

Copy of Social Work England Board Meeting

MEETING

31 January 2025 10:30 GMT

PUBLISHED

24 January 2025

Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 31 January 2025, 10.30 – 13.00

at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

AGENDA

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
		Welcome			Chair
1.	10.30	Apologies for absence and declarations of interest	Verbal	To note/declare	Chair
2.	10.40	Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2024	Paper 01	To approve	Chair
3.	10.50	Matters arising and action log	Paper 02	To discuss and note	Chair
4.	11.00	Chair's report	Verbal	To note	Chair
5.	11.10	Chief executive's report	Paper 03	To discuss, and note	Chief Executive
6.	11.20	Policy committee chair's report	Paper 04*	To note	Policy Committee Chair
7.	11.30	Finance and commercial report Management accounts to 31 December 2024	Paper 05	To discuss and note	Executive Director People and Business Support; Head of Finance and Commercial
8.	11.40	Quarter 3 performance 2024/25	Paper 06	To discuss and note	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
9.	12.00	Social Work Week 2025	Paper 07	To discuss and note	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
10.	12.15	Social worker survey: Reflections and next steps	Paper 08	To discuss and note	Executive Director, Professional

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
					Practice and External Engagement
11.	12.30	Board self evaluation Review of BER action plan	Paper 09a Paper 09b	To discuss and approve	Chair; Executive Director, People and Business Support
12.	12.40	Updated board terms of reference Deputy chair role	Paper 10	To discuss and approve	Executive Director, People and Business Support
13.	12.50	Any Other Business Meeting review Date of Next Meeting: 14 March 2025 10.30-13.00	Verbal	To note	Chair
	13.00	Meeting ends			
	13.10 – 13.25	Board Information Governance Training			Head of Data Protection and Information Governance

* 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	Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Simon Lewis	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Board Apprentice:	Bhavna Chandra	Boardroom Apprentice
Staff in attendance:	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement

	Chloe Corbett	Corporate Governance Manager
	Grace Barnes	Executive Assistant
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Mathew Devlin	Head of Strategic Engagement
	Natalie Day	Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Stephen Barnett	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Richard Simpson	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
Sponsor team:	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
Public observers:	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Staff observers:	Ioana Roberts	Regional Engagement Lead – East
	Junyao Wei	Business Support Officer
	Katie Grayson-Purdy	Senior Policy Manager (Regulation)
	Nancy Henwood	Senior Information Governance Officer
	Nichola Anderson	Policy Support Officer
Minute taker:	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Apologies:	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director

Minutes of the Social Work England Board Meeting for approval
25 October 2024, 10.30-12.15
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

Board Members:	Dr Andrew McCulloch	Chair, Non-executive Director
	Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive Director
	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director
	Simon Lewis	Non-executive Director
	Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive Director
	Colum Conway	Chief Executive, Executive Director
Boardroom Apprentice:	Rachael Hood	Board Apprentice
Social Work England staff in attendance:	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Natalie Day	Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
	Philip Hallam	Executive Director, Regulation
	Rachel McAssey	Assistant Director, Regulation (Registration, Advice and Adjudications)
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
Sponsor Team:	Stephen Barnett	Assistant Director - Regulation (Investigations)
	Andrew Wise	Department for Education
	Brooke Parker	Department for Education
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education

Staff observers:	Calvin Ngwenya	Registration and Advice Manager
	Grace Barnes	Executive Assistant
	Julie Guihen	Professional Case Examiner
	Leonie Joseph	Finance and Payroll Officer
	Phil Bowden	Head of Adjudications
	Rebecca Mulvaney	Senior Policy Manager (Research and Public Affairs)
	Tuesday Peckett	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer
	Wallis Crump	Hearings Officer
Public Observers:	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Minute taker:	Elizabeth Frier	Corporate Governance Manager
Apologies:	n/a	

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Non-executive director Dr Adi Cooper declared that she had commenced the role of independent chair of Camden s Partnership Board. Non- executive director Ann Harris declared that she had commenced a role at Bedford college group.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 19 July 2024 **were approved as a correct record.**

3. Matters arising and action log

Paper 02

- 3.1 There were no matters arising. The chair reviewed the action log.

Closed actions following the last meeting:

- **Action 98:** The board to be kept updated on the outcomes of the meeting with BASW and the unions and the progress in this area. *The meeting between Social Work England, BASW and the unions took place on 15 July 2024. The board was updated on the progress and outcomes of the meeting.* **Action closed.**
- **Action 99:** The board to be kept updated on the developments of the Early Career Framework and the professional registration of the children's homes. *The executive director, professional practice and external engagement provided an update of recent developments as part of the July quarterly performance report.* **Action closed.**

3.2 Actions pending sign off at the 25 October 2024 meeting:

- **Action 100:** Incorporate a strategic exercise on risk appetite into the upcoming September strategy day agenda to ensure all board members have had the opportunity to explore the risk appetite statement and test that it continues to be fit for purpose. *Risk appetite refresher session scheduled to take place immediately following on from the 25 October 2024 board meeting.* **Action to close.**
- **Action 104:** The board to be kept up to date on value for money and the benefits management approach. *The executive summary of our value for money report is on the agenda for discussion at the 25 October 2024 board private strategy meeting.* **Action to close**
- **Action 108:** Further details of the people engagement survey and organisational commitments to be shared with the remuneration committee and then the board in October 2024. *Report provided to remuneration committee for discussion on 18 October 2024. Summary of feedback shared with the board on 25 October 2024.* **Action to close.**
- **Action 109:** The date of the next policy committee to be circulated to board members to attend and support the new chair. *Ann Harris attended the policy committee meeting in September to support the new chair.* **Action to close.**
- **Action 95:** A discussion on the professional registration of children’s residential workforce and the inspection process for approved mental health professionals (AMHPs) and best interests assessors (BIAs) course to form part of a strategy session with the executive and board. *The policy committee's September meeting included a deep dive into the exploratory scoping of the professional registration of children's residential workforce, enabling the chair to provide reassurance to board of the committee's input and advice. Further updates on this work will be provided as part of the CEO's Report. Work is ongoing in terms of developing an inspection process for AMHPs and BIAs, which was discussed briefly as part of a broader session on the education and training landscape and the shifting role of Social Work England at the board strategy day. This will continue to be an ongoing priority this business year, as we prepare for inspections from summer 2025.* **Action to close.**
- **Action 110:** Executive director, professional practice and external engagement to provide an update on readiness for professional practice guidance as part of the future board work programme. *Following extensive engagement with our education and training advisory forum (ETAF), we are now preparing to publish our knowledge, skills and behaviours statements (KSBs). These will be a core component of new curriculum guidance on “readiness for professional practice” as part of the education and training standards review. Work in already underway to prepare for this review, before a public consultation in 2025 to 2026.* **Action to close.**

3.3 Progress on the open items was **noted** by the Board.

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4. Chair's report

- 4.1 The chair provided an update on the non-executive director (NED) recruitment process, noting correspondence with the Department for Education.
- 4.2 The advertisement for new NED roles was expected imminently and would be disseminated through a variety of business and personal networks. Board members were encouraged to disseminate via their own networks and to suggest any relevant professional networks that could be targeted to broaden reach. The recruitment would seek candidates from three core skill areas:
- IT/Digital expertise
 - Finance (financially qualified)
 - General knowledge of professional education
- Emphasis was placed on attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds. The target timeline was for NEDs to be appointed and in place by April or May 2025.
- 4.3 The chair had recently met with the chair of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and shared that there was a mutual commitment to developing closer constructive conversation.
- 4.4 The chair and the chief executive had recently had a productive meeting with the Minister for Children and Families, during which the CEO had provided a briefing on ongoing projects. The Minister expressed positive support.
- 4.5 The chair reported his attendance at a recent REMCO (remuneration committee) meeting to present the CEO's mid-year performance report and discuss progress.
- 4.6 The board was encouraged by the positive first meeting between the CEO, chair and the Minister, as well as the concrete progress being made on NED recruitment.
- 4.7 The board **noted** the report.

5. Chief Executive's report

Paper 03

- 5.1 The chief executive welcomed Stephen Barnett as the new assistant director, regulation (investigations) and the new executive assistant Grace Barnes.
- 5.2 The chief executive provided an overview of his report, highlighting that the annual registration renewals process was underway. Renewals were progressing well with a pattern similar to the previous year. Improvements had been made in targeted communication methods, which had proven effective.
- 5.3 Executive director, regulation confirmed that extensive engagement efforts were made with registrants and employers to promote timely renewal, particularly in the final two weeks leading to the 30 November 2024 deadline.
- 5.4 A board member inquired about the deadlines and whether the hard cut-off point for renewal remained the same as last year, and if employers were fully aware.
- 5.5 Executive director, regulation confirmed that the renewals process and deadlines remained the same as in previous years, and expressed confidence in the extensive employer engagement which had taken place through regional engagement leads and targeted communication. All employers had been informed about renewal timelines.

- 5.6 The chief executive highlighted that referral and progression rates in fitness to practise (FtP) were stable, although the number of cases awaiting a hearing continued to be much higher than acceptable. He was pleased to report that, following a mid-year review of finances, additional resources had been made available to enable up to 47 additional hearings to take place before the year end. This was positive, although he recognised that it was a small number in relation to the size of the backlog and the organisation would continue to work hard to address this issue.
- 5.7 The board shared the chief executive's concerns regarding the backlog in FtP hearings, noting the impact on registrants and stakeholders. It recognised that this situation resulted from a structural resourcing issue, however it was positive that the organisation had managed to resource 47 additional hearings and this indicated it was doing everything possible to address the problem. The chair emphasised the importance of continued efforts to mitigate the backlog.
- 5.8 The chief executive provided an update on strategic initiatives, including the hosting of an in-person workforce roundtable meeting with senior leaders interested in social work across England, and the publication of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours statements which had been positively received by the sector.
- 5.9 It was noted that Social Work England would celebrate its 5th anniversary in the first week of December.
- 5.10 The board **noted** the report.

6. Policy committee chair's report

Paper 04*

- 6.1 The policy committee chair presented the report, highlighting discussions that had taken place about the initial scoping of potential future regulation of the children's home workforce.
- 6.2 Lynn Romeo, former Chief Adult Social Worker, had attended as a guest. The chair noted that her insights were valuable to the discussion.
- 6.3 The policy committee chair expressed appreciation for the new approach to agenda planning, which focused on one significant area per meeting, fostering richer discussions and deeper insights into ongoing work.
- 6.4 The chair of ARAC had also observed the last meeting and shared positive feedback about how useful the experience had been. She encouraged both current and incoming non-executive directors (NEDs) to observe other committee meetings for a broader understanding.
- 6.5 The chair of the board acknowledged the policy committee's progress, extending thanks to the chair of policy committee for her leadership and effective meeting management.
- 6.6 The board **noted** the report.

Action: The date of the next policy committee to be circulated to board members

7. ARAC chair's report

Paper 05*

- 7.1 The ARAC chair informed the board that the October meeting had received a number of routine reports to provide assurance.

- 7.2 The committee had a ‘deep dive’ discussion to explore the corporate risk relating to external environment. This had provided a good deal of assurance. A strong emphasis on horizon scanning had led to significant improvements in proactive risk management.
- 7.3 The committee had received its first biannual cybersecurity report. The digital team had presented on current cyber resilience measures, providing assurance on the organisation’s security posture and readiness. The board noted the substantial risk that cybersecurity threats posed to operational continuity, and that addressing this remained a top priority. The upcoming recruitment of new non-executive directors (NEDs) would include a focus on digital and cybersecurity expertise to further bolster the board's oversight capabilities in this area.
- 7.4 The approach and timing of the next ARAC effectiveness review was also discussed. As committee effectiveness had been evaluated in depth in 2022 and 2023, it was agreed to conduct a "light-touch" review in spring/summer 2025.
- 7.5 The ARAC chair highlighted that the ongoing FtP hearings backlog had escalated from a risk to an issue, which necessitated a different reporting and mitigation approach. The executive leadership team (ELT) had confirmed that regular monitoring and reporting was in place internally, and that efforts were ongoing to redirect resources to mitigate the impact on registrants and others involved. It was agreed that ARAC should also receive regular reporting on corporate issues.
- 7.6 The ARAC chair highlighted that a valuable ‘lessons learned’ session had taken place with NAO following completion of the 2023/24 external audit. The board chair commended the finance team for its hard work and responsiveness during the audit process.
- 7.7 A board member reported that he had observed another arm’s length body audit and risk meeting and noted Social Work England’s ARAC approach aligned well with best practices, enhancing assurance for the board.
- 7.8 The board **noted** the report.

8. Remuneration committee chair’s report

Paper 06*

- 8.1 The REMCO chair introduced her report which included a summary of feedback from the 2024 people engagement survey.
- 8.2 The committee had reviewed the CEO’s objectives and mid-year performance, with the chair of the board joining for this discussion. The committee chair assured the board that a thorough discussion had taken place and the committee was satisfied regarding progress and areas of focus.
- 8.3 The committee had noted improvement in the Q2 sickness absence rate, and positive feedback regarding the management development programme. An external partner organisation had been engaged to support the culture and behaviours project.
- 8.4 In discussion, the board noted the higher than usual vacancy position as a result of the recruitment pause in 2023/24. Executive director, people and business support explained that additional capacity had been allocated to the people team to expedite recruitment.

- 8.5 The board discussed the 2024 people engagement survey outcomes, noting the high response rate which was in itself a good indicator of engagement. Questions were asked regarding areas with lower scores, specifically “leadership” and access to “tools”.
- 8.6 The executive director, people and business support explained that the term “leadership” was understood in different ways by respondents, potentially including team-level leadership. Significant work had been done previously to clarify and understand this. Each team received its own survey results, which were discussed at team meetings to explore the reasons and identify any areas for improvement. This enabled feedback relating to higher levels of leadership to be understood and elevated, to inform the organisation wide response. She noted that the leadership score was trending positively and was comparable to public sector norms.
- 8.7 The question on “tools” related to anything an employee might consider they needed to do their job effectively, such as IT systems. A programme of work was in place to deliver digital improvements, although constraints on capacity and budget meant that the pace of delivery did not always meet everyone’s expectations. There was a renewed focus on communicating with staff, to make sure that their priorities were understood and they were regularly updated.
- 8.8 It was noted that female employees constituted around 70% of the workforce and had responded less favourably across key survey areas. Further work was underway to explore this.
- 8.9 A board member asked whether it would be possible to include more specific questions in future surveys to capture clearer insights, especially regarding “tools”. The executive director, people and business support agreed to explore this, and confirmed that the survey provider offered additional “deep dive surveys” into specific areas if required.
- 8.10 The board **noted** the report.

9. Finance and Commercial Report

Paper 07

- 9.1 The executive director, people and business support updated the board on the year-to-date management accounts.
- 9.2 An underspend of £1.5 million compared to budget was reported, at 30 September 2024. This was primarily due to lower than expected payroll costs, and lower than anticipated legal fees as a result of the change in accounting method.
- 9.3 A plan was in place to refocus resources towards the backlog of FtP hearings, as the chief executive had outlined earlier in the meeting.
- 9.4 The team anticipated remaining close to the budget on both revenue and capital budgets by year-end, with continuous monitoring in place to align expenditure with planned allocations.
- 9.5 The board **noted** the update.

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10. Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024/25

Paper 08

10.1 The head of business planning and improvement introduced the quarter 2 performance report, which set out performance against the business plan and key performance indicators (KPIs).

2024/25 Strategic theme: Prevention and impact

10.2 The executive director, professional practice and external engagement advised the board that the objectives were on track and that risks were within risk appetite.

10.3 Highlights in the last quarter included communications and media activity across all channels. This had focused on a range of matters including annual registration renewal and the potential inclusion of domestic abuse and coercive control in initial education and training. The executive director and policy team had met with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, and would involve them in the review of initial education and training standards later in the year. The knowledge, skills, and behaviours statements had been published.

10.4 An evaluation of Social Work Week (SWW) over the past four years had been completed, with planning for 2025 already underway. There was a continued focus on engagement, with the podcast library continuing to build. The team was hoping to build on the success of the recent “Change the Script” campaign, subject to funding.

10.5 The review of the approach to continuing professional development (CPD) was ongoing. Conversations across the sector and feedback from social workers and the PSW (Principal Social Worker) network indicated mixed perspectives on CPD, with some feeling current requirements were insufficient, and others feeling they were excessive.

10.6 The board discussed the review, including the pause on quality sampling of CPD records in the current year to enable this work to happen. The board recognised the value in undertaking a fundamental review after five years of regulatory experience. The pause on quality sampling had prompted a mixed reaction from the sector, however it was noted that some checks on CPD would continue to be undertaken. The executive director, professional practice and external engagement emphasised the personal accountability of social workers for uploading CPD and demonstrating that they continued to meet the professional standards. The chair emphasised that sector feedback would be important in considering the future approach to CPD, although this would need to be balanced with the evidence-base. The key factor would be the impact of CPD in ensuring that social workers continued to meet the professional standards. It would be important to understand what mattered to registrants, and the public, in order to provide assurance regarding the professional standards.

10.7 A recent workforce roundtable, held in Sheffield, had brought together various stakeholders and had been constructive and action-oriented. There would be an opportunity to speak about this work at the National Children and Adult Services Conference (NCASC) in November.

10.8 A Policy Research Manager had been appointed and was developing a research strategy. Research capacity was expanding, with a new project starting to explore

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seriousness within FtP. Work continued at pace on reform projects, including the scoping of professional regulation of the children's home workforce. Work was also continuing on plans for inspecting Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Best Interests Assessor (BIA) courses.

10.9 Findings from the social worker survey were expected before Christmas, while the new stakeholder survey remained active.

2024/25 Strategic theme: Regulation and protection

10.10 The executive director, regulation updated the board on business plan activity and performance.

10.11 Overall, performance in registration remained on track. The review to consider the future approach to registration renewal, after five years, was proceeding as planned. This would help the organisation to understand whether current concepts, such as annual renewal, remained appropriate and what the public and the profession needed.

10.12 Performance was good in terms of the processing of new applications and restorations.

10.13 There was a small but volatile number of misuse of title cases, this KPI would be reviewed to consider whether it was sufficiently stable to set a meaningful target in future years.

10.14 The annual registration renewal process was underway and messages had been given to renew as early as possible. The process was working as intended and it was hoped that, as last year, only a small number of social workers would fail to take the actions they needed to renew their registration. The success of this year's renewals process would affect the subsequent number of restoration applications and misuse of title cases.

10.15 Performance remained challenging across all parts of the Fitness to Practice (FtP) process. There had been a number of leadership transitions over the summer and were still vacancies to fill in some teams. A lack of leadership capacity had limited progress on the business plan improvement objectives, however the pace would accelerate once the new leadership was in place.

10.16 A comprehensive plan was in place to improve triage and investigation timeliness and reduce caseload volumes. At triage, the challenge was to manage increasing complexity within referrals and make careful and considered decisions. The executive director, regulation expressed confidence in the quality of decision-making, and that the team was responding to these challenges in a positive way. Currently more than 60% of cases at the triage stage were being resolved without further investigation.

10.17 At investigations, there was a cohort of cases that was difficult to move forward, the team was doing everything it could to move these on in an appropriate way. There was a careful balance between seeking to move cases forward whilst making sure that everything possible had been done to investigate them in the most appropriate way. An increasing number of cases were being resolved via accepted disposal,

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which was considered appropriate. This impacted upon the number going forward to a hearing.

- 10.18 At the hearings stage, the organisation had been able to find resources to fund up to 47 additional final hearings this year, although the exact number would depend on readiness, availability of witnesses and parties.
- 10.19 A board member inquired about the balance of face-to-face versus online hearings, and the executive director, regulation confirmed that remote hearings remained the default unless requested or there was a specific reason to hold the hearing in person. Online hearings enabled better engagement of social workers and witnesses, which was positive. This did have the effect of lengthening overall hearing time, as social workers were often unrepresented; therefore efforts had to be made to ensure they understood the process. Each hearing was assessed individually to ensure appropriateness.
- 10.20 Board members were invited to observe a hearing and were advised that recordings of ‘mock’ hearings for training purposes would also be made available to view.
- 10.21 The chair thanked the executive director, regulation for providing a good summary of the risks, and highlighted the importance of improvement objectives such as 6.1 to explore strategic solutions for the challenges being experienced within FtP. He recognised that progress depended on leadership capacity.
- 10.22 The executive director, regulation acknowledged the hard work of the FtP team during this challenging period, particularly those who had supported across into triage and investigations to push for improved performance.
- 10.23 The Board extended its appreciation to the FtP team for maintaining support and the quality of case resolutions, amid challenges.

2024/25 Strategic theme: Delivery and improvement

- 10.24 The executive director, people and business support highlighted that objectives 8 and 10 of the business plan did not have specific deliverables attached, but progress in these areas had been steady. The organisation had successfully completed a value for money evaluation report, and quality assurance (QA) activities remained on schedule. A portfolio of digital projects was advancing, which aimed to enhance operational efficiency and improve service delivery.
- 10.25 Objectives 9.1 and 9.2 focused on culture, behaviours and leadership development. An initiative to explore and define the organisational culture and behaviours Social Work England would need in the future, to deliver its strategy and continue to be an organisation people wanted to work for, was set to commence. There was an ongoing commitment to building a supportive and cohesive workplace environment.
- 10.26 The KPIs overall provided a reasonably positive picture, with sickness rates showing a downward trend. A deep dive analysis into sickness would be undertaken later in the year, along with a renewed focus on wellbeing support for staff.
- 10.27 Recruitment efforts were continuing positively, with plans in place to review the recruitment approach.
- 10.16 The board **noted** the report.

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11. Corporate Risk Register

Paper 09*

- 11.1 The corporate risk register was presented to the board for review; under the new work programme this would come to the board biannually. A schedule of risk 'deep dives' had been agreed with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).
- 11.2 A board member observed that no new risks had been identified during the recent strategy day, which offered some assurance that the horizon scanning approach was effective.
- 11.3 The chair highlighted the reputational risk related to the Fitness to Practise (FtP) hearings backlog.
- 11.4 The board **noted** the corporate risk register and its role in supporting effective risk management, emphasising the need for ARAC to continue to provide oversight and assurance to the board that key risks were being appropriately identified and mitigated.

12. Social Work Week Review

Paper 10

- 12.1 The assistant director, communication, engagement and insight presented the report, which set out the findings of an in-depth review of the first four Social Work Weeks. The paper offered a reflective snapshot, capturing insights and lessons learned, and re-examined the purpose and design of Social Work Week (SWW).
- 12.2 SWW was now recognised now as part of the organisation's core business. Over the years there had been experimentation with differences in scale, format and content. There had always been close attention to co-production. Now, it was timely to revisit the basics in terms of being clear why we held the week and establish a blueprint going forward. Proportionality had been considered, there was a small team internally but lots of ambition.
- 12.3 The fundamental principles would be to continue to provide a free programme, work in partnership with others, use the week to explain our work and reinforce professional standards, reflect the diversity of profession and different voices, and achieve an appropriate balance between national and local content. There would be further thinking on how to engage the public more directly.
- 12.4 The board welcomed the evaluation report and endorsed the direction of travel. Board members asked to be included when expressions of interest were sought for delivering SWW 2025 sessions, as all non-executive directors had some expertise that may be relevant.
- 12.5 The executive director, professional practice and external engagement noted that SWW had positioned the organisation uniquely as a regulator, allowing a focus on specific aspects of our regulation as well as aspects of the profession, through a partnership approach.
- 12.6 A board member suggested incorporating some of the material from the 'policy insights' bulletin into SWW, to provide the broader social work community with contextual information about why we undertook this work and why it mattered. The assistant director, policy and strategy provided assurance that the team would be focused on the policy landscape when developing the programme.

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- 12.7 Executive director, regulation, emphasised the importance of communicating how social work regulation fits within the broader regulatory environment, particularly the public protection system and how this ultimately supports the profession.
- 12.8 It was requested that board members were invited to input to the planning stages of future work programmes.
- 12.9 The board **noted** the report.

13. Data and Insight – Update on Strategy

Paper 11*

- 13.1 The head of business planning and improvement presented the report, which provided a progress update at the mid-point of the 2023-26 data and insight strategy. A more detailed implementation plan sat behind the strategy. Over this period significant foundational work had been undertaken, for example the initial analysis of EDI within Fitness to Practise (FtP). More information about our activities and outcomes had been published on the website. The organisation was taking steps to understand its needs around the technology required to support data management and reporting.
- 13.2 The assistant director, communications engagement and insight emphasised that a key priority was how the organisation publicly presented key messages to create a compelling narrative around its work and share valuable insights that could inform local practice.
- 13.3 The board noted that the research strategy, which was under development, would be integral to this work. The assistant director, policy and strategy advised the board would receive regular updates as development of the strategy continued. In discussion, the board noted the importance of making sure that research could be acted upon and deliver tangible impact. The assistant director, policy and strategy agreed that this was critical and had been part of the approach to date. She gave the examples of research into practice education and perceptions about social work, which had both directly informed next steps.
- 13.4 The chief executive cautioned on the need to balance ambition with capacity in this area, emphasising that whilst it was essential to aim high, the strategy must also reflect realistic expectations within available resources. The chair echoed the importance of a clear research agenda.
- 13.5 The board **noted** the report.

14. Co-opted Membership of Board Committees

Paper 12

- 14.1 The executive director, people and business support presented the report, which recommended a process for co-opting additional members onto board committees, should there be a need to access wider knowledge and experience.
- 14.2 A question was raised about providing devices, and it was clarified that no devices would be issued; instead, co-opted members would receive pdf copies of papers and would be subject to a confidentiality agreement. It was confirmed that a standard job description (JD) would be created for the co-opted role.
- 14.3 The board **approved** the report and the process for co-option of members onto board committees.

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15. Any other Business

Paper 13

Travel and Expenses Policy

15.1 The chair noted that the travel and expenses policy was on the agenda for information. This was a regular reminder, as part of our good practice approach to corporate governance.

15.2 The board **noted** the policy.

Whistleblowing (Prescribed Person) and role of the board

Paper 14

15.3 The chair noted that the whistleblowing (prescribed person) policy was on the agenda for information, as part of our good practice approach to corporate governance.

15.4 A board member raised a question regarding the handling of whistleblowing concerns when individuals were specifically contacted versus simply copied in. The executive director, regulation clarified that in either case, correspondence should be forwarded to the designated whistleblowing inbox to ensure appropriate follow-up and determination. He emphasised that, as a prescribed person, the organisation primarily handled whistleblowing matters concerning external entities, while internal whistleblowing pertained more directly to organisational activities.

15.5 It was agreed to recirculate the internal whistleblowing policy to the board for reference.

15.6 It was clarified that if a whistleblowing report related to the chair, the senior independent director (SID) should handle the matter to ensure conformity with proper protocols.

15.7 The board **noted** the policy.

Action: Corporate Governance Manager to recirculate the internal whistleblowing policy to board members.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 31 January 2025 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

Summary of Actions

- The date of the next policy committee to be circulated to board members to attend.
- Corporate governance manager to recirculate the internal whistleblowing policy to board members.

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

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Summary of actions from board meetings up to 31 January 2025

Agenda Item 3 Paper Ref 02

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair

Author

Sophie Rees Rumney, Executive Assistant

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance – Minimalist

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

The actions below provide an audit trail of items closed at or since the last meeting on 25 October 2024. Actions still in progress or yet to complete since the last meeting are listed on the log that follows.

Closed actions following the last meeting:

- **Action 111:** The date of the next policy committee meeting to be circulated to board members to attend. *Non-executive directors Ann Harris, Dr Sue Ross and Simon Lewis attended the 10 January 2025 policy committee meeting. Action closed.*
- **Action 112:** Corporate governance manager to recirculate the internal whistleblowing policy to board members. *Corporate governance manager recirculated the internal whistleblowing policy to board members on 12 December 2024. 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.

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Social Work England Board Action Log

Action no.	Date of Meeting	Action	Owner	Due By	Update	Next review	Status
101	17/05/2024	Executive director, people and business support to arrange cyber awareness training in consultation with the IT team, the chair and the ARAC chair	Executive Director, People and Business Support	19/07/2024	Planning has been underway to develop and deliver a focused session that will take place after the 14 March 2025 board meeting. This training had originally been scheduled for the 31 January 2025 but had been deferred at the request of a board member to enable them to participate.	14/03/2025	Open
102	17/05/2024	The executive office team to diarise an annual meeting between the chair and the DPO around April/May.	Corporate Governance Manager; Executive Assistant	19/07/2024	The executive office team will support the scheduling of these for April/May 2025.	14/03/2025	Open
105	17/05/2024	An updated caseload volume report to be presented at the Social Work England board meeting on 31 January 2025. This report will provide an overview of end-of-month caseload volumes and allow for reporting and identification of any emerging trends.	Executive Director, Regulation	31/01/2025	This is on the forward plan for the board. In discussion with the chair, it has been re-scheduled for the March meeting so that it will provide a more complete picture of activity and the planned next steps. To remain open until 14 March 2025.	14/03/2025	Open

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Action no.	Date of Meeting	Action	Owner	Due By	Update	Next review	Status
106	17/05/2024	The executive office team to plan a forward schedule for the board to reflect the arrangements agreed in the board effectiveness review interim action. This will include two strategy days per year, one stakeholder visit/meeting, one meeting at a location away from Sheffield convenient to the board and two meetings per year dedicated to the non-executive director discussions only.	Corporate Governance Manager; Executive Assistant	31/01/2025	A forward schedule of regular agenda items for the board and each committee was approved at the board strategy awayday on 27 September 2024. This will be kept under regular review. The executive assistant and regional engagement lead had identified potential dates with Lancashire County Council for a stakeholder session and proposed the dates to the board. It is now likely that the visit will take place in May 2025.	14/03/2025	Open

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CEO report to the board January 2025

Agenda Item 05 Paper Ref 03

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Introduction

At our meeting today we will be discussing the Q3 performance report. The report indicates that we are on track to meet the majority of our business objectives by the end of the business year and reflects a broad range of activity across the organisation.

The board will be aware from previous reports that turnover in the leadership and management in Fitness to Practise this year has had an impact on capacity and the ability of the team to complete on the delivery on objectives. This is in relation to options for alternative disposal of cases and applying learning from early engagement with social workers to improve timeliness. These objectives will be carried into the business plan for next year.

We continue to develop capacity in our triage team and expect that to have an impact in the coming months and over the course of the next financial year. Whilst volumes and timeliness at the triage stage remain a challenge, we continue to risk assess cases when we receive them, and conclude most of the concerns we receive at the triage stage.

The board will also be aware that it is difficult to quickly realign capacity at the hearings stage of the FtP process given the nature of the cases and the range of people and processes involved. The team have endeavoured to use the resources available to them to schedule as many hearings as possible by the year end. At this stage we know that it will not be possible to direct further resources to hearings in this financial year.

The renewal of registration period has come to an end for this year since the last board meeting and it is good to report a successful renewals period and to reflect positively on all those involved. As noted in the report we are keen to engage on CPD in the year ahead to help inform a vision and direction of travel that will underpin the central role of professional development for individual social workers and the social work profession.

2. Seriousness in Fitness to Practise

We recently commissioned research to underpin our understanding of 'seriousness' in our fitness to practise proceedings. The objective of this initial commission is to explore how seriousness is considered, but most importantly why regulators and decision makers may determine something to be serious within the context of professional regulation, with a focus on social work. We will use the findings to inform how we should progress our understanding of seriousness through further engagement with social workers and members of the public, with a view to developing our decision-making processes. This has the potential to be transformative in its impact and outcome.

3. Social Work Week 2025

Planning is well under way for Social Work Week and we hope to be able to launch the programme for the week in mid-February. The Expression of Interest (EOI) process was

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launched on 11 November inviting expressions of interest on the following themes: Data and insight, Education and training, Innovation, Professional identity and Safe and effective practice. The EOI process closed on 31 December, with 59 EOI's submitted. A 2 stage sift has been completed including a final panel sift on 9 January to prepare a draft programme. National Advisory Forum members were involved in both stages of the EOI sift. A draft programme was presented and discussed at the policy committee on 10 January.

4. Professional Standards Authority (PSA)

We are planning to welcome the Board of Directors at the PSA to our office in Sheffield in March. This will be an opportunity to meet with the Board and Senior Team at the PSA and to share further insights on the role of social work working with families and communities across England and the role of Social Work England as the profession's regulator.

5. AMHP and BIA Courses

Although the work on AMHP and BIA courses is noted in the performance report I wanted to give it emphasis in my report. Workshops and induction training have been completed for new inspectors with AMHP and BIA experience and further training is planned for March 2025. We are now consulting with external stakeholders, including employers and education providers, to help shape the model. The first BIA inspection is expected to take place in September 2025, with AMHP inspections to commence following this.

6. AI online summit

On 04 February, we are hosting an initial discussion with sector leaders on AI in social work. This is an issue we are increasingly hearing about anecdotally, with social workers raising concerns about how and when to engage with AI. As the regulator, it is important for us to be alert to the positives AI can bring to the profession, and how social workers practice, but also ways in which it can expose our registrants and impact on public protection. We are looking forward to a good discussion with colleagues on this very timely matter.

7. Practice Educators Development Group

Our practice education development group met for the 3rd time on 23 January. This group looks at the important role played by practice educators in the future pipeline of the profession and is working to consider how best a regulatory framework could support increased consistency, robust standards, and engage with other linked national developments. This is a wide-ranging group of stakeholders from across the sector and it will continue to meet and link across to our Education and Training Advisory Forum.

8. Independent Review

In line with our legislation the Secretary of State is to commission an independent person to review Social Work England after 5 years of operations. Our preparations are under way for the independent review which may begin in due course. The precise focus and scope of the review will be determined by the review team, based on the agreed terms of reference which will be developed by DfE and approved by Ministers. We will work with the DfE and the review team throughout the entire review timeline to ensure the review achieves the best outcomes for everyone. We will keep the board informed of progress including any decisions which are made about the scope, terms of reference, lead reviewer and timeframes.

9. Change the Script Campaign

We have secured funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for a phase two of our change the script campaign. This builds on our media activity last year to raise awareness of the impact that negative depictions of social work has on both the profession and the public. There is an emphasis this year to work more closely with stakeholders who share our ambition to increase public understanding that social work is a vital, highly trained, and regulated profession.

10. Conclusion

At this time of year, we are working to prepare the budget and business plan for 25/26. There are still a number of variables that need to be taken account of before we can land on any final drafts, however we will share drafts with the board over the next few weeks so we can be ready for sign off at our meeting in March.

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11. Annexes

Annex 1: Chief Executive's meetings

Director for the Social Workers Registration Board, South Australia

Social Worker of the Year Awards

Chief Executive BASW

International Network of Social Work Regulators

Chief Executives of Regulatory Bodies

Permanent Secretary and Chief Executives of ALBs at DfE

Ofsted External Reference Group

Ministerial Reception at DfE

Association of Directors of Children's Services Workforce Committee

Regulated Professions Advisory Forum

DBS Chairman and CEO Round Table

Skills for Care Workforce Strategy Oversight Executive

Chief Executive of the Professional Standards Authority

UK Social Work Regulators Alliance

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Finance and commercial update

Agenda Item 7 Paper Ref 05

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

Richard Simpson, Head of Finance and Commercial

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Financial governance - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

This paper provides an update on the following:

- Management accounts for the period ending 31 December 2024
- Commercial update
- 25/26 Budget update

2. Action required

For discussion and noting.

3. Commentary

Management accounts

A summary set of the Management Accounts for the year to 31 December 2024 can be found in Annex A. Key highlights are:

Full year revenue expenditure, net of fee income, is £6,222k which is £2,007k lower than budget. This underspend is predominantly due to the impact of the introduction of a new method of accounting for legal fees (c£900k), following the recommendation of the National Audit Office, a higher level of vacancies than budgeted (c£507k) and a lower level of EQA expenditure (£256k) than anticipated.

Vacancies have been higher than usual throughout the year due to the unwinding of the recruitment pause, introduced in Q4 of the 2023/24 financial year. The position has now stabilised, with the number of vacancies returning to normal levels. The reasons for the underspend within the EQA budget relate to lower than anticipated travel costs and partner fees to complete planned activities for the year-to-date. Future budget assumptions are being reviewed.

Our forecast for the full financial year is for an underspend of £1.2m (11% variance from budget) compared to the projected full year underspend reported in Q2 of £20k (0.2%). The sharp increase in forecast year-end variance to budget in Q3 reflects difficulties we have experienced in being able to accelerate the number of hearings that were originally planned, as part of our mitigation plan. Further details are provided in the Q3 performance report.

We are also using some of the underspend on our payroll budget to fund the review of our digital, data and technology (DDaT) architecture, resourcing and strategy.

Full year capital expenditure is £1,473k, which is an £87k underspend compared to budget. We expect the rate of capital expenditure to increase in the final quarter and finish the year close to budget, with a small underspend of £9k.

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Commercial Update

Procurement for an external partner to undertake a strategic review of our DDaT arrangements is complete as is the procurement of a cyber security provider. The new procurement act is due to go live from 24 February 2025. As we will continue to use existing Crown Commercial Service frameworks to procure goods and services there will be a limited impact to our internal processes over the next 12 months. At present we have no upcoming procurements requiring the use of the new arrangements under the act. Our commercial staff have received training from both the Cabinet Office and the DfE commercial team, with the DfE having agreed to provide ongoing support as necessary.

25/26 Budget update

We are continuing to work on our budget plan for the next financial year and, as usual, will present our proposed budget to the board at its next meeting in March. As we did last year, we are preparing for a couple of possible budget scenarios while we await the outcome of the DfE budget allocation process.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

N/A

5. Annexes

Annex A – Management accounts at 31 December 2024

Income and Expenditure Statement

Directorates	Year to date amount	Year to date budget	Year to date variance	Full year budget	Full year forecast	Forecast variance	Forecast variance %
Fee income	(7,632,865)	(7,599,807)	33,058	(10,109,706)	(10,141,123)	31,417	
Executive Leadership Team							
Wages & Salaries	425,141	386,107	(39,033)	518,265	573,947	(55,682)	
Support	31,759	26,250	(5,509)	35,000	40,509	(5,509)	
Total	456,899	412,357	(44,542)	553,265	614,456	(61,191)	
People & Business Support							
Wages & Salaries	1,875,662	2,038,931	163,269	2,676,937	2,426,700	250,237	
Support	1,900,969	1,944,572	43,603	2,686,006	2,974,148	(288,142)	
Total	3,776,631	3,983,503	206,872	5,362,943	5,400,848	(37,905)	
Regulation							
Wages & Salaries	4,422,447	4,724,266	301,819	6,398,822	6,087,448	311,375	
Support	3,415,936	4,528,160	1,112,223	6,167,782	5,512,063	655,719	
Total	7,838,383	9,252,425	1,414,042	12,566,604	11,599,510	967,094	
Professional practice and external engagement							
Wages & Salaries	1,560,291	1,642,172	81,880	2,235,116	2,150,395	84,721	
Support	223,103	538,962	315,859	764,776	540,719	224,057	
Total	1,783,395	2,181,134	397,739	2,999,893	2,691,114	308,779	
Total Expenditure	13,855,308	15,829,420	1,974,111	21,482,705	20,305,928	1,176,777	
Net Expenditure	6,222,444	8,229,613	2,007,169	11,372,999	10,164,806	1,208,193	11%

Depreciation/Amortisation	1,455,929	1,621,500	165,571	2,262,000	2,096,428	165,571	
Net Expenditure inc Depreciation	7,678,372	9,851,113	2,172,741	13,634,999	12,261,234	1,373,765	
Capital Expenditure	1,473,559	1,561,000	87,441	2,132,000	2,122,567	9,433	
Total	9,151,931	11,412,113	2,260,182	15,766,999	14,383,801	1,383,198	

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Balance Sheet

	Cost £	Depreciation £	N.B.V £
Fixed Assets			
Buildings	1,264,299	(973,767)	290,532
Right of Use Asset	1,124,002	(440,578)	683,424
IT Equipment	1,177,249	(1,021,116)	156,133
Fixtures & Fittings	331,614	(319,955)	11,659
Internally generated system	7,807,986	(1,171,198)	4,684,792
Forge System (WIP)	4,214,989	0	4,214,989
	15,920,137	(3,926,613)	10,041,528
Current Assets			
Prepayments			361,271
Bank			6,919,486
Debtors			25,927
			7,306,684
Current Liabilities			
Accruals			(611,843)
Deferred Income			(5,980,261)
Payables			(2,273,669)
			(8,865,773)
Working Capital (Current Assets less Current Liabilities)			(1,559,089)
Non-Current Liabilities			
Short Term - PFI Finance Lease Liability Additions			(1,152,302)
Lease liability payments			421,826
Lease interest			(69,251)
Provisions			(135,542)
			(935,270)
Total Assets & Liabilities			7,547,169
Taxpayers equity			7,547,169

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Performance report Q3 2024-25

Agenda Item 8

Paper Ref 06

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Andy Leverton, Head of Business Planning and Improvement

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Executive Leadership Team

This paper is for

Discussion and Advising

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Executive summary

This report presents our performance for Q3 of 24-25 against our business plan objectives and our key performance indicators (KPIs).

Key points

We are on track to deliver against 13 of our 15 business plan objectives, an improvement from 12 out of 15 in Q2. Changes in our fitness to practise teams continue to affect our capacity to progress objectives 6.2 and 6.3. We are now on track to meet objective 6.1 (rated amber in Q2) due to additional capacity. A new leadership team will be in place in fitness to practice in Q4, which will provide further capacity in these areas.

Progress against our business plan objectives is described in more detail in section 3.

We met 12 of our 17 performance targets in Q3, down from 14 out of 17 in Q2. We are marginally behind trajectory for our target of education course reapprovals. We remain confident of completing our programme of reapprovals and meeting the 100% target by the end of Q4.

The forecast year-end variance to budget is now exceeding our target of +/- 1.5%, having been within target at the end of last quarter. This is due to underspends arising from the change in accounting practice for legal fees and higher than expected vacancies leading to a payroll underspend. We identified mitigations, and continue working to address the situation.

We are not on track to achieve year-end targets for the age of the triage caseload and the age of the investigation caseload. The time taken to complete the case examination process narrowly exceeds our target, however it has remained stable over the last 2 quarters, following 4 consecutive quarterly increases.

Progress against our key performance indicators is set out and explained in more detail in section 4.

2. Overall assessment

Table 1: Overview of business plan objectives for 2024-25

Business plan objective for 2024 to 2025			RAG
Prevention and Impact	1.1	Further develop our engagement and communication with the social work profession, key stakeholders and the public, to build trust and confidence in social work.	
	2.1	Publish our research findings, thematic reviews and analysis of the data we have to increase openness and transparency, and support wider learning, as part of our ongoing communication and engagement	
	3.1	Inform, influence, and support the development of government reform for social care and social work.	
	3.2	Develop a model of regulating specialist and advanced practice, with the potential for annotations to a social worker's registration status.	
	3.3	Learn more about how social workers use continuing professional development (CPD) and review our related requirements for how social workers demonstrate that they meet our professional standards.	
	4.1	Develop our approach to inspections, reapprovals and quality assurance for education and training courses that prepare social workers for specialist practice, including approved mental health professionals and best interest assessors.	
	4.2	Review learning from our inspections of social work courses and conduct an initial review of our education and training standards in preparations for a public consultation in 2025 to 2026.	
	4.3	Launch our readiness for professional practice guidance, including knowledge, skills and behaviour statements developed with the sector, in partnership with the Education and Training Advisory Forum.	
Regulation and Protection	5.1	Review our approach to registration renewal and consider whether existing arrangements offer the right balance between public protection, public confidence in the profession, and efficiency.	
	6.1	Review the options for bringing aspects of our fitness to practise advocacy in-house, to improve timeliness and reduce cost.	
	6.2	Explore alternative options for disposing of cases referred for a hearing and review the further use of options available in our legislation to support more efficient hearings processes.	
	6.3	Apply learning to improve the timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of our triage, investigations, and case examiner processes, with a focus on early engagement with social workers.	
	7.1	Grow and develop our single points of contact network to cover all major employers of social workers in England and increase engagement with the network to support preventative responses to emerging regulatory concerns.	
Delivery & Improvement	9.1	Enhance our leadership and management development offer and review our behaviour framework to support this.	
	9.2	Review our ways of working to ensure they recognise and reinforce behaviours that support our organisational culture and values.	

For objectives 8 and 10 in our strategy for 2023 to 2026, we have no specific objectives in our business plan for 24-25. Work continues towards achieving these two strategic objectives.

Green: On track	Amber: Some issues, being managed and closely monitored	Red: Significant issues, action plan required
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Table 2: Overview of key performance indicators for 2024-25

ID	KPI Description	Target		Q3	Q2
EQA1	Percentage of course reapproval decisions made	100% by March 2025	Q3: 96%	95%	88%
REG1	Time taken to approve UK registration applications	≤ 10 working days (median)		5	3
REG2	Time taken to approve restoration applications	≤ 20 working days (median)		4	5
REG3	Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases	≤ 60 working days (median)		0 ¹	53
REG4	Time taken to answer emails	≤ 5 working days (median)		2	2
REG5	Time taken to answer phone calls	≤ 8 minutes (median)		3	4
FTP1	Age of triage caseload	≤ 14 weeks (median) by March 2025	Q3: ≤ 16 weeks	28	29
FTP2	Age of investigation caseload	≤ 54 weeks (median) by March 2025	Q3: ≤ 56 weeks	74	67
FTP3	Time taken to complete case examination process	≤ 12 weeks (median)		13	13
FTP4	Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome	Monitor (weeks)		106	108
FTP5	Time taken to approve interim orders	≤ 20 working days (median)		18	18
IG1	Time taken to complete FOI requests	≥ 90% within deadline		100%	96%
IG2	Time taken to complete subject access requests	≥ 90% within deadline		100%	100%
C1	Corporate complaints response time	≥ 80% within 20 working days		94%	91%
P1	Retention rate	≥ 80%		87%	87%
P2	Sickness absence over last 12 months	≤ 8.1 days per person		7.4	8.0
FIN1	Forecast year-end variance to budget	+/- 1.5%		11.0% ²	0.2%
IT1	System availability excluding planned outages	≥ 99%		100%	100%

¹ This reflects cases that were closed within the same day as they were opened.

² Underspend

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3. Business plan objectives 01 October to 31 December 2024

Strategic theme: Prevention and impact

Objective 1.1: Further develop our engagement and communication with the social work profession, key stakeholders and the public, to build trust and confidence in social work.

This objective encompasses our work to inform, educate and influence others across the breadth of Social Work England priorities. We use communication and engagement as 2 levers to advance our mission to enable positive change in social work.

Media moments

There was significant media activity during Q3, both proactively and reactively. We identified opportunities to reinforce our priorities, and to give context and clarity where necessary to journalists. We saw 45 articles reference Social Work England with around two-thirds of coverage positive or neutral, and a third negative. Coverage featured registration renewals, the review of CPD, the launch of the knowledge, skills and behaviours, the latest diversity data in fitness to practise (FtP) publication and national stories relating to social work.

Registration renewals campaign

Our campaign to support registration was a key focus in Q3, encouraging social workers to upload their CPD and apply to renew their registration. After each piece of communication activity, there were clearly attributable increases in people taking the actions necessary to maintain their registration this year. Communications were sent out from 1 December to confirm social workers’ registration statuses. In addition, we used the moment to publish a podcast on the importance of regulation, the differences between a regulatory body and a professional body, and why it’s important to be registered, to continue to improve understanding of our role.

In person events

We had a strong event presence during Q3 at 2 national events. In October, we hosted a stand at Community Care Live 2024, speaking to almost 300 people, including principal social workers, students, and social workers from the NHS and local authorities. We also delivered a workshop panel discussion on workforce challenges. In addition, we used these events as an opportunity to gather insight and further promote our [Change the Script campaign](#).

Strategic engagement

In Q3, we recorded 254 engagements with the sector. Of these, 56 focused specifically on FtP. Our national sessions to de-mystify our FtP process and explore prevalent themes, attracted 90 attendees. These were complemented by 14 regional sessions where 560 attendees engaged with us on the same subject. In addition, we held 3 national CPD sessions with a total number of 281 attendees. Further information on engagement through our single point of contact (SPOC) network is included under objective 7.1 below.

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Stakeholder survey

We remain committed to building meaningful relationships with social work organisations to achieve our objectives. As part of our approach, we distributed a short survey to 328 stakeholder organisations, which included employers of social work, education and training providers, regulators, and national organisations. In total, 80 organisations (24%) completed the survey. The executive leadership team (ELT) reviewed the findings in Q4.

Social Work Week

We launched our Social Work Week 2025 expression of interest process (EOI) in November, inviting workshop ideas from the sector aligned to specific themes. Communication activity was delivered throughout the remainder of Q3 to promote this opportunity. The EOI process closed on 31 December, with 59 EOIs submitted. January’s policy committee had a first look at the draft proposal alongside our working group, which includes representatives from our national advisory forum.

Social work survey

As part of our commitment to transparency and improving how we deliver regulation, we published [the results of our social worker survey](#) in December. The survey will be used as a benchmark to look at how our work contributes to changing current perceptions of regulation, professional standards, and the role of social workers in society.

The profile of our board

Following the substantive appointment of Dr Andrew McCulloch as chair of our Board, we published [a blog](#) focused on his experience, the role of the Social Work England Board and the challenges he wishes to address to bring about change in the profession for those who have social work in their lives. We also supported the Department for Education (DfE) to promote non-executive director recruitment activity across both owned and earned communication channels.

Objective 2.1: Publish our research findings, thematic reviews and analysis of the data we have to increase openness and transparency, and support wider learning, as part of our ongoing communication and engagement

Policy research

We have successfully commissioned a provider to deliver a bespoke piece of research on the concept of seriousness and its application in FtP proceedings. We have also invited bids for 2 smaller pieces of research on the use of AI in social work and education. Work will begin on these areas of research in Q4, and we will look to commission a further piece of mapping work on the education landscape for practice education.

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Objective 3.1: Inform, influence and support the development of government reform for social care and social work.

Children’s social care reform

We continued to explore the potential scope of professional regulation of the children’s residential care homes workforce. We worked closely with key sector leaders, including the DfE and Ofsted to finalise our proposal, which was submitted to the DfE in December 2024. We are also continuing discussions with the DfE on the next steps within broader children social care reform agendas, including upcoming consultations.

Workforce roundtable

Following the workforce roundtable in September, we published a blog and supporting videos. In November, we also hosted an event at the National Children and Adult Services Conference, focused on workforce challenges facing the social work profession, as part of our ongoing dialogue with the sector to help shape our work in this important area.

Objective 3.2: Develop a model of regulating specialist and advanced practice, with the potential for annotations to a social worker’s registration status.

We have started scoping work on the regulation of practice education, including options for deepening our understanding of this workforce and their education and training. As per objective 2.1, we will commission an independent provider in Q4 to map this education landscape to help inform our next steps.

Objective 3.3: Learn more about how social workers use continuing professional development (CPD) and review our related requirements for how social workers demonstrate that they meet our professional standards.

During Q3, we analysed the public survey that we launched in Q2, which received 1,058 responses. We used early findings from the survey to inform workshops with social workers, further information can be found under objective 5.1.

We will now work to identify themes across the different strands of the CPD review project. We are preparing to consult on our renewals process in Q4, see objective 5.1 for more detail on this.

Objective 4.1: Develop our approach to inspections, reapprovals and quality assurance for education and training courses that prepare social workers for specialist practice, including approved mental health professionals and best interest assessors.

Work is progressing to develop our approach to inspection of Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Best Interest Assessor (BIA) courses. Workshops and induction training were completed for new inspectors with AMHP and BIA experience in Q3, with further training planned for March 2025. We will also be consulting with external stakeholders,

including employers and education providers, to help shape the model in early 2025. The first BIA inspection is expected to take place in September 2025, with AMHP inspections to commence following this.

Objective 4.2: Review learning from our inspections of social work courses and conduct an initial review of our education and training standards in preparation for a public consultation in 2025 to 2026.

We continue to consider the learning from our education quality assurance inspections to help shape our future strategic approach to education and training. Over Q4, we will engage with key stakeholders, including inspectors and course providers. We will share high-level findings from this work with the sector at the beginning of the next financial year.

We continue to prepare for a consultation on changes to our education and training standards, which will align with our other strategic plans and ambitions in the education space.

Objective 4.3: Launch our readiness for professional practice guidance, including knowledge, skills and behaviour statements developed with the sector, in partnership with the Education and Training Advisory Forum.

We published our Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours statements (KSBs) in October, which have been positively received by the sector. Work will continue, as part of our review of the education and training standards to draft the “readiness for professional practice” guidance, to bring the KSBs into regulation.

Work with the Education and Training Advisory Forum includes the review of the education and training standards and joint work to develop the guidance for readiness for professional practice.

Risks related to prevention and impact

CRR03: Education provision – *Our work in policy and standards does not lead to improvement in social work education*

We remain confident that our work to analyse and publish learning from our inspections, review the education and training standards, and assess the impact of our professional standard requirements for CPD, demonstrates an evidence-based approach to making informed, robust decisions for our policy and approach to social work education.

This risk remains stable. We expect to see the risk score reduce to our desired level by June 2026, as activities undertaken as part of this strategy begin to take effect.

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CRR06: External environment – *We fail to be ready to respond to strategic, political or workforce changes*

We continue to use our political monitoring tool and media monitoring to stay abreast of developing issues. Our expanded policy team has helped to build further capacity for systematic environmental scanning through weekly policy briefings for internal use and for our Board.

We are also reviewing our approach to regulatory risk. We are drawing best practice, as well as learning lessons, from other regulators in health and social care and beyond. We recently agreed to use our Insight Hub as a forum to identify, monitor and propose mitigations for regulatory risks, ensuring we are best prepared to monitor the external regulatory landscape more systematically.

This risk remains stable and within our risk appetite.

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Strategic theme: Regulation and protection

Registration and Advice

Objective 5.1: Review our approach to registration renewal and consider whether existing arrangements offer the right balance between public protection, public confidence in the profession, and efficiency.

We have been preparing for workshops with social workers as part of our Registration Renewal and Reimagining CPD project, as mentioned under objective 3.3. We analysed the qualitative responses from an initial public survey and used the results to inform our approach and discussion topics to 2 workshops held in November 2024. We obtained feedback directly from social workers about our current approach to renewals and CPD.

We sent a renewals and CPD survey to employers in early December via our regional engagement leads to our SPOC network and other employer networks. The survey remains open. We will provide a summary of the findings of this survey in due course.

Following an internal review of our regulations and the registration rules, which we carried out in October 2024, we formed an internal steering group with colleagues from policy, legal, communications and equality, diversity and inclusion. The steering group will focus on developing recommendations for any potential changes to the registration rules which we will need to consult on publicly.

Fitness to practise

Objective 6.1: Review the options for bringing aspects of our fitness to practise advocacy in-house, to improve timeliness and reduce cost.

We have reviewed our in-house advocacy options. We have recruited a paralegal and a part-time lawyer, which gives some additional capacity to progress this work. We are currently developing a project plan to be implemented over the course of the next financial year. We have outlined the new posts required and identified an appropriate budget, with the intention to recruit into new in-house advocacy roles during 25-26. A new leadership team across triage and investigations will be in place by February 2025, creating more capacity to move this project forward.

Objective 6.2: Explore alternative options for disposing of cases referred for a hearing and review the further use of options available in our legislation to support more efficient hearings processes.

We are continuing our 2-person panel pilot. At the end of Q4 we will review the findings and consider our next steps.

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Progress on identifying possible approaches to disposing of cases for a hearing has been delayed due to vacancies and capacity challenges in the FtP leadership team. Further work will commence in Q4, starting with an internal workshop to consider the research we have undertaken.

Objective 6.3: Apply learning to improve the timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of our triage, investigations, and case examiner processes, with a focus on early engagement with social workers.

Our plans for addressing timeliness are impacted by gaps in management of our triage and investigation teams. A full management team will be in place from February 2025. We are providing some interim support to help teams ensure the quality of case progression and decision making, whilst identifying opportunities to improve timeliness. Additional support has also been provided by Capsticks in Q3.

