

# Business Plan

2020 to 2021





## Contents

Introduction	3
Strategic context	5
Our regulatory approach	6
The social work profession	11
The people we work with and work for	14
Education and training	16
Our organisation	19

## Introduction

Social Work England is a specialist body taking a new approach to regulating social workers in their vital roles. We believe in the power of collaboration and share a common goal with those we regulate—to protect the public, enable positive change and ultimately improve people’s lives.

We began regulating in December 2019. Our start-up year was a period of intense activity to shape the organisation we would become. We worked alongside people with lived experience, social workers, stakeholders, education providers, employers, and all those with an interest in the profession to build a new approach from the ground up, as well as recruiting our people.

Our first year of operations is part of our three-year plan to deliver radically different regulation. This year we will move away from a focus on infrastructure and transition to one of renewed energy, establishing ourselves as a specialist regulator that makes a difference to society, social work professionals and the wider health and social care sector. This is how:

- There are just over 100,000 registered social workers – we will work with each and every one of them to raise standards, enable change, promote confidence in the sector and ultimately contribute to the future of the profession.
- There will be a focus on driving competence in the profession through continuing professional development (CPD). Our new approach will mean we’re empowering professionals to continue their learning to make sure that they’re providing the highest quality of support to people who need it the most.
- We’re looking for greater consistency in the quality of education and training across England so that the next generation of social workers leave their course ready to enter the profession.
- As a modern, specialist regulator we will be flexible in our approach, collaborative with everyone who has an interest in social work, and take proportionate action when things go wrong.
- We recognise the value of co-production and we will make sure that the views and experience of people who have lived experience of social work are reflected across our organisation.
- We see the importance of having good data and will focus on building a wider picture of the profession, which hasn’t been available before.



We recognise that social workers are currently facing pressure like never before due to COVID-19. On top of navigating the personal challenges that the pandemic brings, social workers are at the forefront of supporting our most vulnerable people through this uncertain time. We acknowledge that this organisation has a unique view of social work in England and remain committed to influencing the conversation on the collective response required by the profession in months that lie ahead.

For the profession, that means providing guidance on matters relating to our regulation and, where possible, avoiding placing any unnecessary burdens on social workers and education and training providers so that they can work flexibly to support those in society during this time of unprecedented need.

Colum Conway

Chief Executive, Social Work England

## Strategic context

Our corporate strategy sets out five areas of focus and breaks down our ambition for the next three years:

1. Our regulatory approach
2. The social work profession
3. The people we work with and work for
4. Education and training
5. Our organisation

To provide clarity to our ambitions, we've set out ten strategic objectives for the next three years. Derived from these strategic objectives are the business objectives that describe what we plan to do during the 2020 to 2021 financial year and how we will measure success. Alongside this, our first year will be critical to develop benchmarks and metrics that will allow us to continue to learn, revise and refine our approach to regulation.

## Our regulatory approach

Our ambition for 2020 to 2023	What success looks like
A new regulatory approach – we will learn, reflect and test boundaries.	There is trust and confidence in our regulatory approach.
Collaborate and engage, developing understanding and leadership in regulation.	We make a unique contribution to professional regulation.

“We plan to further develop our systems and engagement activities around the registration process to ensure that existing social workers can easily maintain their details, that new social workers experience a simple and effective registration process, and that the renewal process is both straightforward and robust. We will do so by gathering user feedback and testing our approaches.”

**Philip Hallam**

**Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance, and Legal**

“Our fitness to practise processes will move beyond legacy cases and a new case progression strategy will be developed to prompt improvements using these experiences throughout the year.

Collaborative work will begin with other regulators to share a joint understanding about social work and regulation to inform research projects and publications.”

**Jonathan Dillon**

**Executive Director, Fitness to Practise**

Strategic objective to March 2023	Business objective for 2020 to 2021	How we will know we have succeeded
<p>1 We will continue to develop and refine our registration systems and processes.</p>	<p>1.1 Establish an easy to use and streamlined registration process.</p>	<p>We have improved our guidance and improved the customer experience for applicants.</p> <p>We have developed relationships with course providers to help us improve pass list processes and information for students.</p>
	<p>1.2 Establish our first annual renewal process.</p>	<p>We have produced helpful guidance for social workers who wish to renew and received positive feedback about the process.</p> <p>Our annual renewals process provides us with data to better understand the social work landscape.</p> <p>We have communicated consistently and effectively to social workers around the renewal process.</p>
	<p>1.3 Introduce annotation for areas of extended practice.</p>	<p>We have worked closely with government to consider and implement changes around standards for approved mental health professionals and approved mental capacity professionals.</p> <p>We have reviewed the requirements for CPD for social workers with an annotation.</p>

