



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2020/21



Regulator reviewed: **Social Work England**

Key facts & figures:

- Maintains a register of **social workers in England**
- **99,191 professionals** on the register at 30 November 2021
- Annual registration is **£90**

Standards of good regulation met

General Standards	4/5
Guidance and Standards	2/2
Education and Training	2/2
Registration	4/4
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**

For this review period Social Work England met 16 of our 18 Standards. It did not meet Standard 3, because we were concerned about the lack of EDI data it held on its registrants. It did not meet Standard 17, because we were concerned about how long it took to make decisions about interim orders.

GENERAL STANDARDS: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

Social Work England has developed an EDI action plan. This was published after the end of this review period, and most of the activity in it is due to take place over the coming months. There was relatively limited progress against the action plan during our review period. Social Work England is also hindered by a lack of EDI data: by the end of our review period, it had EDI data for less than 5% of its registrants. We were not assured that it understands the diversity of its registrants, or ensures that its processes do not disadvantage people with protected characteristics, whilst the data is so limited. Social Work England has started to make some encouraging progress in this area, and we will continue to monitor how it carries out its action plan. But Standard 3 is not met this year.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING STANDARDS

Social Work England implemented new education and training standards, a significant development in its oversight of education and training providers, which it had put back a year because of the pandemic. It liaised with course providers in advance to ensure they could make any necessary changes.

Social Work England has also worked on education and training standards for two groups of professionals carrying out roles under the Mental Health Act, commissioning research and consulting with experts to inform those standards. It took a sensible and proactive approach overall and we are satisfied that Standard 8 is met.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: TIMELINESS

Social Work England's ability to progress fitness to practise cases continues to be significantly affected by the impact of the cases transferred from the HCPC. This was a challenge unique to Social Work England as a new body and progressing these cases was a challenge that could not be resolved in the first year.

Social Work England's focus on clearing these legacy cases is appropriate and it has made good progress this year, whilst avoiding creating significant problems for future years. Standard 15 is met this year. However, it is important that we see the resolution of the vast majority of remaining legacy cases, as well as progress in timeliness and triage, over the next year.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: INTERIM ORDERS (IOs)

Interim Orders are an important part of a regulator's work in that they enable it to restrict its registrants' practice if there is evidence there may be a danger to public safety. Last year we were concerned that Social Work England was not undertaking risk assessments appropriately and so might not properly assess whether an IO is necessary. It was also taking too long to seek these orders.

This year we found that Social Work England has made progress in relation to risk assessments at triage. We are also encouraged by the progress it has reported on the application of its risk assessment policy. However, we are concerned that Social Work England has been taking longer to make IO decisions this year, particularly on new cases. This delay means that Standard 17 is not met.