

(Observers) Social Work England Board Meeting

MEETING

14 March 2025 10:30 GMT

PUBLISHED

10 March 2025

Social Work England Board Meeting

Friday 14 March 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 Board members' register of interests link	Verbal	To note/ declare	Chair
2.	10.40	Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2025	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	Audit and risk assurance committee chair's report	Paper 04*	To note	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair
7.	11.30	Policy committee chair's report	Paper 05*	To note	Policy Committee Chair
8.	11.40	Co-production paper	Paper 06	To discuss and advise	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement; Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
9.	11.50	Finance and commercial report Management accounts to 31 January 2025	Paper 07	To discuss and note	Executive Director People and Business Support; Head of Finance and Commercial
10.	12.00	Draft budget 2025/26	Paper 08*	To discuss, note and approve	Executive Director People and Business Support; Head of Finance and Commercial
11.	12:10	Draft business plan 2025/26	Paper 09*	To discuss, note and approve	Chief Executive; Executive Director People and Business Support; Assistant Director, Assurance and Improvement
12.	12.30	Fitness to practise 2025/26 - case throughput and actions	Paper 10*	To discuss and note	Executive Director, Regulation
13.	12.40	Reimagining renewals and CPD update	Paper 11	To discuss, note and approve	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement; Executive Director, Regulation; Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy
14.	12.50	Corporate Governance: policy update: - Board code of conduct policy - Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy - Gifts and hospitality policy	Paper 12 Annex 12a Annex 12b Annex 12c	To discuss, note and approve	Chair; Executive Director People and Business Support; Corporate Governance Manager

Item	Time	Topic	Paper / Ref.	Board Action	Lead
15.	12.55	Any other business Date of next meeting: 16 May 2025	Verbal	To note	Chair
	13.00	Meeting ends			
	13.15 – 14.15	Board cyber security training			Stacey Lidgate – Cysiam

* 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

Ann Harris 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: Ahmina Akhtar Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

David Bates Head of Information Technology and Data

Joe Stockwell Assistant Director - Assurance and Improvement

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)
	Stephen Barnett	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Richard O'Connell	Head of Finance and Commercial
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	David Mellers	Senior Finance Business Partner
	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Sponsor team:	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Kate Phillips	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
Public observers:	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Staff observers:	Ian Crawford	Lay Case Examiner
Minute taker:	Chloe Corbett	Corporate Governance Manager

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Minutes of the Social Work England board meeting for approval
31 January 2025, 10.30-13.00
at The Don, Social Work England and by videoconference

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
Board Apprentice:	Bhavna Chandra	Boardroom Apprentice
Staff in attendance:	Andy Leverton	Head of Business Planning and Improvement
	Chloe Corbett	Corporate Governance Manager
	Gwyn Jones	Senior Data and Insight Analyst
	Kate Metcalf	Regional Engagement Lead - SE
	Katie Florence	Assistant Director, Communication, Engagement and Insight
	Linda Dale	Executive Director, People and Business Support
	Matthew 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)

Sponsor team:	Stephen Barnett	Assistant Director, Regulation (Investigations)
	Sarah Blackmore	Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement
	Andrew Wise	Department for Education (DfE)
	Sonia Mosley	Department for Education (DfE)
Public observers:	Richard West	Professional Standards Authority
Staff observers:	David Mellers	Senior Finance Business Partner
	Junyao Wei	Business Support Officer
	Nancy Henwood	Senior Information Governance Officer
	Nichola Anderson	Policy Support Officer
Minute taker:	Sophie Rees Rumney	Executive Assistant
Apologies:	Ann Harris	Non-executive Director

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, welcomed board members, colleagues and observers to the meeting, and noted the welcome attendance by the new boardroom apprentice. He also noted apologies sent by non-executive director, Ann Harris.
- 1.2 Non-executive director, Simon Lewis, declared two interests: a recent public appointment by the Secretary of State for Education as an independent reviewer of access and participation plans in the higher education sector, and a judicial role as an independent fee-paid judge in the Care Standards Tribunal.
- 1.3 The chair reported that non-executive director, Ann Harris, had declared a new role with the Home Office. She had been appointed as an independent reviewer to conduct an arm's length body review of the Disclosure and Barring Service.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Paper 01

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 25 October 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 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.*

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

4. Chair's report

Verbal

4.1 The chair informed the board that he had met with the BASW chair, Julia Ross, and had found the meeting to be constructive.

4.2 The chair had presented at the public chair's forum and shared his views on benchmarking as a means of driving quality forward.

4.3 The chair informed the board that he had completed the shortlisting process for the non-executive director recruitment, alongside an external assessor who was a member of Department for Education's (DfE) board. He shared that a large number of applications had been received, which could be attributed to the dissemination of the opportunity through various networks by Social Work England and the DfE. The chair expressed optimism for the future appointments and thanked the communications team and the DfE for their hard work and input. He hoped that successful appointments would be made by May.

The chair paused the board meeting at 10:41 due to technical difficulties with the camera. The meeting resumed at 10:46 with audio capacity only.

5. Chief executive's report

Paper 03

5.1 The chief executive informed the board that the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) would hold its board meeting at Social Work England's offices in March 2025. He noted that the organisation looked forward to welcoming the PSA and its board, as the meeting would coincide with World Social Work Day and Social Work Week 2025. He noted that both the chair and the chair of the policy committee would be attending on behalf of the board and extended the invitation to the other members as well.

5.2 The board was updated that the executive director, professional practice and external engagement would be leading an online summit on artificial intelligence (AI) in social work on 4 February 2025. Growing attention in the sector had been observed, with numerous stories and discussions emerging on the topic. The online summit focused on ensuring that the potential use of AI aligned with professional standards while recognising its potential benefits in supporting social work practice. The board discussed how AI could positively impact social workers' workloads but also raised concerns about its potential implications for the workforce. The executive director, people and business support was invited to comment, and acknowledged that there were two distinct areas of focus; one being the use of AI by social workers and how this related to the professional standards; the second being whether there may be opportunities to utilise AI internally within the organisation in a safe manner to support our functions and increase efficiency. The potential internal use of emerging

technologies was being explored as part of the current review of digital, data and technology, and would be considered in greater depth in the next business year.

5.3 The board inquired about the current work of the National Advisory Forum (NAF) and its involvement in various areas of the organisation. The chief executive responded that a review had been conducted on the NAF's terms of reference, operating procedures, and the work it would be engaged in for 2025/26. A paper titled 'Updating the way we work with NAF' would be presented at the board meeting on 14 March 2025.

5.4 The chief executive also informed the board that the DfE was developing plans for an independent review of the organisation. A review, mandated by legislation established at the organisation's inception, was scheduled to take place after five years. A lead reviewer would be appointed in due course and the review would take place later in the year. Work was underway internally to collate key documents and information that would be useful to the review team.

6. Policy committee chair's report

Paper 04*

6.1 The policy committee chair presented the report and highlighted discussions by the committee on the current political context, the policy environment, and key areas where Social Work England was involved, including the development of Social Work Week 2025. She shared that the meeting had been useful, and board members who had attended on an ad-hoc basis, agreed that it had been helpful. They also noted that the attendance of the former chief social worker for adults in the Department of Health and Social Care had been valuable.

7. Finance and commercial report

Paper 05

7.1 Before introducing the finance and commercial report, the executive director, people and business support updated the board on behalf of the ARAC chair, who had sent apologies to the meeting. ARAC had not met since the last board meeting in October, its next meeting would take place on 14 February 2025. Two internal audit reports were due to be discussed at the February ARAC meeting, and two further reports would be presented at an extra-ordinary ARAC meeting towards the end of March. Planning was underway for the external audit, and NAO and the Social Work England team had agreed to bring some the timeline forward to allow more time at the end of the process, should it be needed. Changes were being made to ways of working to address learnings from last year's external audit.

7.2 In the absence of the head of finance and commercial, the executive director, people and business support then updated the board on the management accounts up to 31 December 2024. The full-year revenue expenditure was approximately £2 million under budget, primarily due to the impact of the introduction of the new method of accounting for legal fees, which had been recommended by the National Audit Office (NAO). A budget mitigation plan had been in place to accelerate the number of hearings, but there had been challenges in achieving all of the planned activity, as outlined in the report. Although the underspend currently exceeded expectations, strategies were being developed to utilise more of the available funding to expedite case progression and provide additional capacity to support triage.

7.3 The executive director, people and business support shared an update on commercial activity, noting that recent activities to procure an external partner to

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review digital, data and technology arrangements and also to provide a new cybersecurity service had been completed successfully.

7.4 She further updated the board that the organisation continued to work on the budget plan and would be proposing the draft 2025/26 plan at the board meeting on 14 March 2025.

7.5 The board **noted** the content of the report. The chair agreed that the in-year underspend was unfortunate but noted that the board understood the reasons behind it and that the organisation was doing everything it could to efficiently allocate the available funds.

8. Quarter 3 performance report

Paper 06

8.1 The chair thanked the head of business planning and improvement for his contributions and strong leadership in key aspects of his role during his time at Social Work England.

8.2 The head of business planning and improvement introduced the quarter 3 performance report, which set out performance against the business plan and key performance indicators (KPIs). He shared that KPI's were largely on track, with the exception of timeliness in fitness to practise.

2024/25 Strategic theme: Prevention and impact

8.3 The executive director, professional practice and external engagement reported that it had been a busy period and shared key highlights. There had been a focus on the children's wellbeing and schools bill as it progressed through Parliament. Additionally, attention had been directed toward child sexual exploitation and grooming gangs. Baroness Louise Casey had been appointed to lead an independent commission tasked with reforming adult social care in England. Sarah McClinton had taken up post as the new Chief Social Worker for Adults in England and Social Work England had extended its support to her.

8.4 The new Mental Health Bill was expected to introduce significant changes to social work practice, particularly affecting Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) and other mental health practitioners. These reforms aligned with the 'Right Care, Right Person' policy, which focused on ensuring care was delivered appropriately. Further updates were also noted by the board on the following: the practice education group which had met again, discussing Social Work Week 2025 and the stakeholder survey; planning for phase 2 of the 'Change the Script' campaign was underway following the provision of funding by DfE; planned activity for quarter 4 included key events such as the workforce roundtable.

8.5 The board inquired about the stakeholder survey, noting the 80 responses from 328 stakeholders contacted, and asked whether this had been a good response rate. The assistant director, communications, engagement and insight shared that it had been the organisation's first survey, so it was still establishing a benchmark and gaining an understanding. The team was pleased with the level of engagement. The survey had provided an opportunity to identify stakeholders with whom the organisation frequently engaged, but who did not respond, and had highlighted areas to build on. A deep dive into the stakeholder survey results was planned for the next policy committee meeting.

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2024/25 Strategic theme: Regulation and protection

- 8.6 The executive director, regulation updated the board on business plan priorities and performance. He shared that the annual registration renewal for this cycle had been completed, with a successful outcome of 97% of registrants renewing. No system issues had been reported. Some registrants had unintentionally failed to renew and would need to rejoin the register. However, the organisation was on track to meet the restoration KPI, to ensure this cohort could be restored to the register in a timely manner.
- 8.7 Timeliness in triage had been very challenging due to capacity and leadership changes. New leadership was now coming into post, and the team would soon have a full leadership structure to focus on timeliness. New short-term temporary resource had been allocated, with longer-term resources planned for Q1 2025, budget allocations permitting. These actions were expected to have a positive impact on timeliness.
- 8.8 The investigations KPI had been affected by the challenges in triage, as the two processes were interconnected. As a result, the median time cases spent within investigations had been distorted. The volume of cases at investigations had reduced, but timeliness had worsened. At case examination stage, performance remained positive and on track to meet the KPI. An increasing number of cases had been disposed of appropriately using accepted disposal powers. It was noted that a more detailed paper on timeliness and caseload volume would be presented to the board at the 14 March 2025 meeting.
- 8.9 At hearings, in addition to the 34 hearings that had been scheduled at the start of the year, an additional 33 hearings had been listed to be heard before the end of quarter 4. Planning for hearings activity in 2025/26 was underway, although clarity regarding the budget would be essential to finalise the schedule.
- 8.10 The board **noted** the update, was assured that the team was doing as much as possible and thanked everyone for their hard work. The chair acknowledged that current performance was influenced by a range of complex and legacy factors. Although the board was not comfortable with current timeliness within triage and hearings, it was confident in the executive director of regulation's leadership and in the team's management of the issues.

2024/25 Strategic theme: Delivery and improvement

- 8.11 The executive director, people and business support highlighted the work done in quarter 3 to improve digital services, including accessibility improvements to the public website. The project to enable email communications to be managed within Forge (the case management system) had commenced, alongside a project to develop a case management system to support the education and quality assurance function. It was critical to provide this support to the education team after a long period of limited functionality. All these initiatives were expected to contribute to more efficient operations across the organisation.
- 8.12 In relation to business plan objective 9.1, which focused on enhancing the leadership and management development offer, it was reported that management workshops had continued throughout the year and the first programme was now concluding. An evaluation would be completed, and preparations for the next cohort would begin. Feedback had been positive so far.

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- 8.13 In relation to objective 9.2, a “deep dive” had explored current organisational culture, our desired culture, and the behaviours that would support it. There had been extensive engagement across the organisation in quarter 3. The work would now be developed into a draft culture and behaviours framework, which would be reviewed and refined in quarter 4 before being launched and embedded, supported by a leadership development package. The objective remained on track for completion by year end.
- 8.14 The people and organisational KPIs remained broadly stable, with the retention rate showing a slight improvement compared to earlier periods. Sickness absence continued to decline gradually. Overall, risks remained stable; however, closer monitoring was required at the team level, where variances could be more significant.
- 8.15 The chair emphasised the importance of the culture and behaviours work and noted evidence that suggested when people work together on behaviours, it provides them with ownership and a commitment. This shared corporate understanding often motivates people to police themselves. The chair suggested setting dedicated time aside to further develop this work, ensuring the board fully understand and are aligned to the culture and behaviours framework.

Action: The executive director, people and business support to ensure dedicated time is allocated during the May board strategy session agenda to further develop the culture and behaviours work, ensuring the board understand and are aligned to the behaviours framework.

9. Social Work Week 2025

Paper 07

- 9.1 The head of strategic engagement presented a brief paper and noted that significant work had gone into developing the full programme for Social Work Week 2025. He explained that the organisation had launched an expression of interest (EIA) in December 2024 and received 59 submissions. Over the new year, the team sifted through the responses and identified strong offers from the sector. The programme had then been taken to the policy committee for constructive discussions during the drafting stage, followed by conversations with the executive leadership team. The programme was now in the final stages of refinement, with the aim to launch externally in early February. Work was also underway to plan events, sessions, and celebrations for World Social Work Day.
- 9.2 The head of strategic engagement extended an open invitation to board members to attend the events in any capacity they preferred, whether by chairing sessions or representing the organisation in their public-facing role. The board chair offered to chair a session and welcomed the invitation for board members to attend and drop in as needed.
- 9.3 Other organisations had also been planning their own Social Work Week events. Social Work England had created a toolkit that could be used by other organisations to support in planning these. The aim was to generate wider momentum and impact, to enable Social Work Week to become much more than what was outlined in the programme.
- 9.4 The board shared positive feedback and inquired about the co-production process with the National Advisory Forum (NAF). It was clarified that two members of NAF had been involved from the outset. They had provided valuable challenge and positive input throughout the process. Additionally, they had been involved in the sifting

process for the EIAs. For World Social Work Day, the NAF had been invited to participate at the Sheffield offices.

9.5 The executive director, professional practice and external engagement shared that the organisation was also looking forward to hosting the Professional Standards Authority board on World Social Work Day. The board chair and the policy committee chair would be attending, ensuring good board participation.

9.6 The chief executive noted the positive collaborative work with social work organisations in other parts of the UK. A session had been planned with other regulators in the UK to focus on data. The board recommended that, at some point, it would be valuable to hear from other jurisdictions internationally too. Social Work England was part of an international regulators network, and that we could link in with it.

Senior data and insight analyst joined at 11.45.

10. Social worker survey: reflections and next steps

Paper 08

10.1 The assistant director, communications, engagement and insight introduced the report and acknowledged that most board members were already aware of key findings from the social worker survey results, which had been discussed at the last policy committee meeting. The survey would be repeated periodically, in order to incrementally capture the shift in how social work regulation and professional standards were perceived. A small team had been involved in planning and delivering the survey, which had provided valuable learning as it had involved extensive analysis of free-text responses. There were plans to repeat the survey every two years. Any feedback from the board on the approach would be welcomed.

10.2 The board **noted** the report, reflecting that the survey was useful in establishing a baseline and in generating insight about potential improvement actions the organisation could take. The board supported the proposal to repeat the survey periodically and agreed that it was beneficial to publish the findings.

11. Board internal effectiveness review 2024/25

Paper 09a & 09b

11.1 The chair presented the outcome of the internal board effectiveness review for 2024/25, highlighting that the most significant theme within the feedback related to diversity and the challenges posed by having such a low number of board members at present. Action was underway to address this through the current non-executive director recruitment process. The chair also noted the need to improve board involvement and information sharing between meetings. He suggested scheduling an additional one-hour video conference meeting in board members' calendars as a contingency towards the end of each calendar year, when there was a gap in the board schedule, should key developments need to be shared. This meeting would not have a full agenda but would serve as a broad update and discussion forum and could be conducted via video rather than in person.

Action: The corporate governance manager to coordinate an additional informal board meeting in December, to be utilised if information sharing on key developments is required.

11.2 The board **noted** the latest progress update to the 2023/24 external board effectiveness review action plan, emphasising the importance of reviewing the induction and onboarding process ahead of the upcoming non-executive director

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appointments. Non-executive director, Simon Lewis, stated that his experience with induction last year had been positive and offered to provide further feedback.

Action: The corporate governance manager to seek feedback from non-executive director Simon Lewis on his experience of board induction.

12. Updated board terms of reference

Paper 10

12.1 The board discussed the chair's proposal to reinstate the deputy chair role and **agreed** minor amendments to the terms of reference to clarify the responsibilities associated with this role. The board **approved** the appointment of Dr Adi Cooper as deputy chair and recommended that the need for a separate senior independent director role be reviewed following the end of the ARAC chair's term of appointment in July 2025. The board also suggested that, in due course, there should be further consideration as to whether the deputy chair position should attract additional remuneration, in conjunction with DfE.

12.2 The policy committee chair proposed the co-option of Lyn Romeo, former chief social worker for adults in the Department of Health and Social Care, to the policy committee, which would benefit from her unique experience and knowledge. The board **approved** the co-option.

13. AOB

Verbal

13.1 The chair invited the board to review the meeting. The board recognised that there had been challenges with the technology, during the session, which may have distracted from the experience of members, staff and observers joining remotely. The executive office team would take steps to minimise the risk of similar disruptions in the future.

13.2 The board proposed a future agenda item on the future approach to continuing professional development.

Action: Corporate governance manager to add continuing professional development to the 2025/26 board and committee work programme.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Friday 14 March 2025 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.35pm.

Summary of Actions

- The executive director, people and business support to ensure dedicated time is allocated during the May board strategy session agenda to further develop the culture and behaviours work, ensuring the board understand and are aligned to the behaviours framework.
- The corporate governance manager to coordinate an additional informal board meeting in December, to be utilised if information sharing on key developments is required.
- The corporate governance manager to seek feedback from non-executive director Simon Lewis on his experience of board induction.
- Corporate governance manager to add continuing professional development to the 2025/26 board and committee work programme.

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Summary of actions from board meetings up to 14 March 2025

Agenda Item 3 Paper Ref 02

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair

Author

Sophie Rees Rumney, Executive Assistant

Date

14 March 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 31 January 2025. 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 102:** The executive office team to diarise an annual meeting between the chair and the DPO around April/May. *A meeting between the chair and the DPO has been scheduled for the 15 May 2025. The meeting request has been added to the executive office team's annual meeting schedule.* **Action closed.**
- **Action 106:** 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. *A forward schedule of regular agenda items for the board and each committee was approved at the board strategy awayday on 27 September 2024. While the requirements and arrangements for the proposed forward schedule will be reviewed regularly, this item can now be closed.* **Action closed.**
- **Action 113:** The executive director, people and business support to ensure dedicated time is allocated during the May board strategy session agenda to further develop the culture and behaviours work, ensuring the board understand and are aligned to the behaviour's framework. *The executive office team have added an item on culture and behaviours work to the draft agenda for the board strategy session.* **Action closed.**
- **Action 115:** The corporate governance manager to seek feedback from non-executive director Simon Lewis on his experience of board induction. *Non-executive director Simon Lewis has provided feedback on his induction experience to the corporate governance manager.* **Action closed.**
- **Action 116:** Corporate governance manager to add continuing professional development to the 2025/26 board and committee work programme. *The board will receive an update on CPD at the 14 March 2025 meeting. As part of efforts to redesign the CPD framework and ensure board involvement, an item titled 'CPD: reimagining our processes and developing proposals' has been added to the board work programme for 31 October 2025.* **Action closed.**

Actions pending sign off at the 14 March 2025 meeting:

- **Action 101:** Executive director, people and business support to arrange cyber awareness training in consultation with the IT team, the chair and the ARAC chair. *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.* **Action to close.**
- **Action 105:** 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. *In discussion with the chair, this report was re-scheduled for the 14 March 2025 meeting so that it could provide a more complete picture of activity and the planned next steps. The report will be*

*presented with a new title 'Fitness to practise 2025/26 - case throughput and actions'. **Action to close.***

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
114	31/01/25	The corporate governance manager to coordinate an additional informal board meeting in December, to be utilised if information sharing on key developments is required.	Corporate governance manager	31/12/25	The corporate governance manager has consulted board members to identify a suitable date for an additional board meeting in December.	16/05/25	Open

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Chief executive's report

Agenda Item 5 Paper Ref 3

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

Author

Colum Conway

Date

14 March 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

It is a relatively short time between our board meetings in January and March. The focus of our work at an organisational level in these months is the ongoing development of our budget and business plan for the financial year ahead – 2025/2026. There are still some variables that need to be concluded however drafts and scenarios are available for the board today for consideration.

A good deal of detailed work has been completed on case progression in fitness to practise, this is detailed in a paper presented for discussion at the meeting today. Performance and timeliness remain a challenge however I think we have a clear pathway for sustained improvement in case progression and if we are able to secure additional resources, we will be in a good position to begin the work we have modelled to address the backlog of cases waiting for a hearing over time. By year end our DDaT review will be near completion as will the initial work on our culture and behaviours framework, this work will feed into objectives in the business plan for next year.

Alongside preparations for the year ahead we also have a focus on the year end 2024/2025. The initial phase of our external audit has been successfully concluded and work on the annual report and accounts is underway.

We are expecting the publication of our review by the Professional Standards Authority soon and we anticipate that the plans for our 5-year Independent Review will be in place in the coming months.