<p>2 Our fitness to practise process will be responsive, collaborative and proportionate.</p>	<p>2.1 Fitness to practise cases meeting the triage threshold are investigated thoroughly and collaboratively.</p>	<p>We receive positive assurance from internal and external review on quality of triage decisions.</p> <p>Our case examiner decisions are appropriate and proportionate, based on comprehensive investigations involving the right people at the right time.</p>
	<p>2.2 Develop a case progression strategy that will promote responsive risk assessment and proportionate outcomes.</p>	<p>We have reviewed and either closed or progressed every HCPC legacy case.</p> <p>Risks to people involved in fitness to practise processes are identified, managed and addressed quickly and appropriately.</p> <p>We have reviewed our operational processes and identified opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>We have established constructive relationships with our key stakeholders.</p>
	<p>2.3 Adjudications will be efficient and fair, and will make appropriate use of the full range of disposal options.</p>	<p>Our independent decision makers make full use of the decision making powers available to them in a proportionate and timely way.</p> <p>We have continually reviewed our adjudication decisions and demonstrated learning from them.</p>



	<p>2.4 Participants involved in the fitness to practise process will be well informed and supported throughout the process.</p>	<p>We have enhanced our support to participants by listening to them and informing improvements based on their experiences and the experiences of other regulators.</p> <p>We have developed our approach to those involved with fitness to practise by listening to individual needs and responding with humility.</p> <p>We have received positive feedback from participants about their experience.</p>
<p>3 We will seek to influence system-wide improvement by continuing our work with others and contributing to conversations about regulation.</p>	<p>3.1 Contribute to and influence conversations about professional regulation.</p>	<p>We have established and nurtured relationships with other professional regulators and will have shared our experiences of legislative reform.</p> <p>We have worked with social care regulators across the UK to amplify the voice and values of social work in professional regulation.</p>
	<p>3.2 Develop and deliver plans to share our regulatory activities and knowledge to contribute to a greater understanding of social work regulation.</p>	<p>We have established our corporate communications strategy outlining how we will share knowledge and engage people on channels they prefer.</p> <p>Social workers have a better understanding of regulation and its value.</p>



		<p>Social work employers have a better understanding of our processes.</p>
	<p>3.3 Publish our first research findings and key reviews of social work and professional regulation.</p>	<p>We have published our first interim report on social work in England.</p> <p>We have published the findings of our first commissioned research project and set the direction for our future research.</p> <p>Our regional engagement leads have contributed intelligence from the sector to inform our research.</p>

## The social work profession

Our ambition for 2020 to 2023	What success looks like
Create a different approach to standards and professional development.	Social workers value their professional standards.
Provide a picture of social work in England through intelligence and engagement.	A clear and effective post-qualifying system is in place.

“We will continue to test our standards through our engagement work, intelligence gathering, and through the feedback we receive from our national advisory forum and advisory groups for education and training standards and the professional standards. Throughout the year, we’ll work to embed our standards, outline where they fit in the social work landscape and map them against other professional frameworks.

We will begin work on developing the CPD process, collaborating with other regulators, social workers and people with lived experience. Our engagement and research will test and learn from different approaches to standards and CPD and tell the story of social work in England.

We will look at the post-qualifying framework and begin to consider how this could be simplified and improved. By the end of this year we will have analysed results from the first year of CPD, and developed plans to consider whether specific requirements are needed for social workers and those with an annotation on the register.”

**Sarah Blackmore**

**Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement**

Strategic objective to March 2023	Business objective for 2020 to 2021	How we will know we have succeeded
<p>4 We will continue to develop clear guidelines, tools and messages to support professionals to understand the relationship between standards and practice.</p>	<p>4.1 Embed our standards to make sure they are relevant, specialist and encourage aspiration in social work.</p>	<p>We have tested a range of ways to support social workers to embed the professional standards in their practice.</p> <p>We have developed an intelligence-led and creative approach to embedding the standards.</p>
	<p>4.2 Share our expectations of social workers to undertake and record CPD.</p>	<p>We have completed our first annual review of CPD submissions.</p> <p>We have published findings from our review of CPD and spoken to the profession about their experience, setting direction for the next year.</p>
	<p>4.3 Lead the way in streamlining the post-qualifying landscape, working with sector leaders and social workers.</p>	<p>We have helped to make the post-qualifying landscape clearer for social workers.</p>

