



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2019/20



Regulator reviewed: **Social Work England**

Key facts & figures:

- Maintains a register of **social workers in England**
- **95,251 professionals** on the register at 31 December 2020
- Annual registration is **£90** (as at 31 December 2020)

Standards of good regulation met

General Standards	4/5
Guidance and Standards	2/2
Education and Training	2/2
Registration	3/4
Fitness to Practise	4/5

We look carefully at a range of evidence to decide whether each Standard is met or not. The total number of Standards met does not on its own give the full picture of how a regulator is performing. Read the full performance review to find out more.

Find out more about our performance reviews at:
www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performancereviews

Focus on: **How Social Work England is meeting the Standards**

Social Work England has met 15 of our 18 Standards of Good Regulation in its first year of operation. Because it was a new regulator, we adapted our oversight to respond to new risks that might arise. We shared feedback with Social Work England throughout the year, including by publishing a report on how it had used some of its new powers to close fitness to practise cases.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Social Work England was given the power to open a temporary register of social workers to help with the response to the pandemic. There were over 8,000 people on the temporary register by the end of 2020. Social Work England worked with other organisations to create an online tool to help match people on the temporary register with suitable local employers. It also collaborated on guidance for social workers about specific risks and changes to practice as a result of the pandemic, as well as publishing information about what education providers were doing to adapt their courses to the emergency.

GENERAL STANDARDS: UNDERSTANDS THE DIVERSITY OF ITS REGISTRANTS AND THEIR PATIENTS AND SERVICE USERS AND OF OTHERS WHO INTERACT WITH THE REGULATOR AND ENSURES THAT ITS PROCESSES DO NOT IMPOSE INAPPROPRIATE BARRIERS OR OTHERWISE DISADVANTAGE PEOPLE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Social Work England did not meet Standard 3 because it had made limited progress in its first year on gathering data about the diversity of its registrants and on developing and implementing its strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion. We recognise that as a new organisation Social Work England was collecting data for the first time and we have seen that it has undertaken further activity in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion since the end of our review period; we will consider this in our next review.

REGISTRATION: THE PROCESS FOR REGISTRATION, INCLUDING APPEALS, OPERATES PROPORTIONATELY, FAIRLY AND EFFICIENTLY, WITH DECISIONS CLEARLY EXPLAINED

We looked at how long Social Work England was taking to process applications for registration. No other regulator took as long, on average, across all categories of application. The pandemic had an effect on its ability to deal with registration applications. We did not see evidence that the effect of the pandemic on Social Work England was so different from the other regulators that it justified the significant difference in processing times. We decided that Standard 11 is not met.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE

Social Work England met four of our five Standards for fitness to practise. It did not meet Standard 17 because we had concerns about risk assessments in fitness to practise: for most of our review period it was not routinely carrying out full risk assessments at triage; in our audit of cases we found numerous failures to follow the relevant policy; and we were not assured that it was making decisions about interim orders promptly enough in transfer cases.

Find out more:

► Read through our *Review of Social Work England's process for 'accepted outcomes' in fitness to practise cases*

► You can find our full performance review of Social Work England on our website www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews