

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

**13 March 2026**

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Regulatory performance of Social Work England**

I am writing to update you on Social Work England’s performance in terms of its fitness to practise work following our previous letter dated 17 March 2025.

On 20 March 2026, we will publish our annual review of Social Work England’s performance covering the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. I attach a copy of our report, which is under embargo until publication.

As you know, the PSA reports to Parliament each year on the performance of the 10 statutory health and social care regulators of professionals.<sup>1</sup> We judge a regulator’s performance against our 18 Standards of Good Regulation, which cover the four key regulatory functions of guidance and standards, education and training, registration and fitness to practise. Each Standard is assessed as being ‘met’ or ‘not met’.

### **Our 2024/25 performance review**

We continue to have concerns about the time Social Work England is taking to process its fitness to practise cases, and this is the fourth consecutive year for which Social Work England has not met our Standard for fitness to practise timeliness. As of the end of December 2025, the median time taken from Social Work England receiving referrals, to those cases being closed at the hearings stage, is 219 weeks. There is some indication that this time is no longer increasing and has stabilised, but we continue to consider it to be taking far too long.

We also remain concerned about the number of open cases awaiting conclusion at a hearing. At the end of 2024, Social Work England had 421 open cases at the hearings stage. This has increased to 441 by the end of 2025, though in recent quarters this also

---

<sup>1</sup> These are the General Chiropractic Council, the General Dental Council, the General Medical Council, the General Optical Council, the General Osteopathic Council, the General Pharmaceutical Council, the Health and Care Professions Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and Social Work England.

appears to have stabilised. It concluded 82 hearings in 2025, which is a significant improvement from 2024, but remains insufficient to clear the hearings backlog.

Timeliness at the other stages of Social Work England's fitness to practise process is also poor, particularly the time it is taking to process concerns at the triage stage. We understand that this is driven by a significant increase in referrals, and the need for Social Work England to review cases for restricted court material, but we remain concerned.

We continue to be confident that Social Work England takes these issues seriously, and is seeking to address them, but performance has not yet improved.

We have also found that Social Work England has not met Standard 13 this year, which relates to continuing fitness to practise. We are concerned about Social Work England's decision not to quality assure any of the CPD submitted by registrants, and the fact that it has not yet published any proposals for its new approach to CPD.

#### Next steps

We will continue to engage constructively with Social Work England and are strongly encouraging it to address our concerns about the timeliness of its fitness to practise processes. We would welcome your support as we take this forward with Social Work England. During our next performance review of Social Work England, we will be reviewing its fitness to practise processes in detail, particularly in relation to case progression and the management of cases. We will continue to provide annual updates until we are no longer concerned about Social Work England's fitness to practise timeliness.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this or would like to discuss further.

*Yours sincerely,*



**Caroline Corby**

Chair

**Copy to:**

Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee

Dr Andrew McCulloch, Chair, Social Work England

Colum Conway, Chief Executive and Registrar, Social Work England