

Social Work England
Annual Report and Accounts
2025 to 2026



2025
2026

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England

Social Work England

**Annual report and accounts 2025 to 2026
For the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026**

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraph 19 of Schedule 3 to the
Children and Social Work Act 2017**

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Overview from the chair and chief executive

Welcome to our annual report and accounts for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, in which we reflect on the past year — our progress, our challenges and what we have learnt.

Every day, social workers support millions of people across England to improve their lives. Regulation exists to uphold the professional standards that make safe and effective practice possible, giving the public confidence that the social workers they encounter are skilled, safe and committed to their wellbeing.

This year, more than 104,000 social workers renewed their registration — a testament to the dedication of a profession that genuinely cares about making a difference.

While timeliness in fitness to practise remains our biggest challenge, we have made meaningful progress this year. Our triage team has grown significantly and is completing more decisions than ever before. At the same time, the volume of concerns we receive continues to rise, which means the benefit of our increased capacity has not been realised until the later months of the year. We have met our investigations targets and improved efficiencies across all stages of the process ensuring quality decision-making. We know the length of time it takes for decisions to be made throughout fitness to practise is still taking far too long and improving this will continue to be our relentless focus for the year ahead.

Building trust and confidence in social work is central to our role. Through our national roadshows, Social Work Week and our ongoing campaign to change the script on social work, we have continued to highlight the vital contribution social workers make to people's lives. Alongside this, we have deepened our engagement with social workers, people who draw on social work services, and wider stakeholders — ensuring that co-production shapes everything from our next strategy to future continuing professional development models and revised education and training standards.

This year we also published our findings from the first full reapproval cycle of all social work education and training courses in England, offering valuable insight into course providers' experiences. We developed a new inspection model for best interests assessor (BIA) and approved mental health professional (AMHP) training courses, completed inspections of all BIA courses, and have begun assessing AMHP courses — work that will continue into next year.

We have invested in our people through our new cultural change programme and behaviours framework which looks at how we can work successfully together. We have also laid the groundwork for improving our digital services.

This year we have made improvements to the way we work so we can continue to protect the public. We continue to learn from our work and improve how we regulate. We look forward to the publication of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation which we will use to further enhance how we work as an organisation.

Dr Andrew McCulloch
Chair of the Board,
Social Work England

Colum Conway
Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer,
Social Work England

Performance report



Performance overview

This section of the report explains our purpose, how we are organised and summarises our performance against our objectives. Overall, our performance for 2025 to 2026 was in line with what we set out to achieve in our  [business plan](#) for the year. Pages 29 to 57 provide a more detailed analysis of performance.

Our purpose and activities

We are the specialist regulator for social workers in England, focused on protecting the public and enabling positive change in social work.

Part 2 of the  [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) ('the Act') and the  [Social Workers Regulations 2018](#) ('the Regulations') set out our powers and obligations. The Regulations were amended in December 2022.

We operate as a non-departmental public body and are classified as a central government organisation. We work within a  [framework document](#)¹ agreed with our sponsor the Department for Education, in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Care. The Department for Education has policy responsibility for child and family social workers. The Department of Health and Social Care has policy responsibility for adult social workers.

As stated in the Act, and like the other health and care regulators, our overarching objective is the protection of the public.

We have the following objectives:

- protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public
- promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England
- promote and maintain professional standards for social workers in England

The Regulations detail the framework within which we regulate social workers.

We are responsible for:

- setting  [education and training standards](#) and approving training courses
- setting  [professional standards](#)

¹ Our framework document is to be updated in 2026 in line with the findings from the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

- maintaining a register of all social workers in England
- protecting the title of social worker
- running a  [fitness to practise](#) system
- monitoring and reporting on continuing professional development (CPD)
- approving post qualifying courses and specialisms

Our fitness to practise process

To be a social worker in England, a person must be registered with us and be 'fit to practise'. By 'fit to practise' we mean that this person can practise safely and effectively because they have the relevant:

- skills
- knowledge (including knowledge of the English language)
- character, and
- health

Anyone can raise a concern with us about a social worker's fitness to practise. We receive a high volume of concerns about issues we cannot investigate. We only investigate concerns about a social worker's fitness to practise. If a concern is not about a registered social worker, the concern is closed before becoming a referral.

Once a concern is considered a referral, this will move through the following 5 parts of our fitness to practise process, each of which has different thresholds, processes and outcomes. We define these as:

- **Triage:** where referrals we receive are assessed to determine whether the  [triage test](#) is met, and a case should be further investigated
- **Investigation:** cases that pass the triage test are further investigated, and readied for consideration by case examiners
- **Case examination:** where case examiners apply the realistic prospect test, and determine whether a case can close, be disposed of with the consent of the social worker, or referred to a hearing
- **Hearings:** cases referred by case examiners are prepared for hearing, and a panel of adjudicators considers what, if any, action should be taken in relation to a social worker's registration
- **Case review:** where social workers who have been suspended or placed on conditions of practice have these restrictions on practice monitored

The full fitness to practise process is shown in a  [flowchart](#) on our website.

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) oversees our regulatory activities. It reviews and scrutinises our performance against the  [standards of good regulation](#). It also reviews decisions made by our adjudicators and can refer them to the High Court for further consideration.

In March 2026 the PSA published its  [annual monitoring review](#) of Social Work England for January to December 2025. We met 16 out of the 18 standards of good regulation. The review reflected that we continue to perform well across all areas of our work, especially in:

- setting of standards and guidance
- our work in education and training
- equality, diversity and inclusion

We did not meet one of the fitness to practise standards. The PSA acknowledged the work we have done to improve timeliness in our fitness to practise processes but recognised we continued to face challenges in this area. For more detail on the work we have undertaken, see pages 36 to 45.

The PSA also determined that we did not meet all requirements for standard 13, as we paused our review of 2.5% of CPD records submitted to us by social workers for the second consecutive year, and have not yet put an alternative system in place. The PSA acknowledged that we have assurance that social workers submitted 2 pieces of CPD, along with at least one piece of peer reflection. They also understood our reasons for pausing the 2.5% review, to release capacity to undertake the work to redesign our CPD process.

In 2026 to 2027 we will review a sample of up to 3% of CPD records following the close of the renewal period on 30 November 2026.

We will continue to consider our longer-term approach to CPD review and will engage further with social workers, employers and sector partners as this work develops. This will also take account of the outcome of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

Independent Review of Social Work Regulation

 Part 2 of the Children and Social Care Act (2017), requires an  Independent Review of Social Work Regulation to consider how effectively Social Work England is meeting its overarching objectives and delivering its core regulatory functions. These include registration, professional standards, education and training standards and fitness to practise.

In November 2025, the Department for Education announced that Dame Annie Hudson would lead the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

The review engaged with stakeholders across the social work sector, including people with lived experience, employers, educators and practitioners, as well as with us as the regulator.

At the time of writing, the review is ongoing. It will conclude with a report and recommendations, which are expected to be published in summer 2026. The findings will inform our next strategy and our future direction.

 Words in this report that are underlined and have a globe icon next to them show where more information can be accessed online.

Our guiding principles



Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in all that we do – driving positive change, valuing diversity and representing society



We will listen to, engage with and co-produce alongside those who are directly impacted by our work



We will learn through data and the use of insight to understand our impact and inform our plans



We will use every opportunity to maintain and improve efficiency and effectiveness in the way we work, to ensure the best use of our funding and provide value for money

We have established a  [National Advisory Forum](#) to act as a critical friend and help us achieve inclusive decision-making. In 2025 to 2026 we recruited a new cohort of National Advisory Forum members. Their involvement has improved the quality and representativeness of our decision-making and policy development.

Our values and behaviours

Our values and behaviours shape and steer how we work. We are proud of our values and what they mean to us. In 2025 to 2026, we launched a new behaviours framework to underpin our values and help us maintain and develop our positive organisational culture. See page 47 for more detail.



Our leadership team



Colum Conway
Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer



Sarah Blackmore
Executive Director
Professional Practice and
External Engagement



Philip Hallam
Executive Director
Regulation



Linda Dale
Executive Director
People and Business
Support

Performance summary

Our current  strategy sets out our ambitions for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026.

The strategy focused on 3 strategic themes where we aimed to have an impact:

- prevention and impact - seeking to prevent harm as an increasing focus in how we regulate
- regulation and protection - ensuring our regulation is fair, transparent and strikes the right balance between proportionality and protection
- delivery and improvement - focusing on continuous improvement and efficiency

This year's annual report and accounts reports on our performance at the end of this strategy period. Annual  business plan objectives were set for each strategic theme.

Overall, our performance for 2025 to 2026 was broadly in line with what we set out to achieve in our business plan. We met 10 of 11 of our business plan objectives (see pages 30 to 48) and achieved 15 of 18 of our key performance indicator targets (see pages 23 to 27).

Whilst we await the recommendations of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation, work was paused on the development of our next strategy. Plans to consult on our education and training standards and development of our new approach to CPD were also paused, pending the outcome of the review.



Performance summary: prevention and impact

Building trust and confidence in social work and regulation

Targeted engagement remained central to our regulatory approach during 2025 to 2026. We reached over 8,000 professionals through a series of national sessions focusing on our requirements for continuing professional development and fitness to practise, alongside regional sessions and stakeholder conversations. We used data and frontline insight to tailor engagement towards strengthening understanding of our regulatory role, sharing emerging risks and supporting improved practice.

We also hosted 5 roadshows bringing together social workers, employers and wider stakeholders to share their thoughts on a range of topics relevant to our regulation including CPD, education and training and fitness to practise. Together these activities reflected our commitment to open, collaborative regulation – ensuring the sector's voice shapes how we work.

Our Change the Script campaign continued to support our objective to build and maintain public trust in social work. Phase 2 of the campaign generated over 70 pieces of media coverage sharing positive stories of social work. Phase 3, delivered in March 2026, shared further case studies which highlighted the breadth of settings in which social workers operate.

Social Work Week 2026, held in March, brought together 5,394 participants from across the sector in 18 co-produced sessions, creating a national moment to celebrate the profession and gather insight on emerging practice issues. The event demonstrated our commitment to inclusive, partnership-led engagement.

Building the evidence base for regulation

We commissioned 3 independent research projects to explore the following topics and published the findings:

- practice educator² training
- the emerging use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work education and practice
- the concept of seriousness in fitness to practise

To complement our research into the emerging use of AI we hosted initial discussions with a range of sector leaders to consider the use of AI in social work including the opportunities and risks.

Alongside this, we began work to develop our first research strategy and agreed the structure and remit of a new stand-alone research function. We have also established the Alliance Research Network with social work and social care regulators across the UK. This work is:

- expanding our evidence base
- informing internal decision-making
- strengthening our ability to contribute to public policy through relationships with government, employers and professional bodies

2 Definition: Practice educators are social workers who provide support, guidance, and oversight to social work students during their practice placements. They help students understand the theory they have learned in the classroom and apply this in a practical setting. This is important to make sure students have the practical skills that are essential for effective social work practice.

Advancing our approach to CPD

We progressed a comprehensive review of our approach to CPD, gathering feedback from social workers which indicates broad support for redeveloping our model. We decided to pause to understand how the outcomes of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation could influence this work. We acknowledge the concerns raised by the PSA regarding the impact of this delay. We look forward to consulting in the year ahead and setting out our vision for CPD once the outcome of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation is known. In 2026 to 2027 we will review a sample of up to 3% of CPD records following the close of the renewal period on 30 November 2026.

Improving education and training quality

We continued to work with our  [Education and Training Advisory Forum](#) (ETAF) on a broad range of issues relating to social work education and training.

We introduced a new inspection model for approved mental health professional (AMHP) and best interests assessor (BIA) courses. Between October 2025 and February 2026, we completed reapproval of all BIA courses. We began reapproving AMHP courses in March 2026.

In November 2025, we published  [preparing for practice: social work education in England](#) which shares our learnings from the last 5 years. This publication captures our unique perspective as the regulator for social work in England. It spotlights learning from our first full reapproval cycle of 257 qualifying social work courses. It shares data from our approval and monitoring of education providers and explores how social work education is evolving in response to changes across wider society.

We also progressed a comprehensive review of our education rules and guidance. A consultation is planned for summer 2026.

Understanding the practice educator landscape

Practice educators play a central role in the future of the social work profession, supporting and guiding emerging practice and helping ensure social work students are able to meet the professional standards.

We know from our inspection process that social work students' experiences on placement are variable, and practice education is inconsistent. As the regulator for education and training in social work, it is important for us to understand how the standards can be applied in a more effective and consistent way.

To build our understanding of current arrangements, we held in-person and online events and conducted a survey which received responses from over 4,400 social workers. This, alongside the research we commissioned, has produced the most comprehensive evidence base on the practice educator role so far. The findings will inform decisions on our regulatory approach and future research on placement quality and assessment.

Pages 29 to 36 provide more detail about our 2025 to 2026 objectives and performance in relation to prevention and impact.



Performance summary: regulation and protection

We had another successful  [annual registration renewal](#) period. 97.6% of social workers successfully renewed their registration and submitted the required CPD.

Our fitness to practise teams continued to make meaningful progress against our strategic objectives, although we faced ongoing challenges in managing demand and achieving timeliness.

Managing increased demand in triage

2,670 concerns were raised at the initial triage stage of fitness to practise in 2025 to 2026, a 38% increase compared to 1,935 received in the previous year. At the start of the business year, we launched a full review of our approach across triage and investigations. This is the first time we have undertaken such a significant review of our processes since we became the regulator. This review was needed as we could see in December 2024 that referral volumes were beginning to rise significantly and a backlog was developing. Alongside the review, we brought in additional fixed term resource to assist with the significant number of new referrals.

Despite making 59% more triage decisions than the previous year, the volume of new referrals grew concurrently and, for most of the year, outpaced our output. The impact of this was that the open caseload at the triage stage was higher at the end of 2025 to 2026 than at the end of the previous year. We continued to respond to this growth and in the final month of the business year, we started to have an impact on the caseload by addressing more cases than at any time previously.

The review of our approach in triage and investigations is planned to conclude in April 2026 with recommendations for new ways of working to meet rising referral volumes, as well as addressing other areas for improvement. We are confident this will contribute to a positive impact on timeliness in triage.

Research to understand reasons for the sustained increase in referrals, including liaison with other regulators who have seen similar increases, also commenced during the year.

Improving effectiveness and maintaining quality

Actions taken to improve timeliness and maintain quality across the various stages of the fitness to practise process included:

- Recruitment of additional resource within all our fitness to practise teams.
- Implementation of new public guidance to streamline requests for information when referrals are made to us.
- Consultations on revised impairment and sanctions guidance.³
- The implementation of a new decision-making framework for case examiners.
- Introduction of a new service delivery plan in triage and investigations to prioritise activities through the year, maintaining a focus on key projects and metrics.

Building efficiency and long-term capability at the hearings stage

Improving our capacity to progress cases through hearings remained a critical priority during 2025 to 2026, given the number of cases awaiting conclusion at this stage of the fitness to practise process.

Over the course of the year, we increased the number of staff available to schedule and service hearings and recruited and inducted more than 58 additional panel members and legal advisers. These actions improved resilience and supported increased hearing activity, particularly in the second half of the year, although the full impact will be realised over a longer timeframe.

We also progressed a project to reprocure our external legal services, as well as moving from a single provider to 2.

A key development was the establishment of an in-house legal advocacy team, which will be responsible for preparing and presenting all our interim order applications⁴, and reviews of orders imposed. This investment was designed to increase our control over hearings capacity and reduce reliance on external providers. While benefits in throughput and cost will fall primarily in 2026 to 2027, this change

3 Definition: When considering the outcome of a fitness to practise case a decision-maker will need to consider if a social worker's fitness to practise is impaired and if so, what sanction should be imposed on the social worker. In some cases, a social worker's fitness to practise may not be impaired so no sanction is required. This guidance helps decision-makers consider these outcomes.

4 Definition: Interim orders are only needed when concerns about a social worker's fitness to practise are so serious that, if the social worker continued to practise without restriction, public safety would be put at risk or there would be a risk to the social worker themselves.

represents an important step towards a more sustainable hearings model.

New guidance on an adjudicator consensual disposal process⁵ was consulted on in autumn 2025. This process will be introduced in April 2026 and will allow adjudicators and social workers (in suitable cases) to reach an agreed outcome without the need for a final hearing. This will offer a more proportionate route for appropriate cases.

We evaluated our pilot of 2 person panels, introduced as part of our work to improve hearings efficiency last year. This looked at holding some final hearings with 2 adjudicators rather than 3. Evaluation identified benefits in resource utilisation and scheduling, and we are now building on last year's work and embedding this approach into standard operating practice.

The coming year will focus on realising the benefits of this year's investment by embedding new working practices and arrangements including the procurement of more than one legal provider.

Pages 36 to 45 provide more detail about our 2025 to 2026 objectives and performance in relation to regulation and protection.



Performance summary: delivery and improvement

We made significant progress in strengthening the foundations that underpin how we operate as an organisation by:

- improving our planning processes
- advancing our digital ambitions
- embedding a stronger culture

To secure the resources we need to deliver our regulatory responsibilities efficiently, effectively and support longer-term financial resilience, we completed a consultation on proposals to increase the fees paid by social workers and those applying to join our register. This received nearly 8,000 responses. After careful consideration of the  feedback, we proceeded to implement the proposed changes. Fees were increased on 1 December 2025 and will increase incrementally each subsequent year until 2029. This will ensure we have a more balanced and stable funding base, aligned to our cost of operation.

5 Definition: Adjudicator consensual disposal is a process where Social Work England and the social worker (or their representative, if applicable) will be able to reach an outcome on a case without the need for a full final hearing, if the adjudicator agrees.

We faced challenges in scaling up our activity quickly enough during the year to fully utilise the additional funding in the short term. As we cannot hold reserves, adjustments were made to our grant-in-aid to re-balance the respective contributions of government and registrants to the cost of our regulation. A major focus in the year ahead will be to strengthen forward planning and enable effective utilisation of our resources.

Business planning and strategy

We redesigned our annual business planning cycle to improve clarity and strengthen accountability and oversight. We used the improved approach for the first time in developing our 2026 to 2027 business plan.

We also made progress in developing our next strategy by strengthening our understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the organisation. We have paused work on this so our next strategy can reflect the findings of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

Digital, data and technology

Following an external review in 2025 we established a dedicated programme and developed our digital, data and technology (DDaT) strategy, clarifying our ambition to become a more user-focused, data-driven, agile and secure regulator over the next 3 years. The work is designed to enable more efficient delivery of services and better experiences for social workers, employers and the public.

Key workstreams focused on design, data, technology, people and governance.

We addressed immediate capacity and capability gaps, and defined what we need our digital, data and technology investment to deliver for the organisation and those who use our services.

We delivered a number of targeted digital improvements. This included new functionality to enable staff to communicate directly with stakeholders through our case management system, enhancements to support the inspection of social work education and training courses, and the introduction of a new system to support payroll processing for our partners. We also worked to meet accessibility standards across our digital communications platforms and provided tailored accessibility training to staff.

While most user-facing improvements will be delivered over future years, the progress made during 2025 to 2026 has strengthened our underlying capability and provided greater clarity about priorities and outcomes. It ensures we will be better positioned to translate our digital ambitions into tangible benefits for users.

Organisational culture

We launched a new behaviours framework and cultural change programme and actively involved our people in shaping its implementation. Leadership development and engagement through our staff networks have supported early adoption. Feedback indicates that most colleagues are taking active steps to align with the framework.

We were also awarded our first Gold Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) Award. We are proud of this external recognition of sustained progress in embedding inclusive practices since we began the TIDE journey in 2021.

In 2026 to 2027 we will continue to understand the impact of our cultural change programme on employee experience and organisational performance.

Pages 46 to 48 provide more detail about our 2025 to 2026 objectives and performance in relation to delivery and improvement. Pages 87 to 89 provide more detail about our people policies.

How we measure and report performance

We use data and insight to understand our progress, improve our work and ensure accountability for the public money we spend. Our performance framework is built around a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to the objectives and deliverables set out in our annual  [business plan](#). These indicators provide clear measures of progress and help us to assess the difference our work is making.

Our business plan objectives are focused on clear deliverables and measurable outcomes, making it easier to see the intended impact of our work and how it contributes to public protection and improved regulation.

We place a strong emphasis on continuous learning and improvement. We use performance data to reflect on how well we are delivering our functions and inform the refinement of our KPIs, ensuring that they remain relevant, meaningful and focused on the areas of greatest impact.

We track delivery against our objectives and KPIs by reporting quarterly to the board and publishing  [updates on our website](#). This reporting cycle enables effective oversight, scrutiny and challenge, and ensures that performance issues are identified and addressed in a timely way.

This framework enables us to monitor performance effectively, report transparently on our progress, and drive continuous improvement in how we deliver our regulatory responsibilities.

During 2025 to 2026, we met 15 of our 18 KPI targets. We have continued to perform strongly across most areas of our regulation. Performance at some stages of the fitness to practise process was affected by the high rate of referrals, high caseloads and resourcing challenges. This had an impact on our timeliness at the triage stage and, in the final 2 quarters of the year, also at the case examination stage.

We monitor financial performance as a key part of our overall framework. We were at risk of not meeting our budget variance target of 1.5% due to:

- timing of key funding decisions, which led to additional income streams becoming available during the course of the year
- challenges in being able to step up activity
- timeliness of recruitment

We met the target by making in-year adjustments to grant-in-aid.

Education and training key performance indicator

Key performance indicator	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Time taken from end of course inspection to regulator decision ⁶	Actual: 47 working days median Target: less than or equal to 60 working days median	Actual: 47 working days median Target: no target set as was not a KPI	Actual: 54 working days median Target: no target set as was not a KPI

6 This is a new KPI for 2025 to 2026 replacing completed course reapproval decisions.

Registration key performance indicators

Time taken to approve registration and restoration applications

Key performance indicator	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Time taken to approve UK registration applications	Actual: 3 working days median Target: less than or equal to 10 working days median	Actual: 3 working days median Target: less than or equal to 10 working days median	Actual: 3 working days median Target: less than or equal to 10 working days median
Time taken to approve restoration applications	Actual: 7 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median	Actual: 6 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median	Actual: 3 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median

Time taken to answer emails and phone calls

Key performance indicator	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Time taken to answer emails	Actual: 2 working days median Target: less than or equal to 5 working days median	Actual: 2 working days median Target: less than or equal to 5 working days median	Actual: 2 working days median Target: less than or equal to 5 working days median
Time taken to answer phone calls	Actual: 4 minutes median Target: less than or equal to 8 minutes median	Actual: 4 minutes median Target: less than or equal to 8 minutes median	Actual: 6 minutes median Target: less than or equal to 8 minutes median