<p>5 We will gather intelligence, stories and data about social work and the profession through quality conversations and sound research, sharing what we're learning with the sector.</p>	<p>5.1 Establish strong relationships with social workers based on engagement and collaboration.</p>	<p>We have established what good engagement with our priority stakeholders looks like and how it can be measured.</p> <p>We have collaborated with those with lived and learned experience of social work to gather intelligence about the sector.</p>
	<p>5.2 We will share stories of social work to showcase the breadth of the role and the value it brings to society.</p>	<p>We have used our early findings about how social work is perceived to inform the commissioning of our own research.</p> <p>Our early findings have informed our plans to describe the social work profession.</p>

## The people we work with and work for

Our ambition for 2020 to 2023	What success looks like
Co-produce our work with everyone who has an interest in social work.	We are trusted and recognised for our contributions to social work data and learning.
Deepen the understanding and value of social work.	We have improved the perception of social workers.

“Our engagement activity will inform and be informed by our national advisory forum. We will work with local organisations and groups across the country to hear from those with lived experience of social work. We will also establish an advisory forum for education and training and professional standards to provide us with expert advice, support and challenge.

We will establish a shadowing programme for our staff to further understand the experience of social workers, and opportunities for people with an interest in social work to learn more about our work at Social Work England.”

**Sarah Blackmore**

**Executive Director, Strategy, Policy and Engagement**

Strategic objective to March 2023	Business objective for 2020 to 2021	How we will know we have succeeded
<p>6 We will create spaces for people to support the development of our organisation, including policies, communication and engagement.</p>	<p>6.1 Establish a national advisory forum to provide expert support, advice and challenge around the ambition in our corporate strategy.</p>	<p>The national advisory forum is helping us navigate meaningful and proportional engagement for our work.</p>
	<p>6.2 To continually and effectively collaborate with those with lived and learned experience of social work.</p>	<p>We have tested different ways to work with people and developed an intelligence-led approach to inform our future engagement plans.</p> <p>We have co-produced pieces of work across the organisation throughout the year.</p>
	<p>6.3 Work in partnership by collaborating on opportunities with others who share our ambition to enable positive change in social work.</p>	<p>We have reflected on our approach to partnerships and the role we play in the sector to set out our future ambition.</p>

## Education and training

Our ambition for 2020 to 2023	What success looks like
Improve quality and consistency in meeting the education and training standards.	Our new standards have a positive impact on the quality and consistency of training and education.
Through collaboration and intelligence gathering, build an evidence base on models of provision.	A strategic and collaborative framework is in place supporting emerging models of provision.

“Over the year ahead, we will build upon our relationships with course providers and employers, to ensure that we understand the journey from education to practice. This work will also be informed by our learning from our education quality assurance and CPD activities. The education quality assurance team will have delivered a number of course approvals and reapprovals, and published reports relating to this activity.

We will analyse the information we gather about how practice placements have been delivered. We will put in place plans to share our learning with others, in order to work collaboratively to ensure the provision of high-quality practice placements.”

**Philip Hallam**

**Executive Director, Registration, Quality Assurance, and Legal**



Strategic objective to March 2023	Business objective for 2020 to 2021	How we will know we have succeeded
<p>7 We will work with course providers to make sure our standards are embedded in practice, whilst encouraging innovative and creative approaches to course development.</p>	<p>7.1 Establish expectations of the provision of high quality education and training in social work and the responsibility on all parts of the system to work collaboratively.</p>	<p>We have gathered evidence from our analysis of approval, reapproval and monitoring activity, and created an interim report of our findings.</p> <p>Work is underway to embed the new education and training standards and assess their impact.</p>
	<p>7.2 Establish a robust approval and reapproval model for social work education and training courses against our standards.</p>	<p>The education quality assurance team has published reports about the course approvals and reapprovals they have delivered.</p> <p>All relevant institutions have received the reapproval date for their courses, along with related guidance on the reapproval process.</p>
	<p>7.3 Consider, contribute to and influence public policy around higher education and post-18 education reform.</p>	<p>We have worked closely with government to understand their ambition for post-18 education.</p> <p>We have represented the specialist nature of social work in the qualifying routes into the profession.</p>



<p>8 We will explore and begin to understand the competence of newly qualified social workers.</p>	<p>8.1 Review the models of provision in relation to the competence of newly qualified social workers.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the training and education landscape to facilitate discussion on the strategic direction for training and education in social work.</p>
--	--	---

## Our organisation

Our ambition for 2020 to 2023	What success looks like
Encourage innovative approaches across all areas of our work.	Everyone’s contribution is valued and celebrated.
Promote a positive culture focused on improvement and co-production.	People with an interest in social work have a meaningful say in the work we do.