2. Change the Script – phase 2

Progress has been made on planning for phase 2 of the ‘Change the Script’ campaign, where we will look to build 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. We will work with stakeholders to broaden the campaign to influence wider societal narratives and understanding of social work as a regulated profession more generally. With content focused on relatable, credible human stories of social work, this includes campaign activity during Social Work Week, alongside a key moment in Q1 of 2025-2026 where we will launch a reframing guide which sets out how negative narratives about social work can be reframed to better represent the reality of the profession and the positive impact it makes.

3. Consultation on an increase in fees

The board will know that in February we launched a consultation on an increase in our fees. This is an important consultation as it opens up a conversation on the best way to fund the cost of professional regulation for social workers in England. The last such consultation was 10 years ago. Social Work England is a new regulator, and it has taken our early years to develop a business model that is underpinned by a sustainable approach to resources. In doing so we believe it is important to consider how to achieve the right balance between grant in aid and fee income. This is of course difficult in a what is a challenging financial environment for everyone, from individuals through to government. We look forward to hearing a range of views from across the social work sector through this consultation.

4. Reimagining renewals and CPD update

In our meeting today the board is presented with a paper – Reimagining renewals and CPD update. This is a summary of quite an extensive piece of work reviewing our renewals process

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with a view to completing a consultation process on any proposed changes to the renewals rules and implementing any changes in time for renewals this year. As the paper indicates the review concluded that the current process is proportionate, effective and balanced. The recommendations from the review are mostly in relation to internal operational procedures. This is a reassuring outcome and means the scope of the consultation will be more limited than we had anticipated.

Outcomes from the review on CPD are still being finalised. We are confident that there is general contentment with the process for submitting CPD. However, we know there are a range of views as to the nature and value of CPD and this will be explored further with the sector in a number of ways in the year ahead with a view to a consultation in 2026.

5. Conclusion

Next week we celebrate World Social Work day and of course we have our own Social Work Week. Social work has much to be proud of in England and further afield. In an uncertain world the commitment of the profession to working with some of the most vulnerable people in society is more important than ever.

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Chief executive’s meetings

Chair and CEO of the Disclosure and Barring Service

CEO BASW

Chief Social Worker – Adults

CEOs of Health and Care professional regulators

National Practice Group at DfE

External Reference Group at Ofsted

International Social Work Regulators network

CEOs UK Social Work regulators



Co-production paper

Agenda Item 8 Paper Ref 06

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

Author

Ahmina Akhtar

Date

14 March 2025

Reviewed by

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

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

Innovation and change - Open

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In progress

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1. Summary

In September 2024, responsibility for co-production and the management of the National Advisory Forum moved from strategic engagement to the newly formed EDI and co-production team, to align the two core principles of our strategy.

1. Equality, diversity and inclusion must be integral to and embedded in all we do. This must form a key part of the values and behaviours we bring as individuals and as an organisation.
2. We must always listen to, engage with and co-produce alongside those who are directly influenced by our work.

As part of this move a review was initiated of all current co-production processes. This paper will focus on the National Advisory Forum.

2. Action required

The board is asked to discuss our updated approach to co-production and specifically our ways of working with the National Advisory Forum.

3. Commentary

Co-production at Social Work England started during our setup phase with two separate groups. One for professional experts and one for experts by experience. Following this, the National Advisory Forum (NAF) was formed in 2020 to combine the expertise of those with lived and learned experience in one group. Membership of the NAF consistently includes registered and practicing social workers, social work academics, social work students and people with lived experience of social work.

The Forum acts as a critical friend to the organisation and as part of that remit, supports us to define what co-production looks like at Social Work England. It is actively involved in the implementation of our vision and how we meet our objectives.

During our initial corporate strategy whilst the organisation was forming, our focus was on embedding co-production into all relevant areas of work and ensuring that there was an understanding amongst our people of why we work in this way and how to get involved. Success was largely measured by how many pieces of co-production took place and our reach into different teams in the organisation. We also targeted work which we felt had the biggest impact and influence on decision-making such as strategies, business plans, policy committees, working groups and Social Work Week. Some pieces of work were resource intensive, but the value of NAF involvement was often difficult to consistently evidence across all pieces of work.

Our work with the National Advisory Forum and our approach to co-production is a relationship based and collaborative way of working. How we work with people is central to what we do and will remain so. The strength of the NAF comes from the commitment of each member to our work, which is rooted in their ability to have meaningful impact on our work and their positive experiences of doing so. A lot of our thinking in this review has been focused on how we can increase the consistency of the

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quality of the work and have better oversight including evaluation and evidencing impact, whilst retaining our person-centred approach.

Review

An extensive review of our approach to co-production began in summer 2023. This involved meeting with key stakeholders including the NAF, assistant directors, heads of service and regional engagement leads. It was agreed that our focus should be on impact and quality rather than quantity, along with embedding co-production across the organisation. There was a gap in activity for several reasons including a recruitment pause, extended leave and pre-election restrictions. Co-production officially moved to the newly formed EDI and co-production team in early September 2024.

As an arm's length body, we are publicly funded and have a finite budget for co-production. We have developed a prioritisation structure to ensure that we are committing time and resources into the projects which are the most impactful and clearly aligned with strategic and business objectives. We have developed a range of supporting documents to achieve this including:

- Co-production workplan to track projects and support reporting.
- Co-production Standard Operating Procedure to ensure that our processes are uniform and streamlined to ensure equity of experience in all projects
- Updated co-production request Microsoft form which includes questions around business plan objectives, timeframes and budget. The use of the Microsoft form enables us to pull the information directly from it into our workplan spreadsheet.
- Co-production feedback form to ensure continuous improvement.

By prioritising areas of focus for co-production, we ensure value for money whilst achieving our objectives. We are also exploring co-production outside of the National Advisory Forum, including the Education and Training Advisory Forum, Practice Educator Development Group, Social Work Week, and internally working with the People Forum, staff networks, and other sector stakeholders to increase our capacity and ensure we are collaborating with the people most impacted by that aspect of our work. This builds on work already achieved such as digital user research for example where the make-up of the NAF wasn't able to adequately represent the views of those we needed to engage.

We are currently working with the people team to strengthen the processes which enable staff networks to contribute to our people policies.

We are working with assistant directors to understand priorities for the next business year to allow us to forward plan and explore further opportunities to co-produce and stakeholders to target such as representative bodies in fitness to practise workstreams.

We are in the process of producing the EDI & co-production action plan for 2025 – 2026. The explicit inclusion of co-production in the action plan going forward will support us to ensure equal accountability is placed on this alongside EDI. Both are important in

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ensuring a whole organisation approach. In addition, the EDI & co-production roadshows will enable us to reach all teams and ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities as these principles underpin all our work.

As part of the review, the inclusion and co-production manager also conducted one to one sessions with National Advisory Forum members. The themes from these sessions were collated and the feedback has been used to inform our approach. The new approach was shared with the NAF in its November meeting and was well received.

Recruitment for new NAF members is taking place between March and April 2025. This is to replace members who are no longer able to engage in the forum or because of their terms ending.

We have actively explored ways to increase the reach of the opportunities including through specific EDI and co-production channels to ensure diversity of applicants. We will be looking for a mix of lived and learned experience and social work students. We will be doing another round of recruitment later this year for social workers and academics.

Internal training and engagement

The EDI officer and the participation officer are working together to review, bring together and improve our current EDI and co-production training offer to the organisation. A key aspect of this will be introducing our new ways of working and ensuring an ongoing focus on encouraging cross organisation understanding and appreciation of co-production, building on the foundation that we established since our inception.