Our ability to take forward some development and improvement activities has been constrained due to limited FtP leadership capacity in Q1 and Q2. We continue to focus on effective case progression and improvements to support early engagement, such as improved submissions forms for social workers.

Objective 7.1: Develop our single point of contact network and explore local resolution pathways

We are using Tractivity to capture any engagement related to fitness to practise, track the number of engagements and capture insight gathered from the engagement. Regional engagement leads continue to offer opportunities to our SPOC network to engage about fitness to practise. During Q3, there were 56 FtP engagement activities, 3 national FtP sessions (90 attendees) and 14 regional FtP sessions (560 attendees). These sessions were focused on increasing understanding of our FtP process, with specific content and case studies based around ‘dishonesty’, as a key theme.

We are planning to hold 4 SPOC forums in 2025, with additional regional forums to also be established. We are also reviewing the SPOC information pack, and we will include an update to the guidance on disclosing family court documentation.

Risks related to regulation and protection

CRR07: Registration demand – *We are unable to meet registration demand and process renewals and applications to join the Register within reasonable timescales with existing resources*

This risk remains stable. The lean resourcing of the registration team can make it challenging to balance the different workstreams and meet our KPI targets. We have now concluded the renewals cycle for 24-25 and we have continued to meet our targets, as detailed below. There

are 2 vacancies in the registration and advice team, with interviews scheduled for January 2025.

We anticipate a reduction in this risk score by the end of 25-26, after reviewing our approach to registration renewal in 25-26 and responding to our findings.

CRR10: Timeliness and quality within triage and investigations – *We cannot achieve quality and timeliness within triage and investigations*

We remain confident that decision-making is high-quality, proportionate and effective. In Q3, timeliness in triage has continued to be impacted by challenges in leadership resource and our careful management of concerns that reference family court proceedings. Our newly appointed FtP legal team members have been assisting with triage case progression and decision making. During Q4, we plan to increase capacity within the triage service.

Whilst we are taking less time to investigate cases, the median age of the investigation caseload is increasing. This reflects the increased time cases are taking at triage, and several long-standing investigations that are taking time to resolve. We will be developing plans to mitigate risks relating to quality and timeliness in investigations during 25-26.

We will be undertaking a deep dive review of the risks around quality and timeliness with ARAC in March 2025.

CRR30: Financial resources – *We are unable to secure the uplift in financial resources that we need to achieve efficient and timely delivery of all our regulatory functions (notably hearings)*

Securing efficiencies in our fitness to practise function is one of the key mitigations for this risk, as set out under objectives 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 above. Challenges in progressing these objectives has continued to impact the effectiveness of this mitigation in the short term. Other mitigations continue to be progressed, including budget planning for future years in consultation with the Department for Education. The risk score remains stable but is not yet within risk appetite.

CRR20: Misjudged decisions – *We seriously misjudge a decision we make in exercising our regulatory responsibilities*

This risk remains stable and is within risk appetite. We continue to undertake activities across our regulatory services, and through our quality assurance activities, to mitigate against misjudged decisions where possible and consolidate our position. We ran targeted training for legal advisers in December 2024 with further training for FtP panel members planned for Q4. We are progressing a performance review framework for our case examiners, which will further support our assurance activities. We continue to update several pieces of guidance to ensure there is clarity and build in learning.

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Strategic theme: Delivery and improvement

For objectives 8 and 10 in our strategy for 2023 to 2026, we have no specific objectives in our business plan for 24-25. Below is a summary of our activity in Q1 towards achieving these 2 strategic objectives.

Objective 8: Further develop our digital channels and services, to ensure they are inclusive and focused on user experience

In Q3, we delivered an organisation-wide survey on accessibility. We are currently analysing the results to see what further work might need to take place. We delivered a detailed training session to our policy team. We also delivered a ‘You Said, We Did’ report for the Open University on how we used parts of their *Witness to Harm* findings research to inform website improvements.

We selected a specialist organisation, MH&A, to work with us in Q4 to review our digital, data and technology architecture, resourcing and help us develop our future strategy. The review will conclude by the end of March.

Objective 10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money

We shared the full value for money evaluation report with the Board. We are working on a series of related documents setting out aspects of value for money in more detail, including our efficiency plan.

We continue to develop our core digital systems in line with the priorities set by our digital services board, including development of a system for EQA and ability to manage email communication within Forge. In Q3, we delivered a suite of improvements to the registration renewals process that supported a smooth renewals process.

Security of our data and digital services is an important activity that we look to continuously improve. To support this, we have procured a new third-party security service, which will enable us to implement a Security Operations Centre (SoC) that will provide 24/7 monitoring of our digital services estate and continue regular independent penetration testing.

Objective 9.1: Enhance our leadership and management development offer and review our behaviour framework to support this.

Our management development workshops have continued as planned with good attendance. We have held 29 workshops this financial year, with 4 of these in Q3. There are 2 further topics planned for Q4: *Keeping us safe at work* and *Resolution*. We are now preparing an

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evaluation of the first full programme and preparing for the next cohort of managers. This will include new managers and a small number who were unable to attend previous workshops.

Objective 9.2: Review our ways of working to ensure they recognise and reinforce behaviours that support our organisational culture and values.

The Employee Experience Project started their work with us on our culture and behaviours. During Q3, they met with representative focus groups from across the organisation. These included ELT, assistant directors, heads, line managers and other colleagues. A survey was also conducted, where all employees had the opportunity to respond. The sessions allowed for the Employee Experience Project to explore our current and desired culture and start building our behaviours framework and recommendations for future leadership development. Initial feedback and proposals will be shared with the leadership team in January 2025. The project is on track for completion by the end of Q4.

Risks related to Delivery and Improvement

CRR11: Our people capability and capacity – *We do not have the capacity and resources, skills sets, talent development and sustainable people strategy that we need to effectively deliver our business and strategic objectives*

CRR12: Cultural shift – *We continue to evolve and develop as an organisation, we inadvertently lose aspects of our culture that we consider to be positive and important*

Objectives 9.1 and 9.2 in our business plan are intended to mitigate these risks. The activity is progressing and is on track. At an organisational level, our retention rate has remained stable during Q3 and is well above the target level of 80%, although there is more variability at team level. Our rolling 12-month sickness absence rates have continued to fall during this quarter.

Based on our overall people picture, these risks are stable. There has been minor slippage on two specific risk mitigations - our review of recruitment (due March 2025) and agreeing a definition of our ideal culture (due in December 2024; a draft will be discussed by ELT in January 2025).

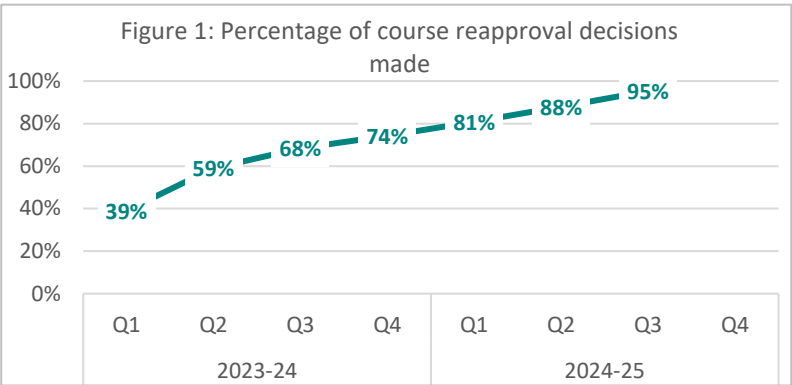
4. Performance data 01 October to 31 December 2024

Strategic theme: Prevention and impact

KPI: Percentage of course reapproval decisions made

Table 3: Education and training key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3 target	Q3
EQA1	Percentage of course reapproval decisions made	100% by March 2025	96%	95%



By the end of Q3, we had made 95% of reapproval decisions. Whilst this is slightly below our quarterly target of 96%, we remain confident of completing all course reapprovals by the end of March 2025 and meeting the 100% target. During the quarter, we commenced 11 inspections, in which we considered 11 courses for reapproval and 6 for approval. We made re-approval decisions for 19 courses in Q3.

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Strategic theme: Regulation and protection

Registration and Advice

Time taken to approve registration and restoration applications

Table 4: Registration and restoration applications

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG1	Time taken to approve UK registration applications	≤ 10 working days	5	3
REG2	Time taken to approve restoration applications	≤ 20 working days	4	4



We met our Q3 targets for approving UK registration applications and restoration applications. During the quarter, we received 1,156 applications from people who qualified in the UK, compared to 1,602 applications in Q3 23-24. Applications peaked in September; we continue to work with education providers to understand demand.

We have maintained our focus on timeliness for assessing applications from people who qualified overseas. The median time to assess applications has continued to decrease and stabilise: 19 working days in October, 15 working days in November, and 21 working days in December. This reflects improved operational effectiveness, but also that we received fewer applications in Q3 (348) compared to Q3 23-24 (382).

2024 Renewal cycle

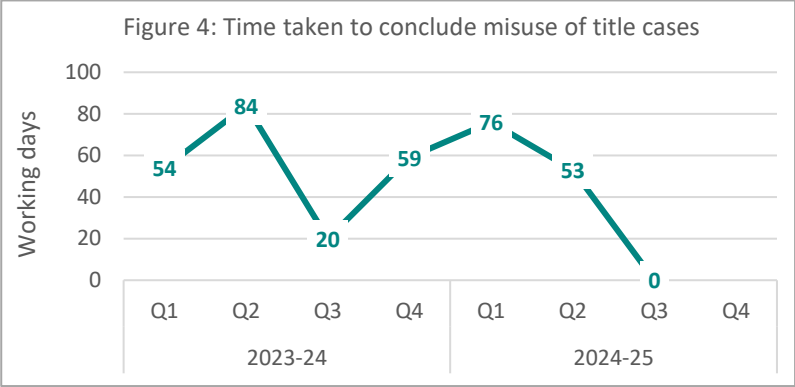
The work above is also balanced alongside supporting the annual renewal of social workers which opened on 1 September and closed on 30 November. It was a successful renewals cycle, and further information relating to renewal outcomes was published our website: [Renewal and CPD Reports](#).

In Q3, we received 673 applications to restore to the register compared to 706 applications in Q3 23-24. The assessment of these applications remains within target, at 4 working days, compared to Q3 23-24 of 2 working days. The profile of restoration applications has changed this year, with fewer applications received during October and November compared to the previous year, and slightly more applications to restore in December (526 compared to 495 in December 2023).

Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases

Table 5: Misuse of title key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG3	Time taken to conclude misuse of title cases	≤ 60 working days	0 ³	34



This is the first year that we have had a target for the time taken to conclude misuse of title cases. The median time to conclude cases was 5 working days in October, 24 working days in November and 0 working days in December, compared to 53, 47 and 0 working days in the same period last year.

The 0 working days this December is because of a process change in December 2023 following the end of renewals, where we fast track any misuse of title cases that happened as a result of people practising for a small period of time when their registration lapsed following the end of the renewal period.

Proportionally, we see fewer misuse of title cases from individuals who continued to practise because they were unaware that their registration had lapsed. Cases raised by members of the public tend to be more complex to investigate and take longer to conclude.

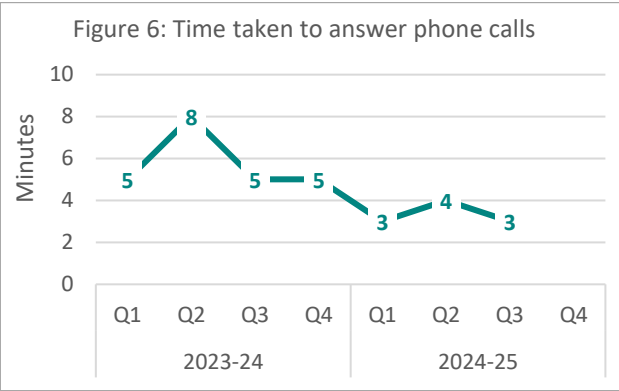
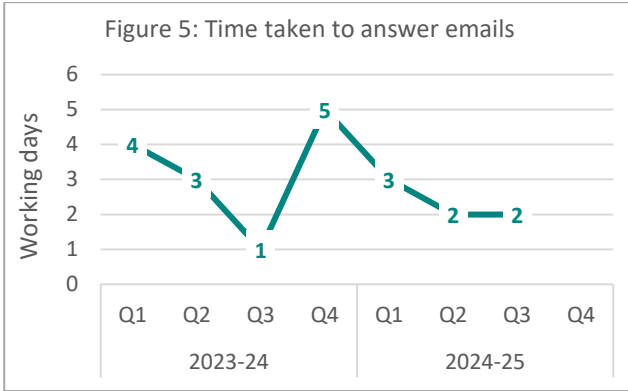
We have discussed with the Board what may be an effective measurement of performance for this small number of complex cases for the next business year.

Time taken to answer emails and phone calls

Table 6: Phone call and email key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
REG4	Time taken to answer emails	≤ 5 working days	2	2
REG5	Time taken to answer phone calls	≤ 8 minutes	3	3

³ This reflects cases that were closed within the same day as they were opened.



We continue to meet our targets for answering emails and phone calls. We received 12,696 phone calls during Q3 compared to 14,645 in the equivalent period last year. We received 11,922 emails during Q3, compared to 14,078 emails received in Q3 23-24.

We operated a scaled back service on Saturday 30 November to support social workers who needed support on the last day of renewals.

Fitness to practise

Overview of the fitness to practise process

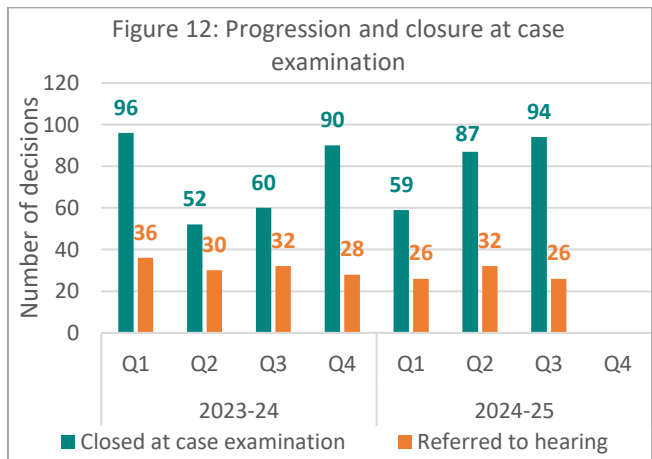
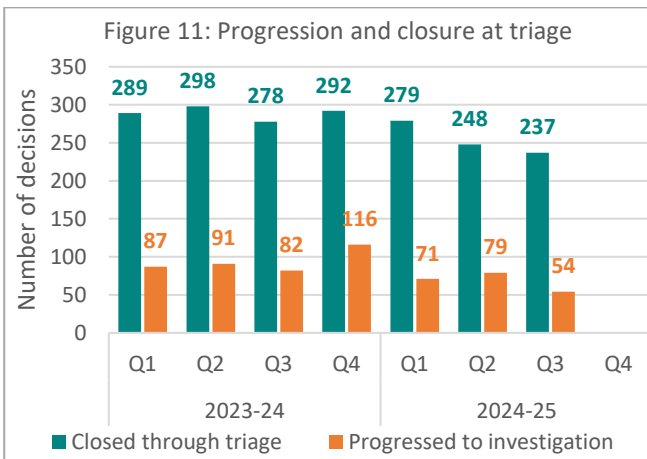
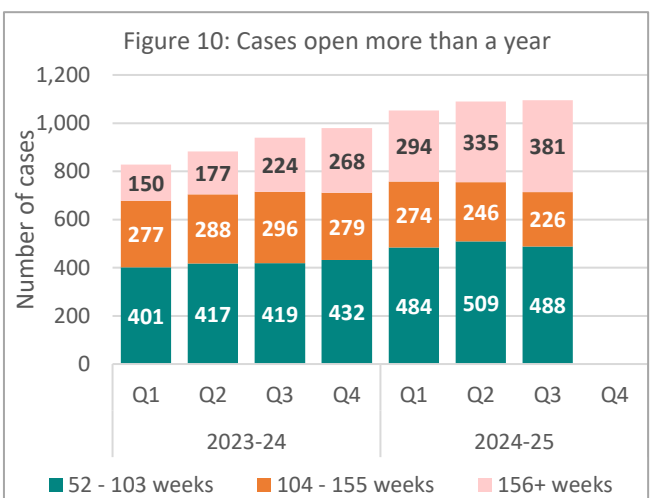
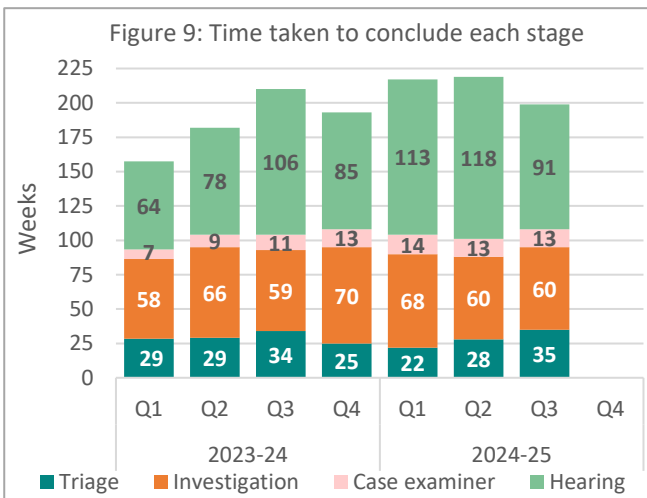
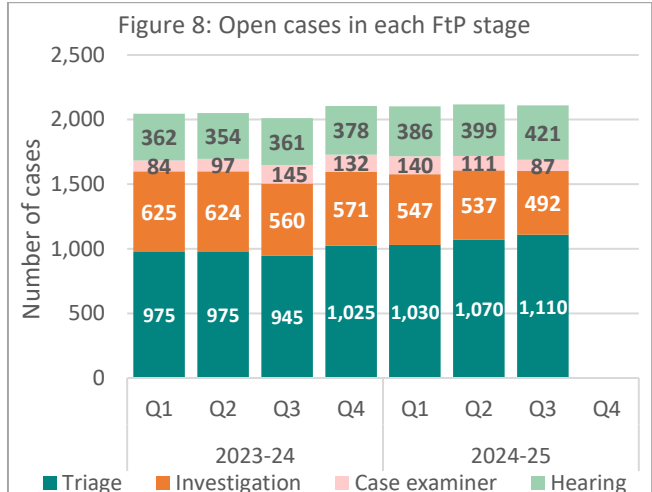
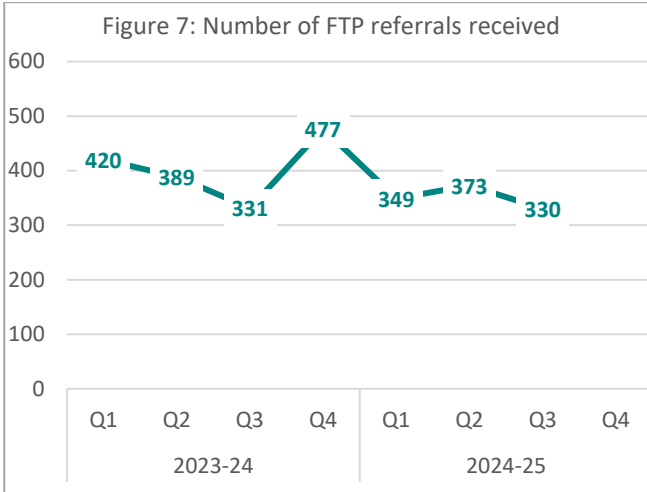
Triage performance continues to be very challenging. The number of open cases at triage (figure 8), and the time taken to conclude them (figure 9), has continued to increase during Q3. Our performance has been impacted by capacity issues in both the staffing and management of the service. We are addressing these issues, as discussed under objective 6.3 and risk CRR10, with short-term plans in place to progress triage cases during Q4. We will also be developing longer-term plans to address performance trends seen over the past 12 months with our new management team. The percentage of cases closed at triage remains high (81%), as they do not meet the threshold for investigation (figure 11).