“In 2020 to 2021 we will create an environment where our people feel supported, yet have the space to try out new ideas that speak to our corporate values. We will ensure our systems and processes allow for effective knowledge sharing and develop a common sense approach that always puts people first.

Our culture will be seen in everything that we deliver and we will empower our people to thrive at work, retaining and building a talented workforce from within to meet our operational objectives.”

**Tracy Watterson**

**Assistant Director, People and Business Support Directorate**

“During the year ahead, we will continue to develop our planning processes to ensure it is clear to people inside and outside of the organisation what we want to achieve and how we will do it.

We will make sure we have the right information to help us assess how well we’re doing in delivering these plans. When we identify room for improvement, we will carefully consider how we can do better and take prompt action.

We will continue to ensure that our information technology remains effective in supporting our people to do their jobs and that our digital services make it easy for people to interact with us.”

**Greg Ross-Sampson**

**Assistant Director, Corporate Services**



Strategic objective to March 2023	Business objective for 2020 to 2021	How we will know we have succeeded
<p>9 We will establish robust infrastructure, systems and processes that promote trust and confidence.</p>	<p>9.1 Establish effective IT systems and digital services.</p>	<p>We have implemented the necessary IT infrastructure to support users.</p> <p>We have progressed towards a recognised industry standard of information security and cyber security.</p> <p>All our digital services are inclusive and accessible in line with industry standards.</p>
	<p>9.2 Establish systems and processes to deliver compliance, good governance and value for money.</p>	<p>We have established a quality assurance framework for our regulatory functions.</p> <p>We have embedded an open, accountable and independently reviewed oversight and assurance framework which demonstrates the principles of probity, propriety, efficiency and value for money.</p> <p>Our risk management framework is embedded across the organisation.</p> <p>We can demonstrate the benefits of our investment in change.</p>

	<p>9.3</p> <p>Develop effective systems for financial management and forecasting.</p>	<p>We have implemented new finance, human resources and commercial systems.</p> <p>Our long-term financial forecasts determine future capital and revenue capacity, and inform optimal resource allocation.</p>
	<p>9.4</p> <p>Enhance our organisational analytical capabilities to inform effective decision making.</p>	<p>We have reviewed, refined and embedded our management information framework.</p> <p>We have developed our approach to continuous improvement across the organisation.</p> <p>We have developed our framework for reporting on the delivery of our business plan.</p>
	<p>9.5</p> <p>Establish the legal function as a source of advice, guidance and support throughout the organisation.</p>	<p>There is increased understanding of the role of the legal team and our legal responsibilities as an organisation.</p> <p>We have developed our scheme of delegation and the supporting decision-making structures.</p>

	<p>9.6</p> <p>Establish the information governance framework, policies and processes to ensure a robust approach to data protection.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the requirements for the information governance function to be involved in all aspects of the organisation.</p> <p>We have delivered a programme of review and training on information governance.</p> <p>We have established appropriate governance and reporting in the organisation, including the annual data protection officer's report.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Our culture of innovation, improvement and co-production will be embedded across the organisation.</p>	<p>10.1</p> <p>Establish planning and development processes and systems to recruit, train and retain talented, energised and motivated people.</p>	<p>We have developed and embedded our workforce and succession planning approach.</p> <p>Our performance development framework reflects our culture and values and supports people to identify and address learning needs.</p> <p>We have co-designed an approach to recognising the achievements of our people.</p>

	<p>10.2</p> <p>Develop a reflective, open and accessible working environment where people are encouraged to share knowledge, learn, and test new ideas.</p>	<p>Our internal communications support our people through change, embed our values and inform decision making.</p> <p>We have a clear approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Our coaching, reflective practice and ongoing learning culture empowers our people to share, learn and innovate.</p> <p>We have established opportunities for our people to shadow social workers and for people with an interest in social work to shadow us.</p>
	<p>10.3</p> <p>Determine environmentally sustainable processes, practices and plans to support and engage with local business, initiatives and charities.</p>	<p>We have engaged with relevant communities and networks to identify where we can contribute.</p> <p>We have developed our sustainability and environmental plan.</p>