Fitness to practise key performance indicators

Key performance indicator	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Time taken to complete triage	Actual in Q4 2026: 27 weeks median Target: less than or equal to 26 weeks median by March 2026	Actual in Q4 2025: 21 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2024 to 2025	Actual in Q4 2024: 19 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2023 to 2024
Time taken to complete investigation	Actual in: Q4 2026: 49 weeks median Target: less than or equal to 54 weeks median by March 2026	Actual in Q4 2025: 59 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2024 to 2025	Actual in Q4 2024: 66 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2023 to 2024
Time taken to complete the case examination process	Actual: 15 weeks median Target: less than or equal to 12 weeks median	Actual: 12 weeks median ⁷ Target: less than or equal to 12 weeks median	Actual: 9 weeks median ⁷ Target: less than or equal to 12 weeks median
Time taken from receipt of concern to final outcome at case examination	Actual: Q4 2026: 148 weeks median Target: less than or equal to 92 weeks median by March 2026	Actual: Q4 2025: 98 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2024 to 2025	Actual Q4 2024: 93 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2023 to 2024
Time from receipt of concern to final fitness to practise outcome at hearing	Actual: 232 weeks median Target: no target set – monitor only	Actual: 212 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2024 to 2025	Actual: 165 weeks median Target: not previously reported – we had a different KPI in 2023 to 2024
Time taken to approve interim orders	Actual: 18 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median	Actual: 18 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median	Actual: 18 working days median Target: less than or equal to 20 working days median

⁷ Figures are re-presented from previously published due to a change in the calculation methodology in 2025 to 2026. Previous figures were 13 weeks for 2024 to 2025 and 10 weeks for 2023 to 2024.

Organisational key performance indicators

Key performance indicator	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Time taken to complete Freedom of Information requests	Actual: 99% within deadline Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline	Actual: 99% within deadline Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline	Actual: 100% within deadline Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline
Time taken to complete Subject Access Requests	Actual: 100% Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline	Actual: 100% Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline	Actual: 100% Target: more than or equal to 90% within deadline
Corporate complaints response time	Actual: 97% within 20 working days Target: more than or equal to 80% within 20 working days	Actual: 91% within 20 working days Target: more than or equal to 80% within 20 working days	Actual: 90% within 20 working days Target: more than or equal to 70% within 20 working days achieved
Staff retention rate over previous 12 months	Actual: 89% Target: more than or equal to 80%	Actual: 87% Target: more than or equal to 80%	Actual: 86% Target: more than or equal to 80%
Days lost per person to sickness absence over last 12 months	Actual: 7 days per person Target: less than or equal to 7.8 days per person	Actual: 8 days ⁸ per person Target: less than or equal to 8.1 days per person	Actual: 8.9 days per person Target: less than or equal to 5.4 days per person
Year-end variance to budget	Actual: 0.0% Target: +/- 1.5%	Actual: 2.8% Target: +/- 1.5%	Actual: 0.1% Target: +/- 1.5%
System availability excluding planned outages	Actual: 99.9% Target: more than or equal to 99%	Actual: 99.9% Target: more than or equal to 99%	Actual: 99.9% Target: more than or equal to 99%

⁸ Figure re-presented from 7.9 days as previously reported. This is due to retrospective changes being captured on the system after the data had been compiled and reported.

Summary of key risks and issues

In 2025 to 2026, our overall risk landscape was broadly similar to the previous year. Our most significant corporate risks related to:

- timeliness within the triage and investigations stages of fitness to practise
- managing our budget
- cyber security

Timeliness within the triage and investigations stages of fitness to practise

Timeliness within the triage and investigations stages of fitness to practise remained a key risk during 2025 to 2026.