We have seen a falling number of open investigation cases over the last 12 months (figure 8) and a reduction in the time taken to complete investigations (figure 9).

The number of cases at case examiner stage has decreased from 111 in Q2 to 87 in Q3 (figure 8). We concluded 120 cases at the case examiner stage in Q3, and only 26 of these cases progressed to hearing (figure 12). Our case throughput has improved as staffing levels remain at full establishment.

The hearings caseload (figure 8) will continue to rise as budget constraints affect the number of hearings we are able to afford. We continue to optimise listing of hearings in Q4. Availability of parties (social workers, complainants and/or witnesses) remains the greatest barrier to increasing listings for the final quarter of the year.

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FTP internal quality standards

We have received one appeal by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) in relation to a final hearing decision during Q3, and this remains ongoing. We also received one appeal by a registrant in relation to a final order review meeting during Q3. We have not dealt with any applications for judicial review.

Alongside this, we do continue to receive learning points from the PSA relating to cases they have considered through their section 29 process. This process allows for the PSA to review final FtP panel decisions and disseminate any learning identified. We review these learning points and share internally and with our partners. Our Decision Review Group continues to review decisions from across the different stages of the fitness to practise process and met twice in Q3. Our internal quality score for Q3 is 97%.

In Q3, our legal team received 4 new applications to review a case examiner decision using the powers given to us in our revised legal framework, and we had 5 applications ongoing. Of these applications:

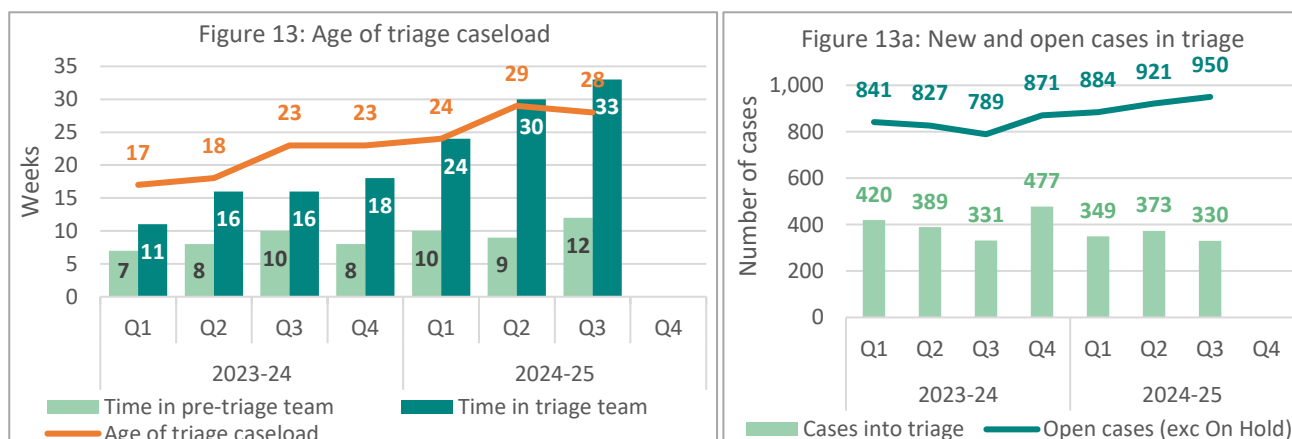
- One was determined ineligible for review
- 4 were considered at stage 1 of the process, where 2 were closed and 2 progressed to stage 2
- 3 await a stage 1 decision
- 2 applications were referred to the case examiners for a fresh decision

At the end of Q3, 4 applications remain ongoing.

Age of triage caseload

Table 7: Triage and investigations key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3 target	Q3
FTP1	Age of triage caseload	≤ 14 weeks by March 2025	16	28



Despite a small decrease in Q3, the age of triage cases remains high: 28 weeks in Q3 24-25, compared to 23 weeks in Q3 23-24. As discussed under the overview of FtP, the number of open cases (figure13a), and the time taken to conclude them (figure 13b), has continued to increase during Q3. Our performance in triage has been impacted by capacity issues in both the staffing and management of the service, as discussed under objective 6.3 and risk CRR10.

The new assistant director joined in Q3, and the new head of service will join at the start of Q4. We have recruited 2 new triage managers, who will be in post by February 2025, as well new triage team members. These new appointments will support us to address challenges in performance created by staffing and capacity issues.

In Q3, we concluded 291 cases in triage (figure 13b), 19% of which were progressed for investigation. We continue to close most of our cases at the triage stage (81%), as they do not meet the threshold for investigation (table 7a).

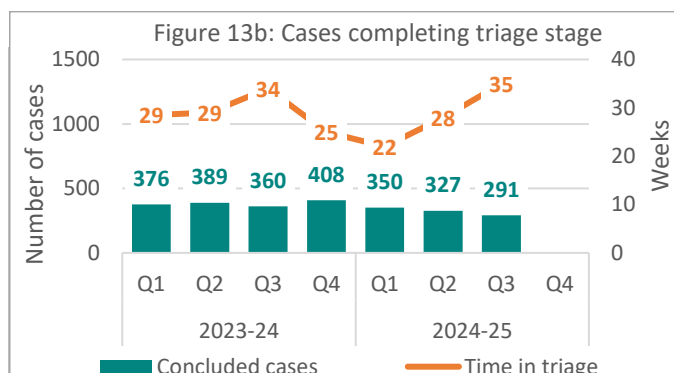
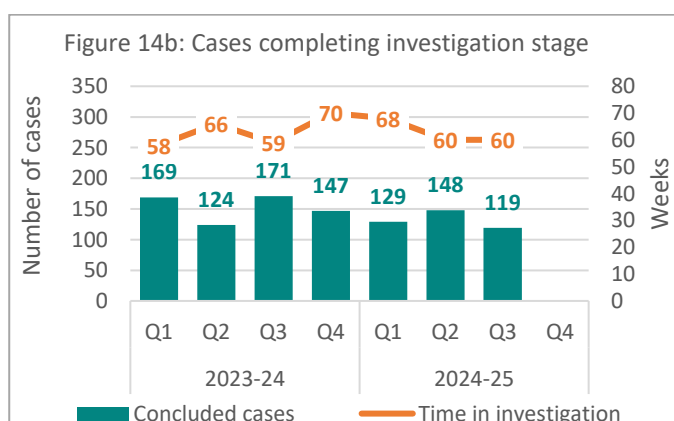
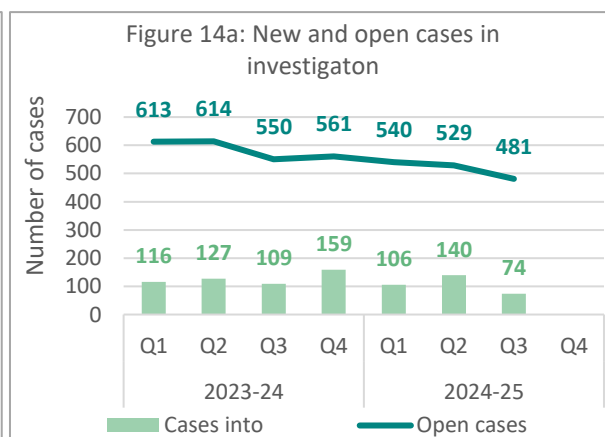
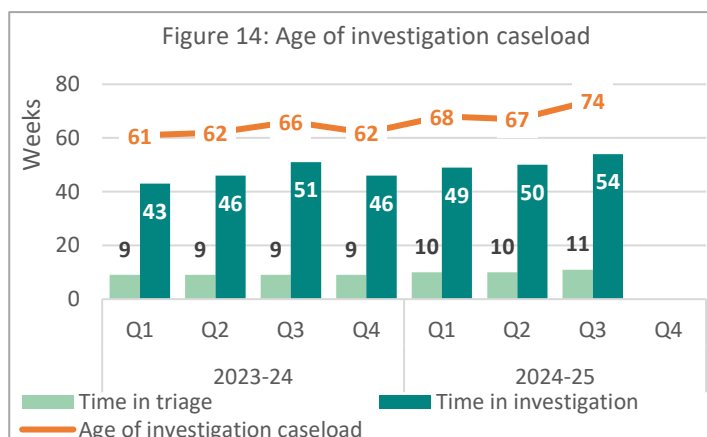


Table 7a: Triage decisions					
FY	Q	Progressed		Closed	
2023-24	Q1	87	23%	289	77%
	Q2	91	23%	298	77%
	Q3	82	23%	278	77%
	Q4	116	28%	292	72%
2024-25	Q1	71	20%	279	80%
	Q2	79	24%	248	76%
	Q3	54	19%	237	81%
	Q4				

Age of investigation caseload

Table 8: Triage and investigations key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3 target	Q3
FTP2	Age of investigation caseload	≤ 54 weeks by March 2025	56	74



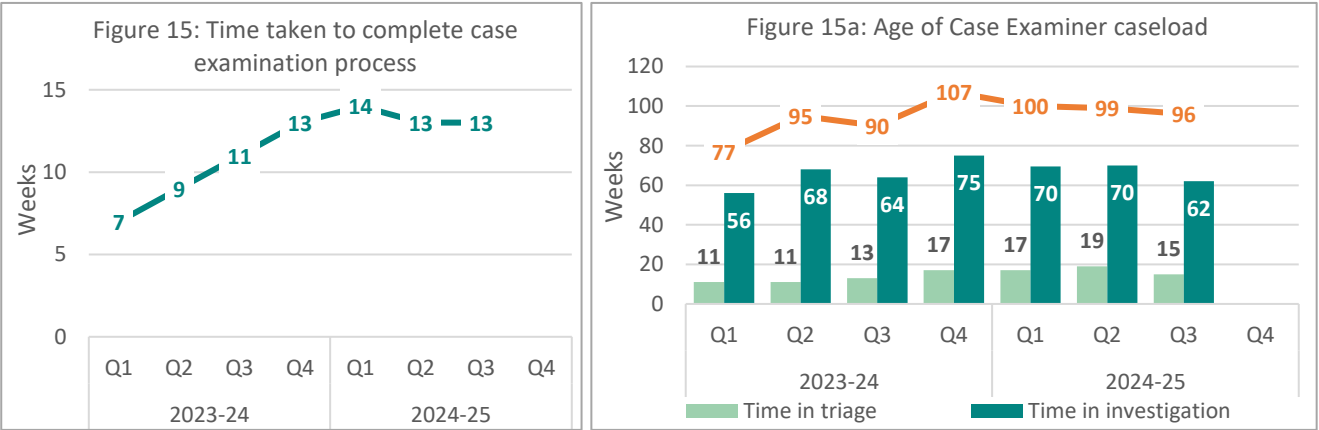
Over the last 12 months, we have seen a reducing number of open investigation cases (figure 14a) and a reduction in the time taken to complete investigations (figure 14b). At the same time the median age of our investigation caseload has increased to 74 weeks, compared to 66 weeks in Q3 23-24. – This reflects both the time cases are taking to conclude at triage, and several long-standing investigations that are taking time to resolve.

Performance in investigations during Q3 has also been impacted by capacity issues in both the staffing and management of the service, as detailed previously. We will have a new investigation management team in place in Q4, although we are still currently recruiting for both investigators and investigations leads.

Time taken to complete case examination process

Table 9: Case examination key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP3	Time taken to complete case examination process	≤ 12 weeks	13	13



In Q3, the time taken to complete the case examination process remained just above our target at 13 weeks Q1 23-24 (figure 15). Our performance continues to be affected by several cases (approximately 15%) awaiting support from our legal team. This is mainly associated with the use of information relating to the family court.

We continue to share learning on cases that are adjourned back to investigations from case examiners. We will continue to prioritise these cases for a decision once they are returned to the case examiners from investigations.

We have delivered training to the investigations team on the revised submission form for social workers to complete, prior to their case being referred to the case examiners. This will assist case examiners to make more effective and efficient decisions.

Table 9a: Number of open cases at case examination stage	2023-24				2024-25			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	84	97	145	132	140	111	87	

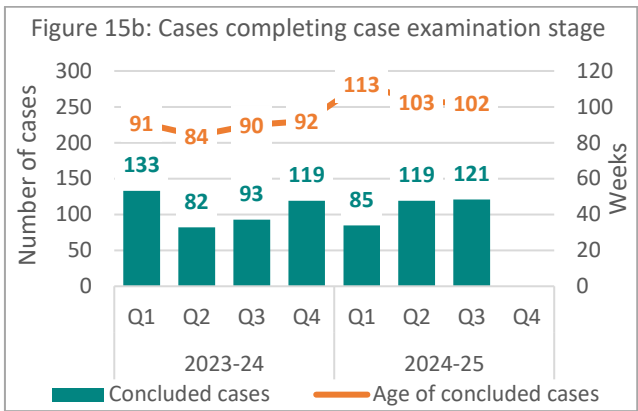


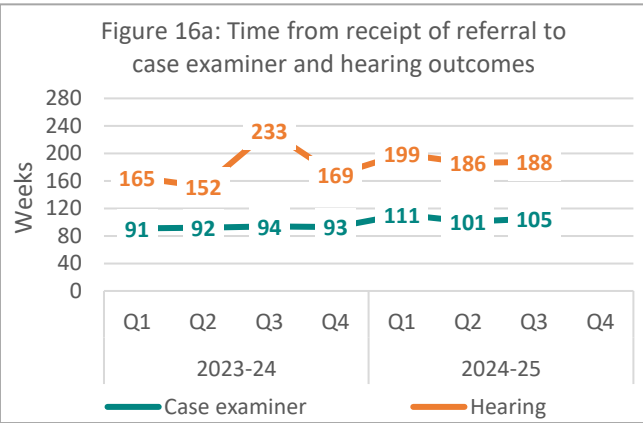
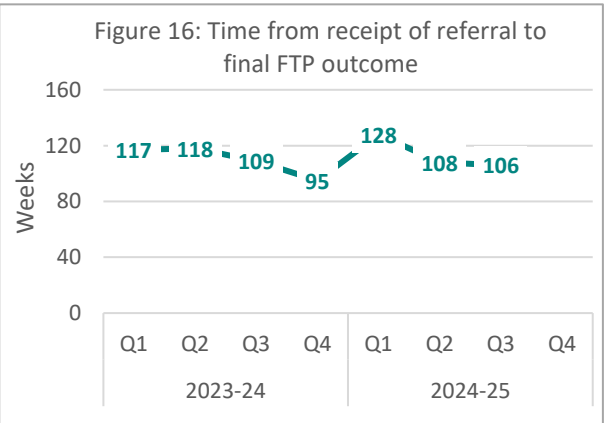
Table 9b: Case examiner decisions							
FY	Q	Closed		Accepted Disposal		Referred to hearing	
2023-24	Q1	75	56%	21	16%	36	27%
	Q2	30	37%	22	27%	30	37%
	Q3	49	53%	11	12%	32	35%
	Q4	55	47%	35	30%	28	24%
2024-25	Q1	34	40%	25	29%	26	31%
	Q2	53	45%	34	29%	32	27%
	Q3	63	52%	31	26%	26	21%
	Q4						

During Q3, we concluded 121 cases at the case examination stage. Of these, 52% of cases were closed with no impairment, 26% were closed through accepted disposal and 21% were referred to a hearing (table 9b). We continue to explore how we can optimise accepted disposal.

Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome

Table 10: Final FtP outcome key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP4	Time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome	Monitor (weeks)	106	111



The time from receipt of referral to final FTP outcome has reduced to 106 weeks (figure 16). The time taken to conclude cases at case examination stage increased to 105 weeks in Q3 from 101 weeks in Q2. This was primarily the result of a cohort of some older cases being progressed for a decision. Our ability to conclude only a small number of final hearings within the budget available continues to affect the time taken to conclude cases at the hearing stage, which has increased from 118 weeks in Q2 to 125 weeks in Q3 (figure 16c).

Table 10a: Number of open cases at hearing stage	2023-24				2024-25			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	362	354	361	378	386	399	421	

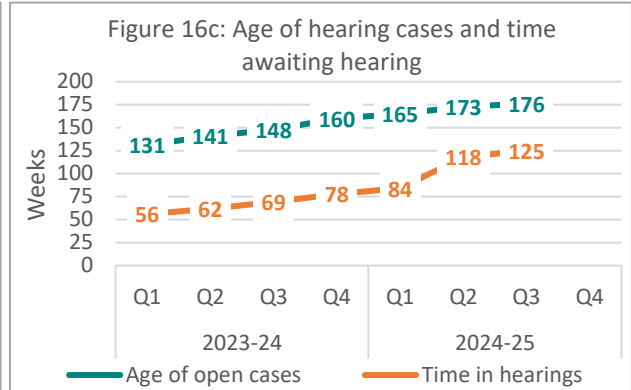
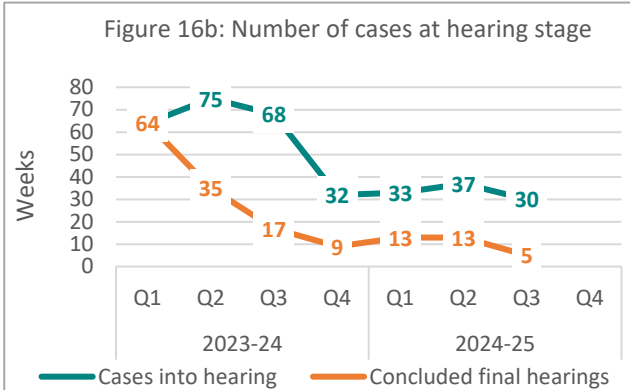


Table 10b: Hearing outcomes	2023-24				2024-25			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
No impairment, no further action	13	13	4	0	4	1	1	
No impairment, advice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
No impairment, warning	6	2	3	0	2	0	0	
Impaired, no further action	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Impaired, advice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Impaired, warning order	7	3	0	1	0	0	0	
Impaired, conditions of practice order	2	3	1	1	2	1	0	
Impaired, suspension order	20	10	3	4	3	3	0	
Impaired, removal order	14	4	6	3	2	8	4	

We held 5 final hearings during Q3, as well as undertaking 26 reviews of final orders. There are currently 421 cases awaiting a hearing (table 10a). As noted above, we continue to optimise listing of hearings in Q4.

