to staff, whether they are accepted or declined.

All individuals should maintain a personal record of gifts and hospitality.

The register shall be available for periodic inspection by internal audit and will be made available at Year End for review by external audit. All offers of gifts and hospitality involving the Board and Executive Directors will be published within the annual report and website.

Gifts/ Hospitality record form

A gifts/hospitality [record form](#) should be completed fully by all recipients and providers of gifts and hospitality to ensure information is recorded in a consistent manner.

Completed and approved forms should be sent to the Executive Office Lead who will update the register accordingly and file the forms away. All such forms will be made available for review by internal and external audit.

Reporting, Monitoring and Reviewing

In order to provide the necessary level of assurance for audit and compliance purposes, the gifts and hospitality register **must** be regularly monitored, reviewed and reported.

All gifts, prizes and donations made by Social Work England staff **must** be reported annually, in writing. This will be commissioned by the Finance team.

Providing gifts and hospitality

The expenditure of public money on official gifts and hospitality is a highly sensitive matter and the slightest hint of casualness can rightly lead to adverse public reaction.

In line with His Majesty's Treasury's *Managing Public Money*, we may make gifts of items such as mugs and pens bearing the Social Work England name and/or logo. Similarly, for promotional purposes, small value items such as gift tokens may be used.

Gifts/vouchers to staff are generally inappropriate other than as part of our recognised non-pay reward scheme, Applause

Providing Hospitality

Hospitality (both internal and external) can be described as any generous or material welcome or reception that is more than an incidental kind. Detailed guidance in regard to providing hospitality is contained within our Travel, Subsistence and Expenses policy.

Key things you need to know:

- You must speak to the [finance team](#) first to ensure you have the appropriate authority and budget cover when considering a gift, and that the gift is acceptable;
- Before giving or offering a gift(s) or hospitality, prior approval must be obtained as outlined within this and the travel, subsistence and expenses policy;
- Make sure any decisions you take, and approval given, are fully documented, robust and taken at the appropriate level and recorded in the gifts and hospitality register; and
- Your actions must bear both public and internal scrutiny. Breaches of policy or unethical behaviour may result in disciplinary action.

Expenditure on official gifts

Cash or Purchase of Goods / Property - you **must** seek HM Treasury and/or Parliamentary approval by specific provision in Supply Estimates for gifts of money and/or for the purchase of goods/property intended as a gift. **Purchase of Alcohol**

It is government policy that public funds **should not be used** for the purchase of alcohol.

If this policy isn't followed, the most appropriate course of action will be agreed between the policy owner and the Senior HR Business Partner, dependent on the circumstances.

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Accounting officer

The Accounting Officer's responsibilities apply to the whole organisation and underpin the operational and strategic achievement of objectives. The AO's responsibilities in regard to this document cover the following areas:

- *Regularity and Propriety*
Ensuring all transactions are accurately identified and recorded and that all funds are applied for the purpose intended.
- *Value for Money*
Ensuring that the organisation's procurement, projects and processes are systematically evaluated to provide confidence about suitability, effectiveness, prudence, quality and good value.
- *Management of Opportunity and Risk*
Achieving the right balance commensurate with the organisation's business and risk appetite.

4.2 Executive Office lead

- Ensure the gifts and hospitality register is accurate and complete at all times.
- Ensure all details contained within record forms are accurately transferred to the register, all forms to be securely stored and available for inspection.
- To provide a quarterly report of all gifts and hospitality to the – Head of Finance and the Executive Director, People and Business Support for review.
- To provide an annual summary of the register for inclusion in the annual report and website.
- Make available upon request all details/records relating to the receipt and offer of gifts and hospitality to internal and external audit.

4.3 All Board members, employees and partners

- All individuals must be familiar with and apply this policy.

5 Related policies, procedures and information sources

[Travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#)

[Anti-fraud policy](#)

[Fraud response procedure](#)

[Government procurement card policy](#)

[Disciplinary policy and procedure](#)

6 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact Alison Edbury, Executive Office Lead

7 Definitions

7.1 Gift

A gift is any item, cash or goods, or any service which is offered for personal benefit at no cost or at a cost that's less than the commercial value. It includes all transactions economically equivalent to free.

7.2 Hospitality

Hospitality can be described as any generous or material welcome or reception that is more than an incidental kind, such as a light refreshment or beverage.

7.3 NDPB

Non-Departmental Public Body

7.4 Propriety

The requirement that expenditure and receipts should be dealt with in accordance with Parliament's intentions and the principles of Parliamentary control, including the conventions agreed with Parliament (and in particular the *Public Accounts Committee*).

7.5 Regularity

Regularity is the requirement for all items of expenditure and receipts to be dealt with in accordance with the legislation authorising them, any applicable delegated authority and the rules of Government Accounting.

7.6 Supply estimates

Supply Estimates are the means by which a NDPB (non-departmental public body), Department or Government seeks authority from Parliament for its own spending each year.

Last reviewed: February 2023

Next review date: March 2024

Signed off by the Board: **[10 March 2023]**

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support