Co-production is everyone's responsibility across the organisation, and we want to ensure that everybody has the correct understanding, support and resources to do that effectively and consistently

We have:

- Developed an intranet hub page that outlines the role and remit of the EDI & co-production team, describes our work, why to the organisation and highlights ways of getting involved.
- Plans to increase the training offer around co-production; creating a Grow pathway with content created alongside the NAF and developing a second phase of the co-production training that is focused on facilitating and delivering co-production.
- Plans to deliver a short session to each team in the organisation to introduce the EDI & co-production team, reiterate our role, make clear their responsibilities and also share information about the relevant training and resources.
- A more proactive approach to case studies and sharing positive examples in the organisation to ensure it remains a present part of our culture and people can understand the impact.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Our previous approach to co-production was successful in increasing understanding of co-production across the organisation and embedding it in a wide range of areas. However, the lack of consistency and standardised processes meant it was difficult to consistently evidence the impact of this work effectively and provide quality assurance.

By standardising our processes, maintaining accurate records and tracking of individual projects, budgets and involvement, we will be more easily be able to measure and evidence the impact of co-production both internally and externally. We want to be able to say, 'were it not for co-production, xxxx project would not have been a success'. The following processes are being implemented to support this ambition.

1. Improved reporting measures including the creation of a Power Bi Report to pull data from the co-production workplan. This will be used to inform existing quarterly reporting on co-production activity to ELT/board. This will also support our reporting to the PSA.
2. Implementation of new co-production request processes to support prioritisation of requests, clarify budget, project duration and estimated spend.
3. Work with the people and development team and wider internal colleagues to further embed co-production outside of the NAF, ensuring we are engaging staff networks and groups such as the people forum for work which is supporting internal organisational objectives.
4. Re-establish the relationships between regional engagement leads/board and National Advisory Forum Members in line with our new ways of working. We want to ensure that the REL's and the board continue to have a constructive relationship with the NAF. We believe this aim is best achieved through collective engagement on aspects of our strategy and business plan.

Regional Engagement Leads

Regional engagement leads will attend the National Advisory Forum meetings on rotation to maintain connections and seek additional input via the revised co-production request form.

Board

The Board will maintain their relationship with the NAF through:

- NAF member attendance at policy committee
- Board member attendance at NAF meetings by prior arrangement with a particular purpose e.g. board induction
- An annual overlapping in person meeting between the board and NAF that coincides with an awareness moment event.

We have concluded that regular facilitation of individual reciprocal relationships is not likely to be the most effective approach to building relationships and mutual understanding/dialogue between the board and NAF, but if there is a need to establish a 1:2:1 relationship for a particular purpose then a request could be brought to ELT for consideration. This approach will enable broader-

based dialogue, improve equity and better serve our needs given the size of the board and the NAF.

5. Review of current training packages to inform the creation of a bespoke training package covering EDI and co-production.
6. Create a benchmarking tool for co-production activity.

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Finance and commercial update

Agenda Item 9 Paper Ref 07

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

Author

David Mellers, Senior Finance Business Partner

Date

14 March 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 January 2025
- Commercial update

2. Action required

For discussion and noting.

3. Commentary

Management accounts

A summary set of the Management Accounts for the year to 31 January 2025 can be found in Annex A. Key highlights are:

Full year revenue expenditure, net of fee income, is £7,210k which is £1,886k 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£500k) and a lower level of EQA expenditure than anticipated (£110k travel and £190k partner fees).

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 £1.1m (10% variance from budget), this is marginally lower than the forecast of £1.2m presented to the board on 31 January 2025. The sharp increase in forecast year-end variance to budget since Q2 reflects difficulties we have experienced in being able to accelerate the number of hearings that were originally planned as part of our budget mitigation plan. We are now expecting increased hearings activity in February and March and the forecast includes for a significant increase in hearings costs to cover this additional effort.

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.

Year to date capital expenditure is £1,640k, which is an £112k underspend compared to budget. Whilst the full year forecast shows a reduction in the underspend to £20k, there is risk that this underspend may increase as we finalise the allocation to capital projects for the year.

Commercial Update

We are currently planning re-procurement for our combined cleaning and maintenance contract (circa £145k), and travel and hotel services (circa £300k).

4. Annexes

Annex A – Management accounts at 31 January 2025

Income and Expenditure Statement

Directorates	Year to date amount	Year to date budget	Year to date variance	Full year budget	Full year forecast	Full year variance	Forecast Variance %
Fee income	(8,473,324)	(8,433,290)	40,034	(10,109,706)	(10,141,752)	32,046	0%
Executive Leadership Team							
Wages & Salaries	473,691	430,160	(43,531)	518,265	582,792	(64,527)	
Support	33,794	29,167	(4,628)	35,000	39,628	(4,627)	
Total	507,485	459,327	(48,159)	553,265	622,420	(69,155)	-12%
People & Business Support							
Wages & Salaries	2,082,985	2,251,363	168,378	2,676,937	2,450,344	226,593	
Support	2,164,982	2,171,383	6,401	2,686,006	2,969,889	(283,883)	
Total	4,247,968	4,422,746	174,779	5,362,943	5,420,233	(57,290)	-1%
Regulation							
Wages & Salaries	4,942,139	5,268,166	326,026	6,398,822	6,052,140	346,682	
Support	3,946,525	4,934,183	987,659	6,167,782	5,538,531	629,250	
Total	8,888,664	10,202,349	1,313,685	12,566,604	11,590,671	975,933	8%
Professional practice and external engagement							
Wages & Salaries	1,744,493	1,833,368	88,875	2,235,116	2,131,841	103,275	
Support	294,731	612,234	317,503	764,776	637,823	126,953	
Total	2,039,223	2,445,601	406,378	2,999,893	2,769,665	230,228	8%
Total Expenditure	15,683,340	17,530,023	1,846,683	21,482,705	20,402,988	1,079,717	5%
Net Expenditure	7,210,016	9,096,733	1,886,717	11,372,999	10,261,237	1,111,763	10%

Depreciation/Amortisation	1,663,505	1,801,667	138,162	2,262,000	1,996,216	265,784	12%
Net Expenditure inc Depreciation	8,873,522	10,898,400	2,024,878	13,634,999	12,257,453	1,377,546	10%
Capital Expenditure	1,640,742	1,753,000	112,257	2,132,000	2,112,141	19,859	1%
Total	10,514,264	12,651,400	2,137,136	15,766,999	14,369,594	1,397,405	9%

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Balance Sheet

	Cost £	Depreciation £	N.B.V £
Fixed Assets			
Buildings	1,264,299	(979,820)	284,479
Right of Use Asset	1,124,002	(495,123)	628,879
IT Equipment	1,182,631	(1,037,855)	144,775
Fixtures & Fittings	331,614	(320,061)	11,552
Internally generated system	7,807,986	(1,301,331)	4,554,659
Forge System (WIP)	4,397,431	0	4,397,431
	16,107,962	(4,134,190)	10,021,776
Current Assets			
Prepayments			553,973
Bank			4,942,671
Debtors			38,934
			5,535,578
Current Liabilities			
Accruals			(670,996)
Deferred Income			(5,220,757)
Payables			(2,320,202)
			(8,211,955)
Working Capital (Current Assets less Current Liabilities)			(2,676,377)
Non-Current Liabilities			
Short Term - PFI Finance Lease Liability Additions			(1,152,302)
Lease liability payments			456,743
Lease interest			(69,925)
Provisions			(135,542)
			(901,027)
Total Assets & Liabilities			6,444,372
Taxpayers equity			6,444,372

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Reimagining renewals and CPD update

Agenda Item 13 Paper Ref 11

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

Author

Katie Grayson-Purdy, senior policy manager and Calvin Ngwenya, registration and advice manager –renewals and CPD

Date

14 March 2025

Reviewed by

Sarah Blackmore, Executive Director, Professional Practice and External Engagement

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO5: Ensure that our registration processes are fair, responsive and efficient.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Regulatory functions - Cautious

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

N/A

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1. Summary

We introduced our requirements for registration renewal, including those relating to CPD, in 2019 when we became the specialist regulator for social work in England. Now that we have been regulating for 5 years, we felt the time was right to reflect on our requirements. We set out our commitment to do this in our business plan:

- **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.
- **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.