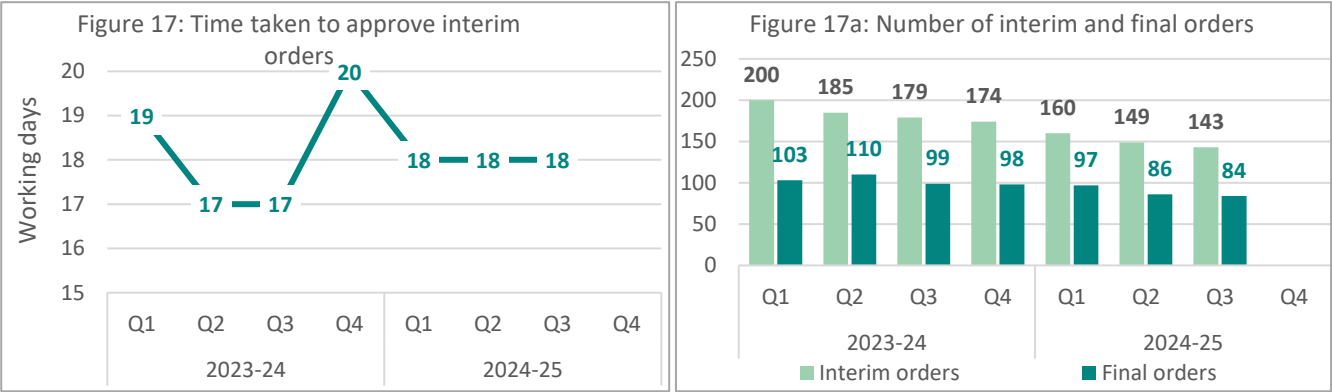
In March 2024, we committed to holding 34 final hearings across 24-25. All 34 of those final hearings have either concluded or been scheduled in Q4. In September, following the mid-year review of budgets, we committed to holding a further 47 final hearing across Q3 and Q4. To date, 33 additional final hearings have either concluded or been scheduled for Q4, which we expect to increase to nearer 40 by end of Q4. The availability of participants, including social workers and witnesses, and the availability of legal resource remain the greatest barriers to listing at pace. Alongside our final hearing activity, we have progressed investigations on over 100 other cases that are awaiting a final hearing.

We continue to update parties about the status of their case, as well as providing updates to stakeholders.

Time taken to approve interim orders

Table 11: Interim orders key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
FTP5	Time taken to approve interim orders	≤ 20 working days	18	18



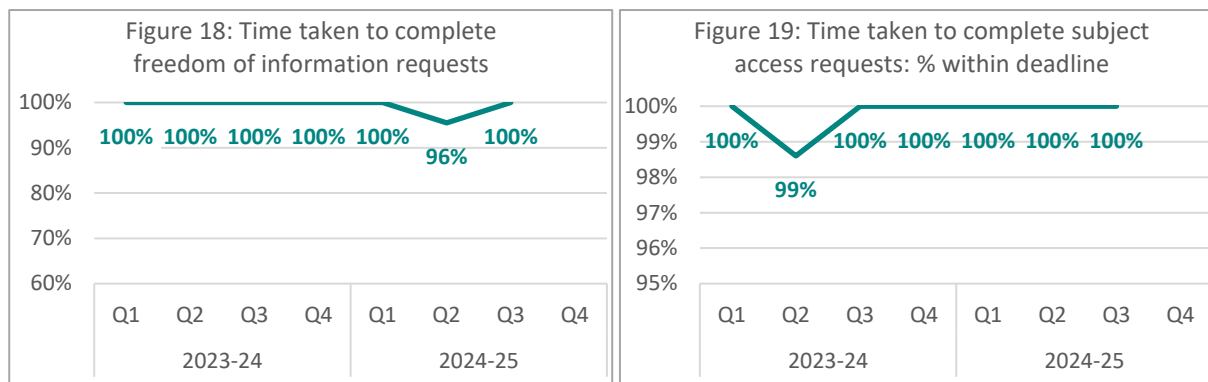
We met our target for time taken to approve interim orders. In Q3, we held 104 mandatory hearings, including 7 interim order applications, 71 interim order reviews, and 26 final order reviews. All statutory review timescales were met.

Strategic theme: Delivery and improvement

Information governance

Table 12: Information governance key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
IG1	Time taken to complete FOI requests	≥ 90% within deadline	100%	99%
IG2	Time taken to complete subject access requests	≥ 90% within deadline	100%	100%

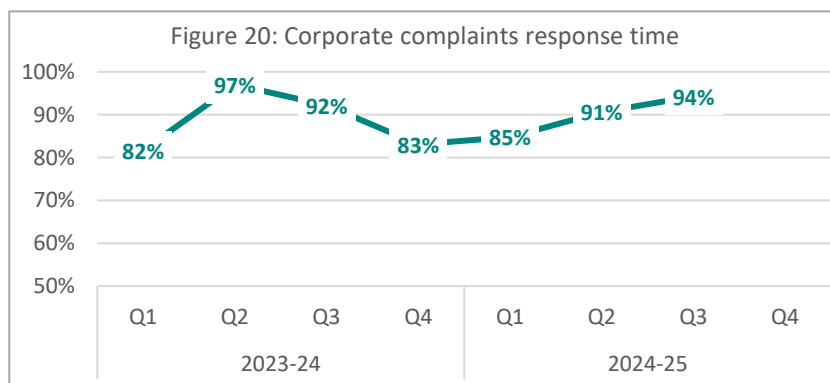


All deadlines were met for both subject access requests and freedom of information requests. We remain above our 90% target for Q3.

Corporate complaints response time

Table 13: Corporate complaints key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
C1	Corporate complaints response time	≥ 80% within 20 working days	94%	90%

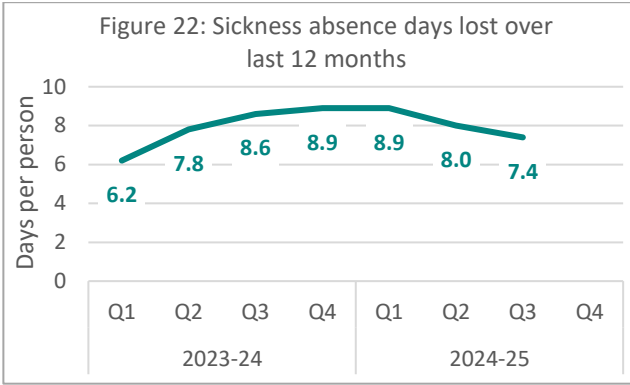
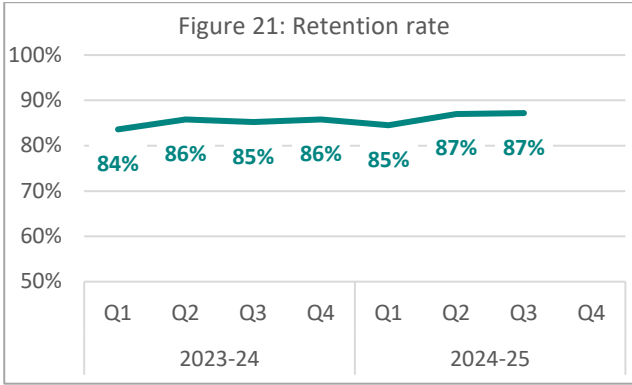


We increased our target for corporate complaints response time from 70% in 23-24 to 80% in 24-25. We continue to meet this target in Q3.

People

Table 14: People key performance indicators

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3
P1	Retention rate	≥ 80%	87%
P2	Sickness absence over last 12 months	8.1 days	7.4



Our retention rate remains at 87%, this remains above our target of 80% and is 2 percentage points higher than Q3 in 23-24. We will continue to focus on retention and areas where we expect turnover, to plan and mitigate risk.

In Q3, we saw 7.4 days of sickness absence per person over the last 12 months, within our target of 8.1 days. This represents a reduction of 0.6 days from Q2 and reduction of 1.2 sickness absence days compared to Q3 in 23-24. We continue to have a small number of long-term sickness cases, which are being managed with the support of the people business partners.

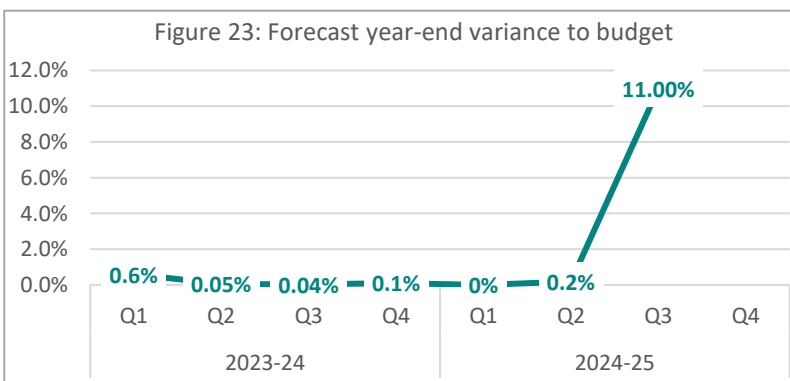
Absence and retention remain part of our monthly business partner discussions, allowing us to understand individual cases, the impact on teams and discuss mitigations with leaders and managers to support delivery of objectives.

A comprehensive review of our absence position is underway and will consider further ways to improve our absence management. This will conclude in spring 2025.

Forecast year-end variance to budget

Table 15: Finance key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3
FIN1	Forecast year-end variance to budget	+/- 1.5%	11%



1
2
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12
13

Our year-to-date expenditure is £2m below budget, predominantly due to the change in accounting policy for legal fees and a higher-than-expected staff vacancy rate in the early part of the year, which led to an underspend on our payroll budget.

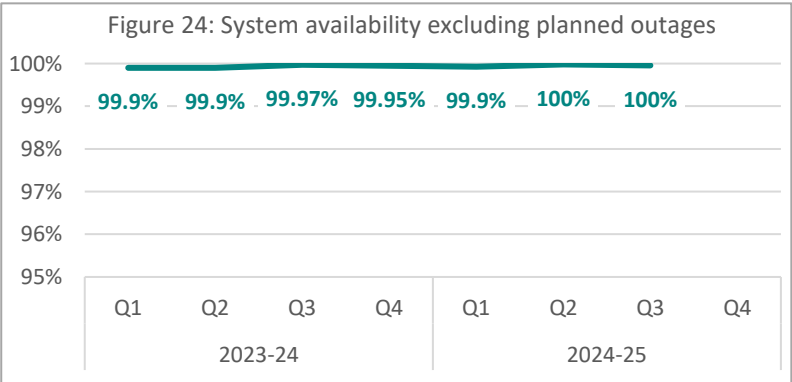
The sharp increase in forecast year-end variance to budget in Q3 reflects difficulties we have experienced in securing the legal capacity and the availability of witnesses needed to accelerate the number of cases originally planned. To date, 33 additional final hearings have either concluded or been scheduled for Q4, which we expect to increase to nearer 40 by end of Q4, and we have also sped up the progression of over 100 FtP cases awaiting a hearing. We are exploring additional options to enable faster progression of FtP cases, including additional temporary capacity for the triage team.

We are also using some of the underspend on our payroll budget to fund the review of our digital, data and technology architecture, resourcing and strategy.

System availability

Table 16: IT key performance indicator

ID	KPI Description	Target	Q3	YTD
IT1	System availability excluding planned outages	≥ 99%	100%	100%



We continue to exceed our target for system availability. This was achieved during a time of high system activity in support of the registration renewal process.

Annex A

Statistical data 2024-25

Education and training			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of concerns received	2024-25		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1			
	2023-24		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of re-approval inspections started	2024-25		5	7	5	13	3	0	3	8	0			
	2023-24		11	16	13	11	0	0	6	7	6	5	2	10
Re-approval decisions	Number completed	2024-25	6	5	6	7	2	9	11	3	5			
		2023-24	3	2	12	21	7	21	8	6	10	0	11	5
	Number re-approved	2024-25	0	4	0	2	1	0	0	1	3			
		2023-24	1	0	0	1	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Number re-approved with conditions	2024-25	6	1	6	5	0	9	11	2	2			
		2023-24	2	2	12	20	4	14	8	6	10	0	11	2
	Number not re-approved	2024-25	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0			
		2023-24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Approval decisions	Number completed	2024-25	4	3	3	6	2	2	4	2	4			
		2023-24	3	0	6	10	3	2	0	1	6	0	1	3
	Number approved	2024-25	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0			
		2023-24	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Number approved with conditions	2024-25	3	0	3	5	1	2	4	2	4			
		2023-24	3	0	6	9	2	1	0	1	6	0	1	3
	Number not approved	2024-25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
		2023-24	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Registration			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of registered social workers		2024-25	103,000	103,133	103,353	104,270	105,025	105,814	106,395	105,625	103,893			
		2023-24	99,893	100,316	100,677	101,460	102,388	103,284	104,138	103,324	101,779	102,179	102,475	102,861
Number of social workers joining the register		2024-25	245	198	332	966	812	945	843	378	515			
		2023-24	437	468	504	822	989	985	1,130	368	726	414	312	400
Number of social workers leaving the register		2024-25	103	65	109	48	55	155	263	1,183	2,214			
		2023-24	112	43	124	37	58	85	273	1,185	2,286	7	12	14
Number of new registration applications received	All applications	2024-25	298	255	580	1,356	976	1,569	677	542	285			
		2023-24	535	725	694	1,333	1,230	1,321	999	648	337	442	367	468
	UK graduates	2024-25	139	122	451	1,221	858	1,442	535	431	190			
		2023-24	394	536	519	1,151	1064	1,184	863	517	222	335	246	325
	Overseas graduates	2024-25	159	133	129	135	118	127	142	111	95			
		2023-24	141	189	175	182	166	137	136	131	115	107	121	143
Median time taken to approve registration applications (working days)	All applications	2024-25	8	12	2	3	3	4	7	3	4			
		2023-24	4	6	4	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	5	3
	UK graduates	2024-25	2	2	1	2	2	4	6	2	3			
		2023-24	4	5	3	3	4	3	2	1	2	3	2	2
	Overseas graduates	2024-25	65	48	35	26	21	23	19	15	21			
		2023-24	52	55	55	56	54	54	51	58	56	62	74	75
Number of restoration applications received		2024-25	59	61	72	60	49	71	62	85	526			
		2023-24	79	85	95	81	65	76	82	129	495	119	76	88
Median time taken to approve restoration applications (working days)		2024-25	3	3	2	3	7	5	5	6	4			
		2023-24	14	7	3	1	9	2	2	1	2	4	8	5
Number of misuse of title cases opened		2024-25	9	4	10	4	3	6	11	7	25			
		2023-24	18	13	13	8	9	5	15	19	25	11	6	6

Registration		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of misuse of title cases closed	2024-25	14	7	5	12	8	8	1	9	18			
	2023-24	15	17	17	13	6	18	8	10	19	11	8	13
Median time taken to conclude misuse of title cases (working days)	2024-25	88	32	54	53	62	64	5	24	0			
	2023-24	59	64	42	69	61	114	53	47	0	49	44	74
Number of phone calls received	2024-25	1,455	1,400	1,473	1,782	1,793	2,670	3,381	5,107	4,208			
	2023-24	1,770	1,843	2,171	2,627	2,696	3,845	4,243	6,775	3,627	2,328	1,774	1,592
Median time taken to answer phone calls (minutes)	2024-25	3	3	3	3	3	6	3	2	8			
	2023-24	6	5	6	6	5	12	9	3	6	7	4	4
Number of emails received	2024-25	3,387	2,793	2,473	2,973	3,022	4,074	4,058	4,402	3,462			
	2023-24	1,643	1,850	1,977	2,057	2,557	4,376	4,481	6,109	3,488	3,474	3,297	5,695
Median time taken to answer emails (working days)	2024-25	4	1	5	3	4	2	1	2	2			
	2023-24	3	4	3	5	2	5	4	1	1	5	5	4

Continued professional development		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Percentage of social workers that have submitted at least one piece of CPD	2024-25	4%	5%	6%	7%	10%	17%	33%	96%	0.0%			
	2023-24	4%	5%	7%	10%	13%	20%	35%	96%	0.3%	1%	2%	3%
Percentage of social workers meeting all CPD requirements	2024-25	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%	11%	26%	96%	0.00%			
	2023-24	1%	2%	3%	4%	7%	14%	27%	96%	0.06%	0.2%	0.5%	1%
Total number of valid CPD items recorded (cumulative)	2024-25	6,406	8,272	10,146	13,337	20,066	36,212	72,695	219,318	316			
	2023-24	7,414	9,004	13,406	18,451	26,328	43,756	77,756	222,148	441	1,709	3,077	4,872

Fitness to practise		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of concerns received	2024-25	128	158	151	158	140	156	155	150	193			
	2023-24	141	142	155	146	156	146	170	202	147	222	147	123
Triage	Median age of pre-triage and triage caseload (weeks)	2024-25	22	22	24	27	28	29	29	28			
		2023-24	17	17	17	19	19	18	20	19	22	22	23

Fitness to practise			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Triage	Number of new pre-triage cases	2024-25	131	119	99	92	132	149	120	111	99			
		2023-24	123	151	146	138	144	107	101	136	94	214	154	109
	Number of open pre-triage cases	2024-25	269	283	290	272	299	343	378	385	413			
		2023-24	307	294	305	263	272	316	282	272	195	252	254	262
Triage	Percentage of cases closed at the pre-triage stage	2024-25	24%	25%	33%	15%	34%	31%	33%	26%	35%			
		2023-24	13%	21%	12%	22%	30%	16%	22%	17%	16%	20%	23%	22%
	Median time taken to complete pre-triage stage (weeks)	2024-25	6	6	5	11	6	7	8	7	7			
		2023-24	6	7	8	6	4	4	9	7	8	4	4	5
	Number of cases that progressed to triage	2024-25	96	82	63	93	71	72	57	78	47			
		2023-24	120	130	120	140	95	53	105	122	144	125	119	80
	Number open triage cases (excluding on hold cases)	2024-25	592	590	594	590	585	578	543	546	537			
		2023-24	490	527	536	590	583	511	531	511	594	566	598	609
	Percentage of cases closed at the triage stage	2024-25	71%	76%	70%	71%	69%	58%	85%	70%	60%			
		2023-24	70%	69%	74%	62%	66%	77%	82%	69%	53%	70%	58%	58%
Investigation	Median time taken to complete triage stage (weeks)	2024-25	21	26	27	32	20	31	30	30	22			
		2023-24	13	19	22	18	25	27	24	29	17	25	16	17
	Number of cases that progressed to investigation	2024-25	32	22	19	28	25	27	15	20	19			
		2023-24	26	32	31	31	35	27	17	42	24	42	43	32
	Number open investigation cases (excluding on hold cases)	2024-25	557	547	540	545	527	529	513	495	481			
		2023-24	667	648	613	606	612	614	574	561	550	562	569	561
	Median age of investigation caseload (weeks)	2024-25	62	64	68	66	66	67	69	71	74			
		2023-24	63	64	61	63	61	62	64	63	66	64	62	62
Case examiner	Median time taken to complete investigation stage (weeks)	2024-25	70	76	49	70	72	40	59	52	62			
		2023-24	33	51	70	59	70	68	66	53	58	66	70	73
Case examiner	Number of open case examiner cases	2024-25	133	142	140	122	123	111	82	89	87			
		2023-24	77	82	84	101	96	97	111	134	145	148	151	132

Fitness to practise			Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Case examiner	Percentage of cases closed at the case examiner stage	2024-25	45%	91%	80%	78%	69%	72%	79%	83%	74%			
		2023-24	72%	80%	67%	70%	44%	84%	63%	79%	54%	79%	74%	78%
	Median time taken to complete case examiner stage (weeks)	2024-25	15	13	14	11	14	14	15	13	11			
		2023-24	7	8	6	6	9	11	12	11	11	13	13	12
	Number of accepted disposals offered	2024-25	14	7	11	21	20	11	10	14	7			
		2023-24	2	14	13	9	8	8	8	10	9	15	13	14
Hearings	Number of cases that progressed to hearings	2024-25	18	2	6	9	12	11	12	5	9			
		2023-24	8	9	19	7	19	4	15	6	11	6	11	11
	Number of open cases in hearings (excluding post-hearing cases)	2024-25	392	391	386	386	393	399	410	414	421			
		2023-24	386	378	362	356	366	354	362	361	361	365	373	378
	Number of concluded final hearings	2024-25	5	6	2	6	4	3	3	1	1			
		2023-24	17	19	28	14	7	14	4	6	7	3	3	3
Interim orders	Median time take to approve interim orders (working days)	2024-25	17	18	26	N/A	18	18	18	18	21			
		2023-24	19	20	19	18	18	17	20	N/A	17	28	19	18
	Number of interim order application hearings held	2024-25	1	3	1	0	3	3	1	2	4			
		2023-24	6	4	7	4	7	4	4	4	1	4	5	2
	Number of interim orders imposed	2024-25	1	3	1	0	3	3	1	2	4			
		2023-24	6	3	6	4	6	4	4	4	0	4	5	1
Number of final order reviews held		2024-25	11	8	11	7	7	10	6	12	8			
		2023-24	10	14	11	8	14	11	10	15	7	10	7	6
Median time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome (weeks) - Including on hold cases		2024-25	125	126	140	108	97	110	113	101	98			
		2023-24	99	127	118	113	128	129	86	119	126	112	93	85
Median time from receipt of referral to final FtP outcome (weeks) - Excluding on hold cases		2024-25	125	126	138	95	85	107	112	98	96			
		2023-24	99	118	118	113	128	120	66	107	126	112	78	72
FTP Internal quality score		2024-25	97%	88%	94%	87%	90%	88%	97%	97%	n/a			
		2023-24	93%	93%	92%	93%	85%	85%	92%	94%	100%	86%	89%	97%

People		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Retention rate	2024-25	85.4%	84.9%	84.5%	84.5%	85.4%	87.1%	86%	87%	87%			
	2023-24	83%	85%	84%	86%	87%	86%	86%	86%	85%	86%	86%	86%
Headcount of staff	2024-25	233	232	234	237	241	247	250	255	258			
	2023-24	249	247	245	240	237	238	242	242	241	238	238	236
Days lost to sickness per employee over previous 12 months	2024-25	8.9	8.8	8.9	8.9	8.5	8.0	7.7	7.5	7.4			
	2023-24	5.7	6.0	6.2	6.5	7.1	7.8	8.1	8.4	8.6	9.2	9.4	8.9

Corporate complaints		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Corporate complaints responded to within timescales	2024-25	74%	94%	91%	85%	100%	92%	96%	100%	88%			
	2023-24	87%	86%	77%	97%	100%	91%	96%	88%	94%	89%	81%	75%
Number of corporate complaints received (stage 1 only)	2024-25	17	12	6	9	7	16	15	10	12			
	2023-24	23	20	27	37	33	24	26	15	23	24	9	13
Number of corporate complaints that missed 20-day timescale	2024-25	5	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0			
	2023-24	2	3	8	1	0	2	1	4	1	3	3	4
Median response time over previous 12 months (working days)	2024-25	15	15	15	15	16	16	16	15	16			
	2023-24	18	18	18	18	18	16	15	16	15	15	15	15

Annex B

Course reapproval decisions Q3 2024-25

Provider	Course	Region	Inspection dates		Link to inspection report	Decision
			From	To		
Bournemouth University	Pg Dip Social Work (exit route)	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BA (Hons) Social Work	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
Edge Hill University (EHUR2)	BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing and Social Work (MNSW exit Award)	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BSc (Hons) Children's Nursing and Social Work (MNSW exit Award)	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BSc (Hons) Learning Disabilities Nursing and Social Work (MNSW exit Award)	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BSc (Hons) Mental Health Nursing and Social Work (MNSW exit Award)	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions

	MNSW Adult Nursing and Social Work	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MNSW Children's Nursing and Social Work	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MNSW Learning Disabilities Nursing and Social Work	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MNSW Mental Health Nursing and Social Work	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ksac5z1v/20240906_mnsw_ehur2_final_report.pdf	Approved with conditions
Edge Hill University (EHUR3)	Pg Dip Social Work - Step Up	North East	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/s01m3ezb/221124_ehur3_pgdipl_rd.pdf	Approved
University of Northampton	BA (Hons) Social Work	Midlands	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/twbhnxjt/20241114_tunr1_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	Midlands	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/twbhnxjt/20241114_tunr1_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Bristol	MSc Social Work	South West	17 July 2024	19 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/nbzpz3xc/u_bris_approval-report_10122024.pdf	Approved with conditions
	Pg Dip Social Work (masters exit route)	South West	17 July 2024	19 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/nbzpz3xc/u_bris_approval-report_10122024.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Nottingham	BA (Hons) Social Work	Midlands	06 August 2024	09 August 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/wrobt5r/131224_unr1-inspection-report_ba-ma.pdf	Approved
	PG Dip Social Work (exit route) Full time	Midlands	06 August 2024	09 August 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/wrobt5r/131224_unr1-inspection-report_ba-ma.pdf	Approved
	MA Social Work Full time	Midlands	06 August 2024	09 August 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/wrobt5r/131224_unr1-inspection-report_ba-ma.pdf	Approved

Course approval decisions Q3 2024-25

Provider	Course	Region	Inspection dates		Link to inspection report	Decision
			From	To		
University of York	BA (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship	Yorkshire & Humber	12 March 2024	14 March 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/ericnqyc/181024_uy_cpp421-inspection-report_swda_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Chichester	PG Dip Social Work Degree Apprenticeship	South East	25 March 2024	28 March 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/zvkfyc4v/20241122_uchir2_pdf2.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Northampton	BA (Hons) Social Work	Midlands	09 July 2024	12 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/twbhnxjt/20241114_tunr1_final.pdf	Approved with conditions
Bournemouth University	Pg Dip Social Work (exit route)	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
	MA Social Work	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
	BA (Hons) Social Work	South West	28 May 2024	31 May 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/5ywkuyzj/181024_bur1-inspection-report_ba-ma_rd.pdf	Approved with conditions
University of Bristol	MSc Social Work	South West	17 July 2024	19 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/nbzpz3xc/ubris_approval-report_10122024.pdf	Approved with conditions
	Pg Dip Social Work (masters exit route)	South West	17 July 2024	19 July 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/nbzpz3xc/ubris_approval-report_10122024.pdf	Approved with conditions
Leeds Trinity University	MA Social Work	Yorkshire & Humber	08 October 2024	10 October 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/n13lpqzg/fianal-approval-report-ltu.pdf	Approved with conditions
	Pg Dip Social Work (masters exit route)	Yorkshire & Humber	08 October 2024	10 October 2024	https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/n13lpqzg/fianal-approval-report-ltu.pdf	Approved with conditions



Social Work Week 2025

Agenda Item 9 Paper Ref 07

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

Author

Matthew Devlin, Head of Strategic Engagement

Katie Florence, Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement and Insight

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Katie Florence, Assistant Director, Communications, Engagement and Insight

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO1: Build trust and confidence in the social work profession, and in regulation, by strengthening our relationship with the sector.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed

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1. Summary

Social Work Week 2025 Expression of Interest (EOI) process was launched on 11 November inviting expressions of interest on the following themes:

- Data and insight
- Education and training
- Innovation
- Professional identity
- Safe and effective practice

The EOI process closed on 31 December, with 59 EOI's submitted.

A 2 stage sift was completed including a final panel sift on 9 January to prepare a draft programme. National Advisory forum members were involved in both stages of the EOI sift. A draft programme was presented and discussed at the policy committee on 10 January. We welcomed the boards interest to stay close to this work and their enthusiasm to chair sessions. The draft programme was also shared and discussed with the executive leadership team on 22 January.

We remain committed to ensuring that each session includes either lived or learned experience. In addition, work is also underway to develop a session under the professional identity strand to celebrate World Social Work Day on 18 March, aligned to the theme for the day "Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing". We are ensuring that our 'change the script' campaign encourages better understanding of social work and regulation amongst the public. A toolkit to support local areas to get involved with this national moment will also be made available.

We are currently putting the finishing touches to the programme and will shortly be confirming successful sessions to those who submitted an EOI. We aim to launch the programme and tickets in early February.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

The board is asked to note our progress and continue to support the delivery of Social Work Week 2025.

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Social worker survey results 2024

Agenda Item 10 Paper Ref 08

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

Author

Rebecca Mulvaney, Senior Policy Manager

Date

31 January 2024

Reviewed by

Katie Florence, Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO2: Share the data and insight we hold about the social work profession and our regulation. This will help us to support leaders and policy makers to drive change, and ensure our processes are safe and fair.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Strategic approach - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed

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1. Summary

We made a commitment in our 2023 to 2024 business plan to show how our work is incrementally contributing towards an increase in the proportion of social workers who:

- have confidence in the way we regulate
- value our professional standards

In March 2024 we launched a survey that would establish a baseline measure to inform our understanding of how the profession perceives us, the professional standards and the social work profession more broadly. This also supports us to refine our strategic positioning through the levers of communication, engagement and policy.

In December 2024 we published the findings from this survey following a detailed analysis of responses, including thematic analysis of all free text comments.

2. Action required

The board is asked to discuss on progress to date and next steps.

3. Commentary

The survey was open between 4 March and 20 May 2024, and we received 2,120 responses, representing around 2% of the register.

Social workers broadly felt that we effectively regulate the social work profession (40% positive responses, 35% neutral, 25% negative).

A large majority of social workers felt that the professional standards were important to them (86%) and that they understood how the professional standards applied to their work as a social worker (90%).

3 quarters of social workers responded negatively when asked if they felt that social workers were valued by society (75%) and 42% said they wouldn't recommend social work as a career.

Beyond the headline findings, we would like to highlight the positive nature of the feedback we identified through our analysis of free text comments on the importance of the professional standards to social workers. We found comments from respondents focused on a strong feeling that the standards align with their professional practice, underpin social worker's daily roles, and are easy to understand. We also found reflections from social workers on how the standards link with wider social work ethics and values, helping to protect and safeguard people who use social work services.

Some of the findings were mixed, particularly about us as a regulator, perceptions of the value of social work, and whether social workers would recommend social work as a career. This was to be expected and needs to be considered within the wider context on sector challenges, for example, ongoing workforce issues and political change. These challenges are not unique to us as regulator, or to social work as a profession.

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There is another aspect to this mixed feedback, reflecting that it is difficult for social workers to decide whether they perceive our regulation to be effective if they do not feel confident in understanding the role of a professional regulator. From our analysis of free text comments, we can see that some respondents wanted more information about Social Work England's role, responsibilities and remit.

This is reflected in conversations we continue to have at all levels across the profession, emphasising the importance of continuing dialogue with our stakeholders and with social workers themselves. It emphasises the on-going importance of our communication and engagement work to dispel myths and create understanding of our role as a professions regulator, versus a professional membership body.

We have not let mixed findings stop us from being the transparent regulator we aim to be. This is why in the report we acknowledge the negative as well as the positive, so that we can hold a mirror up to ourselves as well as the profession.

Proposed next steps

We have shared our findings publicly on our website, alongside a media release, the full report is available via the link provided in Annex 1. We will continue to engage with social workers and our stakeholders to address these findings and ensure our approach to regulation evolves with the profession.

At our January policy committee, we identified some key stakeholders to approach with these findings to look at how collectively improve how social workers perceive the value of their role in society. We know from our commissioned research that social workers are valued more highly by the public than social workers may themselves perceive.

We will continue to seek social workers' views to help us improve the way we regulate the profession. Our insight will help to identify where we can inform, educate and influence others on the role of social work. We will continue to promote social work by collaborating with social workers and people with lived and learned experience. We want the social work profession to be visible and valued throughout society.

We plan to repeat this survey every 2 years, so that over time, we can show how our work, within the current context, is incrementally contributing towards maintaining public confidence in social workers in England. By sharing these insights, we can underpin the value of the professional standards and help to build confidence in social work.

4. Conclusions and/or recommendations

We welcome feedback from the board about the approach taken so far and our proposals to repeat this work in the future.

5. Annexes

Annex 1: [Social worker survey results 2024](#) (link to Social Work England website)

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Board internal self-evaluation 2024/25

Agenda Item 11 Paper Ref 09a

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Andrew McCulloch

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

The Chair of the Board

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance - Minimalist

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

This paper reports the results of the 2024 board internal self-evaluation carried out in late autumn/winter 2024. The paper also asks the board to consider whether any parts of the action plan developed following last year's external review need to be modified or expedited. The paper is for discussion, reflection, and consideration of any changes to the action plan.

2. Methodology

A questionnaire was circulated to all board members (including the exec member and the chair) by the chair. It has now been completed by all members and analysed by the chair who has relevant research expertise. The questionnaire was an amended version of the one used in previous years by SWE. Board members' comments are unattributable, but the raw anonymised data is available for board members on request.

3. Quantitative analysis

The table at Annex A presents the average scores from respondents. Scoring was on a 5 point Likert scale so 1 is the lowest possible and 5 highest possible score. Any average of 4 or above shows very limited concerns in that area, but that does not mean there is no room for improvement.

Many of these results are either self-explanatory or need analysis in the light of qualitative feedback. In the comments column all changes of 0.5 or more in scores on last year have been highlighted. The results are similar to or reflect comments made in previous years, or in the external review, with some important variations:

- the deepest area of dissatisfaction is with the size of the board and consequent impact on skill mix, diversity etc. This is of course being addressed by NED recruitment which is essential to the future health of the board
- there is improved satisfaction over last year in the board's functionality and delivery of governance and strategic oversight. This can be attributed both to the increased time allocated to strategic discussion and the maturity of relationships both within the board and with executive colleagues. This is encouraging and represents a significant step in responding to the external review
- there is a limited reduction in satisfaction with ARAC which is for discussion but the ARAC and board's work on risk is an area of improvement. Changes in ARAC membership have created a transition which can be, and is being, bridged and this is not thought to be a major issue as ARAC is clearly fully functional.

4. Qualitative feedback

There were quite a few positive comments about how the board and the committee work has developed, and about how papers and other elements of functionality have improved. All board members seem to find working with colleagues (exec and non-exec) comfortable. And in many cases there were no comments on some sections where colleagues had scored all 4s and 5s so we can assume a good degree of satisfaction in those areas.

Significant areas for consideration and possible improvement were as follows, with the number of respondents making similar points noted, but overall there was a reduction in improvement points noted by board members over the previous year, suggesting progress in some areas of Board development has been positive:

Composition

- Board too small with consequences for committees, skill mix and diversity x5
- Skill mix inadequate to address the challenges faced by SWE/offer enough leadership in certain areas x1

Relationships/ELT

- Capacity of ELT (and Board) inadequate, lack of resilience x1
- Limitations in discussion and surfacing of policy and practice issues such as CPD x1

Knowledge and skills

- Board too small x2
- FtP knowledge/regulatory knowledge a gap x1

Relationships

- Need to improve relations with NAF x2
- Board team building needed x1
- Chair/CEO updates between meetings inadequate x1
- Board too small x1

Process

- Excellent, good support x1
- Make face to face mandatory x1
- Not enough meetings especially in late autumn/winter x1
- Inadequate focus on policy and practice x1

Strategy

- A strategic rethink on FtP and backlogs needed x1
- Strategic work good, oversight of performance could be enhanced x1
- Moving in the right direction, even more strategic work needed x1

Risk

- HR risks an area of lower confidence x2
- More updates on appeals/court decisions that impact us needed x1

Stakeholders

- Board needs to be more involved/overreliance on ELT x2
- Relations with NAF need to be developed x1

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NAF

- Need another member to enhance skill mix x1
- Turnover of membership a risk to be managed x1

REMCO

- More focus needed on HR/culture x1

Policy Committee

- Improving, but needs more NEDs – the guest attendance has been helpful x1

Many of these comments are self-explanatory. Some of the individual comments can also be grouped under a major theme (e.g. skill mix/size). The author/chair's own perspective on the key theme this year is board composition. All board members have a strong degree of discomfort with this issue, not least because we are 3 NEDs short at present and have a further retirement coming in the summer. The board is small anyway and does not include all the key skills and knowledge required. Committees are also small and one person being sick or unable to attend creates risk and there are no "spare" NEDs to fill gaps. This is an area of high risk for the board over which it has little control but some influence. It is hoped that the current NED recruitment programme will solve most of this problem but it would be optimistic to think that it will fill all skills gaps.

The other, perhaps lesser, concerns which are worth noting are:

- the board remains a little disconnected from stakeholder engagement and is particularly concerned to develop a stronger relationship with the NAF
- there is some concern about executive as well as board capacity but this is being mitigated by enhancing the assistant director level
- there is concern that board coverage/oversight and /or strategic discussion of some issues is not fully adequate including strategic policy and practice relating to social work, HR and FtP strategy with regard to the backlog
- information updates between meetings whether on adverse judgements, reputational issues or policy developments, for example, could usefully be enhanced.

5. NED evaluation process 2024/25

The individual evaluation process for all NEDs was also completed during the autumn/winter of 2024. Feedback from individual NEDs about board functionality and support needs was in line with that reported in this and the external evaluation.