For both pieces of work, there would be 3 distinct phases: understanding more about renewals and CPD, reimagining our processes and developing proposals. It was agreed that it would be efficient and logical to combine the first phase of this work, and in September 2024 we launched the joint Reimagining Renewals and CPD project. It was recognised that, once the first phase of data gathering and analysis was complete, the 2 workstreams should decouple in recognition of the fact that CPD will require more in-depth consideration as part of phases 2 and 3 in next year and beyond.

We are now approaching the end of the first phase of work and are providing the board with an update on its progress and proposed next steps.

2. Action required

No action required. This paper is for assurance and noting.

3. Commentary

The project has been overseen by a steering group comprising colleagues from across the organisation. We also met with the National Advisory Forum to discern the most effective and meaningful ways to engage with them throughout the project. As a result, we have agreed with them that this is best done during the next stages of the work as we explore and develop proposals for change.

Following a review of our internal and external messaging on the aims and objectives for our renewals and CPD approaches, we designed questions that would help us to test them. In order to explore and answer these and related questions, we carried out a series of evidence-gathering activities, including a survey and 2 workshops for social workers, an internal batch review of anonymised CPD records, a literature review of research into the purpose and impact of CPD, and a desk-based review of our and other regulator’s messaging about the purpose, aims and objectives of CPD requirements.

Key findings

Registration renewals

In summary, the review of renewals concluded that our current overarching approach to annual registration renewal is proportionate, effective and offers the right balance between public protection and efficiency. The review indicates that the annual renewal cycle remains effective in ensuring registration renewal compliance. In view of our findings that the renewal process is fit for purpose, and well accepted by social workers and internal teams, we only identified the need to make incremental changes to refine our processes and proposed a

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series of operational improvements. We are confident that our overarching approach remains the most suitable model to deliver our primary purpose of protecting the public. Key findings include:

- **Annual cycle of our current approach:** The annual approach to renewals is accepted by the sector, furthermore the sector agree that this drives public protection. The annual nature also drives learning within the sector and creates a manageable flow of work for the organisation. Retaining the annual renewal cycle will maintain regulatory oversight, compliance with CPD, and continue to promote public protection.
- **Timings of the renewals window (1 September to 30 November):** The timing of the renewals window is appropriate and afforded social workers sufficient time to complete the renewal actions.
- **The 3 mandatory actions that social workers are required to complete:** Social workers and employers are confident and familiar with the annual registration renewal process and the actions required to successfully renew their annual registration.
- **The digital journey social workers must engage with:** Compliance data and feedback indicates that most social workers find the online renewal form intuitive, with a very few encountering user issues with the system.
- **Accessibility of our current approach:** Social workers agreed that the online journey is accessible and easy to navigate, and that Social Work England provides sufficient support, guidance and communication to enable compliance with registration renewal.

CPD

In relation to CPD we identified 3 thematic areas which we wanted to address during this evidence-gathering stage of the work, which raised the following questions:

- **Understanding behaviours:** What can we learn about CPD from the way social workers do, and record, their CPD in our online system?
- **Understanding practice impact:** Can we tell what impact our CPD requirements have on practice?
- **Understanding attitudes:** What do social workers and other stakeholders think, feel, and hope for in relation to our CPD requirements?

At the time of writing this paper we are still finalising the outcomes. Though some of the findings aren’t new, there is value in confirming that they continue to be true, and to what extent that is the case. Key findings include:

- **Recording CPD:** Social workers are completing CPD submissions with rigour and detail on a wide variety of topics, with safeguarding being the most common focus. Though they share that they are carrying out CPD year-round, most social workers only record the required 2 pieces each year, indicating they are recording CPD with us purely to meet the CPD threshold for renewal.
- **Attitudes towards CPD:** Social workers see the CPD they do as essential to their professional development, but advocate for a longer CPD cycle to ease the burden of recording CPD. Some feel our requirement to only record 2 pieces of CPD demonstrates that we do not value the breadth of CPD a social worker does throughout the year, or that we see CPD as being directly linked to their registration renewal, and that that’s the reason for our specific requirements.

- **Employers and CPD:** There are key themes in the literature relating to CPD in social work, including the importance of employer support around undertaking CPD, and the influence this can have on a social worker feeling like they have the right tools to do their job effectively. Some social workers also shared that they don't always feel supported by their employer to complete CPD and argued for a greater role for employers in managing and monitoring CPD.
- **Purpose and impact:** Our current requirements are flexible and allow social workers significant latitude in how they select and record CPD, more so than most other regulators. As indicated above, social workers are carrying out CPD all year-round, but the timing of submissions suggests that entries are not being completed at the time the CPD activity is undertaken, and we continue to see peaks in recording during the renewal period. This calls into question the quality of the reflection and its ability to drive up quality in practice.
- **Quality of our online platform:** Though we are aware of the opinion by some that the requirement to record their CPD with us is burdensome, the recording platform itself does not appear to be a barrier. We gathered suggestions from a few on how it could be improved, but they were not enough to indicate a consistent trend, and we therefore have no reason to suggest any substantial changes are needed.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Following the completion of this first phase of work, the 2 workstreams are proceeding as follows:

Registration renewals

The outputs from the review were discussed at ELT in February 2025, which recommended that no significant changes were required to our over-arching approach to renewals. Several recommendations were made to ELT that focussed on operational effectiveness and how we further improve our engagement with the sector. We are now developing plans to deliver these improvements.

CPD

With the data collection and analysis phase complete, we are now preparing to share an overview of the findings with ELT, and make recommendations for the next phase of this work. We will use the next financial year for further exploration in some areas where our work raised further questions, or where we found a lack of evidence. We will also develop our proposals for changes to our CPD model, prioritising next steps for the CPD review element of the process, in preparation for consultation in the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

We also anticipate carrying out further engagement, both with the sector, the National Advisory Forum and with other regulators. We know the board is also keen to be involved in this work, so we will come back to the board in the next financial year to gather their thoughts to feed into the development of any future proposals.

5. Annexes

None

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Corporate Governance: policy update

Agenda Item 14 Paper Ref 12, Annex 12a,12b, 12c

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

The Chair of the Board

Author

Chloe Corbett, Corporate Governance Manager

Date

14 March 2025

Reviewed by

Linda Dale, Executive Director, People and Business Support

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

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1. Summary

In accordance with good corporate governance practice Social Work England conducts an annual review of the board-related policies. These documents have been reviewed to ensure they align with our Framework Document, official guidance and best practice.

2. Action required

The board is invited to review and approve the policy documents contained in the annexes that follow.

3. Commentary

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

- Board code of conduct policy
- Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy
- Gifts and hospitality policy.

4. Conclusions and/or Recommendations

The board code of conduct policy remains largely unchanged. The amendments to this policy include:

- New reference to the Social Work England social media policy
- New reference to the Senior Independent Director/Deputy Chair role in relation to raising concerns
- Addition of links to the gifts and hospitality policy and social media policy
- Minor amendments to wording, that do not affect content or meaning

Proposed changes are displayed in red text.

The board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy, and the gifts and hospitality policy were reviewed in February 2025, and it was determined that no further amendments are required at present.

5. Annexes

- Annex 12a: Board code of conduct policy
- Annex 12b: Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy
- Annex 12c: Gifts and hospitality policy.