6. Action plan

The action plan following on from the external review is attached at Annex B. The board is asked whether any changes are needed to this plan in the light of the current evaluation. One obvious area for discussion is whether to formulate a clearer requirement for a CEO/Chair update between meetings, especially when the gap is a

large one. It would also be useful to discuss whether any of the other development areas mentioned above could be included in that plan.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the evaluation are encouraging. The capacity of the board is an area of deep concern with knock on consequences for some of the other items in the evaluation. This is being addressed. Good progress is being made on many areas of development, but a number of items are listed above which need to be addressed either through addition/modification of the external review action plan or by other agreed action. The board is asked to note the evaluation and to agree what action should be taken on the issues highlighted in this paper.

Andrew McCulloch, Chair

Annex A: Quantitative results from the survey

QUESTION	AVERAGE SCORE	COMMENT
STRUCTURE Q a	4.3	
PERFORMANCE		
Q b COMPOSITION	3.0	Down by 0.7
Q c COMMITTEES	3.8	
Q d DIVERSITY	3.0	Down by 0.9
RELATIONSHIPS Q a EXEC	4.3	
Q b RESPONSIBILITY	4.5	Up by 0.8
Q c DELEGATE	4.8	
Q d OVERSIGHT	4.6	Up by 0.6
Q e CHALLENGE	4.2	
Q f RELATIONS	4.6	
Q g COMMUNICATION	4.5	
KNOWLEDGE Q a	4.3	
UNDERSTANDING		
Q b SKILL MIX	3.6	
Q c GOVERNANCE	4.6	
RELATIONSHIPS Q a TEAM	4.6	
Q b CONSTRUCTIVE	4.6	
Q c EMPOWERED	4.8	
Q d STAKEHOLDERS	4.2	1 OUTLIER
PROCESS Q a TIME	5	
Q b PAPERS	4.6	
Q c AGENDAS	4.6	
Q d ISSUES	4.6	
Q e TIME USE	5	
Q f FREQUENCY	4.6	1 OUTLIER
Q g MANAGEMENT	4.6	
Q h DECISIONS	4.8	
Q i FOLLOW UP	4.6	1 OUTLIER
Q j CHAIRING	5	
STRATEGY Q a OVERSIGHT	4.6	Up by 0.5
Q b EVALUATE	4.5	Up by 0.5

Q c PUBLIC FIRST	4.5	
Q d IDENTIFY	4.6	Up by 0.7
Q e STRATEGY TIME	4.6	Up by 0.9
Q f STRATEGY DAYS	4.8	Up by 0.8
RISK Q a INFORMATION	4.8	
Q b NOTIFICATION	4.6	
Q c SYSTEMS	4.8	
Q d REPUTATIONAL RISK	4.5	
Q e MONITOR	4.8	
Q f CoI	4.8	
STAKEHOLDERS Q a CONCERNS	4.0	
Q b FEEDBACK	4.0	
COMMITTEES Q a INFORMATION	4.8	
ARAC Q a ToR	4.3	ONLY 3 RESPONDENTS ON ARAC Down by 0.7
Q b COMPOSITION	4.0	
Q c RESOURCES	4.0	Down by 0.8
Q d AUDITORS	4.3	
Q e ACCOUNTS	4.6	
Q f RISK	4.3	Up by 0.5
Q g LENGTH	4.6	
REMUNERATION Q a ToR	4.6	ONLY 3 RESPONDENTS ON REMCO
Q b SKILL MIX	4.6	
Q c RESOURCES	4.6	
Q d CEO	5	
Q e INFORMATION	4.3	Down by 0.5
Q f LENGTH	5	
POLICY Qa ToR	5	ONLY 1 RESPONDENT
Qb SKILL MIX	4	
Qc RESOURCES	5	
Qd OVERSIGHT	4	
Qe INFORMATION	5	
Qf LENGTH	5	
MEMBER EVALUATION	6 YES	
EVALUATION FORM	6 YES	

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW ACTION PLAN 2024/25 Updated 31 January 2025					
Recommendations	Action(s)	Owner	Due by	Review	Current position
Help the board to clarify its role, particularly regarding its strategic role and level of challenge and oversight of the executive and vis a vis the social work profession.	Initial discussion at September 2024 strategy meeting to clarify purpose and scope of the board's role.	Chair	September 2024	March 2025	Complete and ongoing. September 2024 strategy awayday provided opportunity to explore and confirm direction of travel in key areas, including role of board in relation to these.
Provide an opportunity for NEDs to talk as a group with the Chair and CEO on e.g. a quarterly basis to get a sense of developments in the business/sponsor dept/wider environment.	Board meetings take place on a quarterly cycle, usually there are at least 5 meetings per year. Time will be scheduled on the agenda for each private strategy meeting to update on wider developments. The CEO will bring these to the board's attention via his report. Additionally, there should be an option for the CEO or Chair to convene a short briefing meeting on a key matter which has arisen between board meetings, if it is sufficiently urgent and important.	Chair/ CEO Executive Office	From May 2024	March 2025	Complete and ongoing. Strategy awaydays will include a private session for the board.

Monthly communication to NEDs with key policy/operational developments to help them keep in touch between meetings.	Our weekly policy brief is now being circulated routinely to board members; the board can also be added to the mailing list for our newsletter 'Social Work Now'.	Corporate governance manager & Assistant Director, Communications Engagement & Insight	From May 2024	March 2025	Complete and ongoing.
Chair to hold one-to-one meetings with NEDs on a regular basis (e.g. every two to three months) particularly for new NEDs.	Chair to arrange regular 1-1 meetings. It is suggested these are quarterly except where he already has a regular meeting.	Chair/ Executive Office	From May 2024	March 2025	Ongoing. Chair has been meeting with NEDs on an individual basis.
Ensure that the revised induction takes account of the Whitehall environment that SWE sits within. The visits set up by SWE's regional engagement leads should be maintained for new NEDs.	Refreshed induction pack and process has been developed and shared with all board members via the new board intranet. This includes context about the Whitehall environment. DfE's induction pack for new NEDs will also be published to the intranet. Induction process to be reviewed after 6 months and regularly thereafter to ensure it is meeting identified needs.	Executive Director, People and Business Support Executive Office/ Chair	From May 2024	July 2024 and regularly thereafter to incorporate feedback from new board members	Complete and ongoing. Induction slides will undergo their first refresh in February/March 2025. Induction pack includes Whitehall environment. DfE's induction pack also available on board intranet. Positive feedback received to date, feedback will be

					sought from new board members when appointed.
Continue to provide board/executive/National Advisory Forum (NAF) 'buddies' for new NEDs.	Utilising the reciprocal arrangements agreed at the board in December 2023, re-launch the reciprocal relationships scheme and ensure that regional engagement lead / NAF contacts and support are in place for new NEDs.	Adi Cooper/ Ahmina Akhtar	July 2024 Re-launch scheme	March 2025	A paper will be provided to the board in March to set out new arrangements. These will include an annual joint meeting to discuss a key organisational priority, with opportunities for networking and conversation.
The number of NEDs to be increased (e.g. by two) - Consider recruiting in the medium term a NED whose experience includes some lived experience of social work - Aim to fill the skills gaps identified as new NEDs are	<i>The recommendation to increase the size of the board is for DfE to respond to: Chair and CEO to discuss with DfE sponsor team and agree approach and wording.</i> CEO and Chair input into forthcoming recruitment process to ensure a wider reach of possible NEDs and that skills	DfE Chair/CEO	TBC May 2024	March 2025	There is no decision at present to increase the size of the board. Recruitment is underway for 3 new

appointed (noting that SWE do not lead on the recruitment process)	needs are considered within the recruitment/appointment process.				NEDs to the board. The Chair and CEO are involved and advising on the process and skills/knowledge needed.
Create an 18 month forward look for board meetings and committees which shows the key papers brought to each meeting, allowing for sequencing of 'clearance' at committee level before board discussion. Forward look should also identify and timetable papers for decision as opposed to information. Forward look items for ARAC/Remuneration committee/policy committee to be added to wider 18 month forward look	18 month forward look for board and committee meetings to be developed.	Corporate Governance Manager	September 2024	When future annual meeting cycles are confirmed, including timing and approach to board strategy days	Complete and ongoing. A 12 month forward look for board and committee meetings has been developed and was agreed by the board on 27 September 2024. This will be continually reviewed and updated to ensure it remains a 'live' document to inform planning.
Face to face attendance at board meetings to be strongly encouraged.	Board members to continue with current practice to attend strategy sessions (2 per year) in person.	Chair and board members	September 2024	March 2025	All board members attended the

	Chair to discuss with each board member what would be practical and reasonable for them to achieve beyond this, in terms of joining meetings face to face taking into account reasonable adjustments and caring responsibilities.				September strategy session in person. Chair has discussed and agreed with each board member how they are able to engage in the meetings.
Enhance the role of the policy committee. Policy issues to be explored by the policy committee and then escalated to the board. policy committee to take a lead on policy/education issues at strategy events.	To review with committee members the terms of reference and ways of working, and propose to the board: i) Any amendments needed to the terms of reference to enhance the role of the committee and its membership/skills/knowledge ii) Proposed actions to enable the policy committee to support a better flow of information through to the board on policy and strategy issues, e.g. via agenda planning, reporting and feeding into the planning of strategy sessions	Assistant director policy and strategy/Chair of policy committee in liaison with corporate governance manager and the Chair	July 2024	March 2025	Complete and ongoing. This was discussed by the policy committee and a new approach to managing meetings was shared with the board on 27 September 2024. The policy committee will continue to review and evaluate its meeting arrangements through its annual effectiveness reviews. An

					approach and process for co-opting additional members to board committees was approved by the board on 25 October 2024.
Make the papers and minutes from Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the policy committee available to all board members.	Ensure all board members have access to agendas, papers and minutes on Board Intelligence	Corporate Governance Manager	Action closed, completed 12 April 2024	n/a	Completed.
Include discussion of the risk register and identification of strategic risk at alternate board meetings.	To have a standing item on the board agenda at twice per year, aligned with business/budget planning and strategy/horizon scanning discussions.	Corporate Governance Manager	Risk register brought to board in March 2024; to be added to 18 month forward plan	March 2025	Completed. Risk register added as a standing item x2 per year on forward meeting plan.

Improve the strategic planning through six monthly (private) off-site strategy events. The strategy events will look at the priorities for the next 12-24 months for SWE, then review and assess progress. • Alternate strategy sessions should include a focus on horizon scanning and the risks for the organisation. • Board members to agree the key questions to address at the strategy events, so that there is a sense of co-production with the executive. • As there has been a high turnover on the board recently, a team building event be included within	For the 2024-25 year, it is proposed to hold two in person strategy sessions, one in September at our headquarters in Sheffield, and one in <i>[May - TBC]</i> that would be combined with a stakeholder visit. Both would involve an overnight stay and opportunity to network and build relationships. In future years, two in-person strategy sessions per year will be scheduled; at least one of which will incorporate a stakeholder visit and will take place in an alternative off-site venue. The strategy event at mid-year (autumn) could enable a deeper review of our business plan progress; this session might also consider priorities for the upcoming 12-24 months to inform business and budget planning for the following year and/or strategy refresh. The other strategic session in spring could focus more on horizon scanning, external/risk landscape and policy/ strategy.	CEO/EDs/ADs Corporate Governance Manager	From September 24	Annually when meeting cycles confirmed, including timing and approach to board strategy days	Complete and ongoing. In person strategy day took place 27 September 2024 in Sheffield. A further strategy session has been scheduled for 16 May 2025. Plans for a stakeholder visit are being made for May 2025.
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one of the strategy events.	Agendas will be flexible according to need; topical issues or challenges could be scheduled for discussion at either of the two events if required				
The board to continue to develop the performance measures underpinning the strategic objectives, to ensure that they can assure and monitor progress.	Initial discussion at September 2024 board strategy session, to explore and understand what is needed.	Chair, board and executive leadership team	September 2024	<i>TBC in September 2024</i>	This will be considered in the context of business planning for 2025/26, and also development of our strategy for 2026/29.
Hold alternate board meetings in different locations to take the opportunity to engage with local stakeholders.	Board members to continue with current practice to attend strategy sessions (2 per year) in person, these would involve an overnight stay and opportunity to network and build relationships. It is proposed that one strategy session per year would take place at an alternative location and be combined with a stakeholder visit.	Chair and board members	September 2024	Annually when meeting cycles confirmed, including timing and approach to board strategy days	Arrangements are underway for a stakeholder visit, which is now likely to take place in May 2025.
Timetable two board dinners per year (one to include the senior executive team).	Dates to be agreed in diaries to hold board dinners (one to include the senior executive team). To align with the strategy sessions.	Executive Office Team	Dinner September 2024 to be confirmed on 17 May	Annually when meeting cycles confirmed,	Complete and ongoing. Dinner took place on 26 September 2024, the next will take

			2024; future dates as and when annual meeting cycles agreed	including timing and approach to board strategy days	place on 15 May 2025.
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Revised terms of reference: Deputy chair position

Agenda Item 12 Paper Ref 10

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Linda Dale, executive director people and business support

Date

31 January 2025

Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

This paper is for

Decision

Associated Strategic Objective

SO10: Continually develop and improve how we work, ensuring we are a well-run organisation that delivers the right outcomes and provides value for money.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Governance and compliance - Minimalist

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

1. Summary

This report proposes further amendments to the board's terms of reference, to detail the role and responsibilities of the deputy chair. The board is invited to discuss and agree the changes.

2. Action required

The board is asked to consider and, if content, agree the proposed amendments.

3. Commentary

The terms of reference already make provision for a deputy chair to be appointed. Formerly, this role was held by Andrew McCulloch, prior to his appointment as interim chair and later as permanent chair of the board. Since March 2023, when the role was vacated, the board has not had a deputy chair in place. However, a senior independent director (SID) role was created in October 2023, this position is currently held by Ann Harris.

The board chair now intends to appoint a new deputy chair. Therefore, the terms of reference have been reviewed to make sure that the responsibilities are clearly defined and are distinct from those of the SID. It is not expected that the responsibilities of the deputy chair will require a significant time commitment, therefore the role will not attract additional remuneration.

4. Conclusions and/or recommendations

The board is invited to consider, and if content approve, the proposed amendments to the terms of reference.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1– proposed amendments to board terms of reference.

Appendix 1 – proposed amendments to board terms of reference

Social Work England Board

Terms of Reference

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 and Risk Assurance Committee to help the Board to address key financial and other risks
- assessing and approving risk appetite annually
- advising the Secretary of State annually on the remuneration of the Chief Executive giving due weight to the proper management and use and utilisation of public resources.
- 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, **with the specific responsibilities detailed at Annex B**
- Non-Executive Directors, one of whom will be an appropriately qualified finance director as described in Annex 4.1 of [Managing Public Money](#) and one of whom **may** be appointed by the Chair to undertake the role of Senior Independent Director (SID), with the specific responsibilities detailed at Annex **C**.
- The Chief Executive

There are three sub-committees made up from the members of the Board: the Audit and Risk 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.

Sub-Committees

The Chair will ensure Board committees are properly structured with appropriate terms of reference. The terms of each committee will set out its responsibilities and the authority delegated to it by the Board.

The Chair will ensure that committee membership is periodically refreshed and that individual independent non-executive directors are not over-burdened when deciding the chairs and membership of committees. Subject to each sub-committee's Terms of Reference, sub-committee members may include Social Work England's Chief Executive and executive directors, National Advisory Forum members and co-opted members.

Co-opted Members

The Board will decide the appointment of any co-opted members to sub-committees, following the process in Annex D.

Decision-making

Decisions by the Board are normally to be made by consensus and in accordance with the Social Work England Board Code of Conduct. Sub-committee members are also expected to abide by this Code.

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 frequency of Board meetings is aligned with the requirement to review performance, strategy and work on board development
- the Chair, Deputy 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.	

Annex B

Deputy Chair: Role and responsibilities

The Deputy Chair is selected from the existing non-executive directors and their appointment is agreed by the Board. Their responsibilities include:

- To chair Board meetings, and lead the Board in discharging its responsibilities, in the absence of the Chair
- To deputise for the Chair at meetings with internal or external stakeholders when required
- To carry out other duties, as may be required, to support the Chair in his/her leadership of the Board.

Annex C

Senior Independent Director (SID): Role and responsibilities

The SID is selected from the existing non-executive directors and their appointment is agreed by the Board. Their responsibilities include:

- To work closely with the Chair, acting as a sounding board and providing support
- To act as an intermediary for other non-executive directors on the Board as and when necessary
- To be available to key stakeholders and other non-executives to address any concerns or issues they feel have not been adequately dealt with through the usual channels of communication (i.e. through Board meetings, or through the Chair, Deputy Chair or Chief Executive)
- Dealing with any complaints about the Chair, or dealing with any matters where the Chair has a conflict of interest and has recused him/herself
- To act as decision maker for complaints or other matters, as may be requested to support the Chair and/or maintain their independence to hear an appeal
- To support with succession planning, recruitment, and induction for the Chair's role and for other non-executive directors as may be required
- To contribute to the Chair's annual appraisal if this is requested by DfE

Annex D

Co-opted members may be appointed to sub-committees in an advisory, unremunerated, non-voting capacity to resolve knowledge or experience gaps in the membership of that committee. They shall not be an employee or member of Social Work England.

The process for deciding when and who to co-opt is as follows:

1. A gap is identified in the knowledge or experience of the members of a committee of the Board which needs filling on a restricted timetable.
2. The reasons for the restricted timetable and the options for filling the gap are considered by the Board and (if applicable) it is decided that the most suitable option is to co-opt a member.
3. Potential co-opted members will be discussed by the relevant committee and nominated by the Chair of the relevant committee to the Board for approval.
4. Selection of co-opted members is at discretion of the Chair of the relevant committee and is based on the following principles:
 - a. Unique knowledge and experience that would support the committee to achieve the balance and diversity of thought and experience it requires to be effective.
 - b. There is confidence that the co-opted member(s) have the ability to:
 - declare and manage potential conflicts of interest
 - build strong working relationships with committee members and executive officers
 - understand and apply the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion when advising the committee.
 - demonstrate the seven principles of public life and Social Work England values
 - contribute to the effective governance of the organisation.
5. With the consent of the proposed co-opted member, the Board considers the relevant committee Chair's nomination and makes the final decision on the appointment based on the terms set out in these Board terms of reference and the Committee terms of reference, subject to the co-optee signing a confidentiality agreement and agreeing to abide by the Board Code of Conduct.
6. The co-opted member is informed in writing of their appointment to the relevant committee and asked to agree to abide by the Board Code of Conduct (covering expectations to avoid conflicts of interest, declare gifts and hospitality and declare and register interests), to sign a confidentiality agreement, and to note the Board and Committee terms of reference.
7. Once the agreement to abide by the Board Code of Conduct and signed confidentiality agreement are received, the appointment can commence.

Last reviewed: **January 2025**

Next review date: February 2025

Signed off Board:

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support