Board code of conduct policy

1 Why do we need this policy?

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

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

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

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

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

2 Who needs to follow this policy and why?

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

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

Duty to follow principles of public life

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

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

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

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

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

General conduct

Duty to safeguard public funds

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

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

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

Duty not to accept benefits from third parties

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

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

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

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

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

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involving the Board and Executive Directors will be published within the annual report and website and could be disclosed to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Duty to preserve confidentiality

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

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

Duty to act in the public interest

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

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

Duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to register interests

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

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

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

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

Board members' interests will be published on our website.

Board members will declare any other employment.

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Where there is potential for interests to be material or relevant to us such interests should be declared and recorded in the register held and maintained by the executive office team. Examples of interests which should be declared, though not exhaustive, are:

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

Duty to promote equality, diversity and human rights

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

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

Failure to comply with Code of Conduct

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

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

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

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Chair of the Board

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

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

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

4.2 Board members

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

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

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

4.3 Conducting Board meetings

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

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

4.4 Responsibilities towards employees

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

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

4.5 Social media

Board members should follow our Social Media Policy.

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

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

5 Raising concerns

If a Board member wishes to express a concern about the behaviour of another Board member, they should in the first instance raise the issue with the Chair. If the concern involves the Chair, the Board member should raise the matter with the **Senior Independent Director/Deputy Chair, or Chief Executive. Following this, If the concern is still not resolved, the Board member should contact the Department for Education.**

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

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6 Related policies, procedures and information sources

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

[Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#)

[Social Media Policy](#)

7 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact our corporate governance manager.

8 Definitions

8.1 Non-departmental public body (NDPB)

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

8.2 Code of conduct

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

Last reviewed: February 2025

Next review: February 2026

Signed off by Board: March 2024

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

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

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Board declaration of interest and conflict resolution policy

Why do we need this policy?

This policy provides guidance on (all of the following):

- recognising and disclosing activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts
- ensuring that we avoid, or properly manage, any conflicts

Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all Social Work England Board members.

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

Board members must always demonstrate high standards of (all of the following):

- professional conduct
- impartiality
- honesty
- integrity

All Board members must identify and disclose activities and relationships that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts. They must also ensure that any conflicts are properly managed (or avoided).

If properly managed, a Board member's activities can proceed as normal. This will ensure the Board member still upholds their obligations to Social Work England, protecting the integrity and reputation of the organisation.

However, there is a risk if Board members do not report conflicts, or if we do not manage these conflicts effectively. This may (do all of the following):

- jeopardise public confidence in Social Work England and damage our credibility
- damage the credibility of the individual(s) concerned

Our values also reflect our statutory public sector equality duty. This requires us to (do all of the following):

- have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- foster good relations between different groups

Therefore, Board members must behave in a manner which is compatible with our values.

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Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest can arise where a Board member's commitments and obligations to us are compromised (or may appear to be compromised). This may include (any of the following):

- a Board member has competing interests or loyalties that are (or could be) at odds with each other
- a Board member's private affairs or financial interests are in conflict (or could appear to be in conflict) with the interests of Social Work England
- a person with whom the Board member has a close personal relationship has private affairs or financial interests in conflict (or could appear to be in conflict) with the interests of Social Work England
- a Board member's actions appear to show bias or favouritism towards another person (this could be within or outside Social Work England)

There can be situations which appear to show a conflict of interest, even when no conflict exists. It is important for all Board members to consider how potential conflicts of interest might be perceived.

Financial conflicts of interest: We define a financial conflict of interest as any situation where there is (or appears to be) any of the following:

- opportunity for personal financial gain
- opportunity for financial gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the Board member has a close personal relationship)
- reason for another party to believe that a Board member's actions are affected by financial benefits

Financial interest means anything of monetary value. For example (any of the following):

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

Non-financial conflicts of interest

Non-financial interest may include any benefit or advantage. This includes, but is not limited to (either of the following):

- direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career
- gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship)

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Types of conflicts of interest

We have set out below some types of information which Board members should consider declaring as potential conflicts of interest.

This list is not exhaustive. It is impossible to list every potential situation or circumstance that could give rise to a conflict of interest. Board members should use their judgement to decide whether to disclose any of their interests.

Directorships and committee appointments

Both paid and unpaid directorships of any public or private company (or other body). This also includes (either of the following)

- non-executive director roles
- senior employee roles
- any roles or positions with other committees

Other remunerated work

Any paid employment or other sources of income outside normal work. For example, paid consultancy or advisory positions. These could be with government departments or private companies.

Gifts, benefits and hospitality

Any substantial gift or material advantage received by a member, which in any way relates to their role as a Social Work England Board member. For further guidance on this, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality policy.

Shareholdings or other positions

Any relevant organisation in which the Board member holds significant shareholdings, interest or control. This includes partnerships and consultancy activities.

Relevant organisations include (any of the following):

- public companies
- private companies
- not-for-profits

Indirect social or business relationships and family interests

Any close association with an individual who has (any of the following):

- a financial interest
- a non-financial professional interest
- a non-financial personal interest
- and any other interests

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in Social Work England.

Miscellaneous and unremunerated interests

Other interests which do not fall clearly within any of the above categories. For example (either of the following):

- membership of (or work for) other bodies such as charities which could possibly influence a Board member's position.
- the possession of confidential information

How we manage conflicts of interest

We require all our Board members to (do both of the following):

- update their declaration of interests for each Board meeting
- submit a signed record of their register annually

We'll make a copy of all declared Board member interests available at each Board meeting. We'll also do this at sub-committee meetings. For example (all of the following):

- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- the Policy Committee
- the Remuneration Committee

The Chair will ask (both of the following):

- if there are any new interests to add
- if there any potential conflicts of interest specific to the issues being considered at the meeting

This is to confirm (and potentially add to) the interests that Board members have already declared before the meeting.

The secretariat will formally record any declarations of interest within all Board meeting and sub-committee minutes. They'll also record any actions arising from the declarations. The Secretariat of the Social Work England Board will also maintain a written record of all disclosures. We'll also publish all declarations of interest on our website.

Each Board member is responsible for informing the Chair if a conflict arises (or if someone might perceive a conflict). They should do this as soon as possible.

If a Board member has an actual (or potential) conflict of interest, the Chair will take one of the following approaches:

- requiring the Board member not to attend the meeting. They may also exclude the member from receiving meeting papers relating to their interest
- excluding the Board member from all (or part) of the relevant discussion and decision

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- allowing the Board member to remain and participate. However, they will note the nature and extent of the potential conflict of interest

They will ensure that the secretariat documents the reason for the chosen action in minutes and/or records.

If Board members don't follow this policy

If Board members don't follow this policy, the policy owner and the Head of Finance and Commercial (or corporate governance manager) will agree the most appropriate course of action. The course of action will be dependent on the circumstances.

2 Roles and responsibilities

Board members (as individuals)

- On appointment to the Social Work England Board, every Board member must make a written disclosure. This should cover any activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest (or the perception of conflicts).
- Each Board member should recognise situations in which they have a conflict of interest (or which others might reasonably see as a conflict). They should then disclose that conflict and take any further steps as set out in this policy.
- If in doubt, the Board member should declare the activity or relationship in the interests of transparency.

3 Related policies, procedures and information sources

Board code of conduct policy

Board related parties transaction form

Gifts and hospitality policy

4 Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact [corporate governance manager](#).

5 Definitions

Conflict of interest

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

Last reviewed: February 2025

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Next review: February 2026

Signed off by Board: March 2024

Policy Owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

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Gifts and hospitality policy

Why do we need this policy?

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

Who needs to follow this policy and why?

This policy applies to all of the following:

- board members
- employees
- partners

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

- You must declare all offers of gifts and hospitality, made to or by you, regardless of value.
- Any offers or acceptance of gifts and hospitality must be reported to the corporate governance manager.
- All offers of gifts and hospitality must be recorded in the gifts and hospitality register.
- Offers must be declared whether they are accepted or declined.

Receiving Gifts

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are not placed in a position that compromises your role or our organisation's statutory obligations or appears to do so.

Seasonal or modest gifts may be accepted. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- diaries
- pens
- calendars

Gifts through which a member of staff might personally or financially benefit must not be accepted. For example, trade or discount cards. Gifts of alcohol should not be accepted under any circumstances.

Gifts should be refused or returned with a carefully worded covering letter, especially where a contractor relationship is involved.

Where the refusal or return of a gift is likely to offend or embarrass the donor discretion may be exercised as to the handling and retention of the gift. This is dependent on all of the following:

- value of the gift
- nature of the gift

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- origin of the gift

In these circumstances, guidance on whether to retain the gift should be sought from the corporate governance manager.

A distinction should be made between items offered as gifts and those offered in place of fees for speeches, lectures, or other work done in an official capacity. Offers of this kind may be accepted providing the item is of a trivial nature or value but should still be reported.

Receiving Hospitality

In determining whether it is proper to accept hospitality offered, all of the following should be considered:

Nature of the hospitality:

Approval is generally not required for a working lunch which is regarded as acceptable practice.

A more formal lunch or dinner should be approved by a member of the executive leadership team, chief executive and/or chair prior to attendance.

Representation:

Care should be taken to ensure that the organisation is not over-represented when invited to formal events where hospitality is accepted.

Risk of expectation of reciprocal hospitality or business:

Care should be taken not to accept or offer hospitality that will create an expectation of the same in return, or an expectation that other business benefits may be offered such as a favourable regulatory decision or the awarding of a contract.

Where refusal of hospitality may cause embarrassment or appear discourteous, guidance should be sought from the corporate governance manager prior to acceptance/refusal.

Further Guidelines for Offers of Hospitality

Offers of hospitality should only be accepted where there is a clear link to working arrangements and a business reason can be demonstrated. For example (any of the following):

- attendance at a conference which provides complimentary subsistence, travel and accommodation (this does not need to be declared on the register unless a gift is received)
- attending a free training course
- attending a drinks reception to network with key partners or stakeholders

The receipt of modest working lunches and dinners are acceptable where there is a business reason. For example, maintaining good relationships with existing and future stakeholders. Care should be taken when accepting hospitality from potential future contractors. In particular, it is not advisable to accept gifts/hospitality at any point in the time surrounding a

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tendering process or a contract renewal as this has the potential to be construed as a bribe. In these circumstances, guidance should be sought from the commercial team. Invitations to events which are purely social events should be considered carefully before accepting as it may be difficult to substantiate a genuine business reason. You should seek guidance from a member of the executive leadership team, chief executive or chair prior to accepting.

The following guidance outlines what action should be taken when seeking approval for the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

Hospitality	Prior Approval?	Further Action?
Modest conventional hospitality (working lunch)	No	None
Formal lunch/dinner by prior invitation	Prior approval required from an executive director, chief executive and/or chair. Consult commercial team if offered during a tender process.	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Commemorative event, for example, those organised by a contractor, consultant or supplier to celebrate a hand over, or opening	Prior approval required if it takes the form of a formal lunch or dinner by prior invitation; otherwise, no approval required	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Annual dinner of a professional institute where the officer is a guest of the institute or association	No	Record in gifts and hospitality register
Cultural or sporting event as a guest	Prior approval required from an executive director, chief executive and/or chair. Consult commercial team if offered during a tender process.	Record in gifts and hospitality register

Gifts and Hospitality Register

The corporate governance manager shall keep a register of gifts and hospitality. This will cover all invitations and offers of gifts and hospitality extended to staff, board members and partners, whether they are accepted or declined.

The register shall be available for periodic inspection by internal audit and will be made available at year end for review by external audit.

All offers of gifts and hospitality involving the board and executive directors will be published within the annual report and website.

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

Gifts/ Hospitality record form

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

Completed and approved forms should be sent to the corporate governance manager who will update the register accordingly and file the forms appropriately. All such forms will be made available for review by internal and external audit.

Reporting, Monitoring and Reviewing

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

All gifts, prizes and donations made by Social Work England staff **must** be reported in writing on an annual basis. This will be commissioned by the finance team.

Providing gifts and hospitality

The expenditure of public money on official gifts and hospitality should be done with modesty. Frivolity and excess can provide just cause for a negative public reaction.

Providing gifts

In line with [Managing Public Money](#), we may make gifts of items such as mugs and pens bearing the Social Work England name and/or logo. Similarly, for promotional purposes, small value items such as gift tokens may be used.

Gifts and vouchers to staff are generally inappropriate unless as part of our recognised non-pay reward scheme, Applause.

Providing Hospitality

Hospitality (both internal and external) can be described as any generous or material reception that is more than incidental. Detailed guidance in regard to providing hospitality is contained within our [travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#).

Key things you need to know:

- When considering a gift, you must speak to the [finance team](#) first to ensure you have the appropriate authority and budget. The finance team will also decide whether the gift is acceptable/appropriate.

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- Before giving or offering a gift(s) or hospitality, prior approval must be obtained as outlined within this policy and the [travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#).
- Make sure any decisions you make, and any approval given, are fully documented.
- Your actions must bear both public and internal scrutiny. Breaches of policy or unethical behaviour may result in disciplinary action.

Expenditure on official gifts

You must attain approval from HM Treasury and/or Parliament before providing money or purchasing property that you intend to give as a gift.

Purchase of Alcohol

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

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

Roles and responsibilities

Accounting officer

The accounting officer's responsibilities in regard to this document cover the following areas:

Regularity and Propriety

- Ensuring all transactions are accurately identified and recorded
- Ensuring that all requested funds are used for the purpose intended

Value for Money

- Ensuring that the organisation's procurement, projects and processes are regularly evaluated and reviewed. This is so that we can ensure confidence with regard to suitability, effectiveness value.

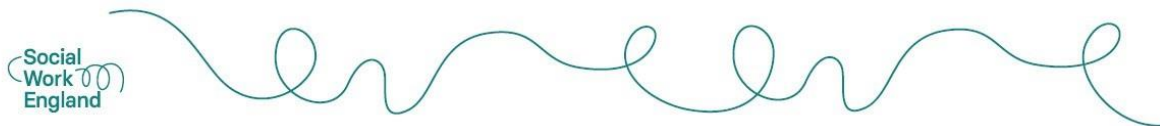
Management of opportunity and risk

- Achieving the right balance commensurate with the organisation's business and risk appetite.

Corporate governance manager

- Ensure the gifts and hospitality register is accurate and complete at all times
- Ensure all details contained within record forms are accurately transferred to the register.
- Ensure all forms are securely stored and available for inspection
- Provide a quarterly report of all gifts and hospitality to the head of finance and the executive director of people and business support for review
- Provide an annual summary of the register for inclusion in the annual report and website
- Provide, upon request, all details/records relating to the receipt and offer of gifts and hospitality for internal and external audit

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All Board members, employees and partners

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

Queries?

If you have a query about this policy, please contact the corporate governance manager.

Definitions

Gift

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

Hospitality

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

NDPB

Non-Departmental Public Body

Propriety

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

Regularity

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

Supply estimates

Supply Estimates are the means by which a department seeks authority from Parliament for its own spending each year, including spending by its NDPBs.

Related policies, procedures and information sources

- [Travel, subsistence and expenses policy](#)
- [Anti-fraud policy](#)
- [Fraud response procedure](#)
- [Government procurement card policy](#)
- [Disciplinary policy](#)
- [Employee code of conduct](#)
- [Board code of conduct](#)

Policy information

- Last reviewed: February 2025

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- Next review date: February 2026
- Board sign off: March 2024
- Policy owner: Executive Director – People and Business Support

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