Delays at these early points in the fitness to practise process can have a significant impact on complainants, witnesses, and social workers as well as implications for public confidence and regulatory effectiveness. Prolonged uncertainty is distressing for those involved and can undermine trust in our role as a regulator.

High volumes of incoming concerns, alongside the complexity of cases and capacity pressures, continued to affect the speed at which cases progressed. The operational impact of this risk is reflected in our performance against timeliness measures set out in the performance analysis on pages 36 to 38.

During the year, as detailed elsewhere in the performance report, we strengthened our understanding of the causes of delay and took steps to address them. While these actions have established a strong foundation for improvement, the scale of demand and the time required for changes to take full effect means that this risk remains a key area of focus.

Managing our budget

The ability to effectively plan and manage our annual budget remained a key area of focus during 2025 to 2026. Over the course of the year, the risk of underspend materialised due to a combination of factors, including:

- the timing of key decisions, which led to additional income streams becoming available during the course of the year
- our ability to scale up operational activity at sufficient pace to fully utilise the additional income, due to recruitment timescales and supplier constraints

As set out on page 24, we made in-year budget adjustments to meet our target to maintain variance to within 1.5% of budget at year-end. See page 75 for how we mitigated this risk.

During the year, we took steps to increase our delivery capacity and capability by recruiting to new roles and commencing re-procurement of 2 external legal services suppliers. We also enhanced in-year financial monitoring. These actions support risk mitigation in the year ahead.

Cyber security

Similar to most other organisations, the risk of a successful cyber, ransomware or socially engineered attack represents a major threat to our operations and the security of personal data that we hold. We have multiple layers of protection in place which meant that there were no breaches and this risk did not materialise.

In 2025 to 2026, we focused on improving visibility and knowledge of current cyber threats and strengthening our prevention, detection and response. We procured and implemented a security operations centre to support horizon scanning and cyber security. We delivered training to our board and implemented regular reporting to the audit and risk assurance committee.

For further information on our corporate risks and mitigations, see the accountability report on page 71 to 75.

Performance analysis

In the performance overview we summarised our performance in 2025 to 2026 under each strategy theme:

- prevention and impact
- regulation and protection
- delivery and improvement

In this section, we consider our performance against each of our 2025 to 2026 business plan objectives and briefly set out our plans for the year ahead.

Within the performance analysis for regulation and protection, we also provide an overview of our annual fitness to practise activity and outcomes.

The performance analysis section concludes with an overview of our impact on the environment, our sustainability actions and a summary of our financial performance.

Performance analysis: prevention and impact

More information about this strategic theme is in our  [strategy](#).



Objective 1.1: build trust and confidence in social work and in regulation by engaging with the profession, stakeholders, people with lived experience and the public.

Engagement with the profession

In 2026, we continued our targeted, insight-driven approach to engagement.

Through a series of national sessions, we improved understanding of the role of regulation and regulatory processes amongst social workers and those working across the social work sector.

By combining data with professional insight, we highlighted emerging regulatory risks, helping the sector recognise and address recurring issues such as dishonesty and poor or inappropriate communication.

National workshops on our CPD requirements reached 443 participants, while 258 attended national fitness to practise sessions.

During October and November, we held 5 roadshows across England, bringing together social workers, employers and partners to share updates and listen to the sector's thinking on:

- the future of social work regulation
- continuing professional development
- education and training
- fitness to practise

182 participants welcomed the opportunity to provide constructive feedback, local insights and engage in discussions shaping the future of social work regulation.

We also maintained a strong presence at major sector events, including Community Care Live, discussing workforce challenges and sector priorities, and the National Children and Adults Service Conference where we hosted a panel session on the future of social work education and training.

Over the year, through our activities we have reached over 8,000 professionals across different social work settings, reflecting the diversity of the profession. All our engagement activities focused on how we can effectively collaborate with the sector to ensure their views influence our work.

Social Work Week 2026

Our sixth Social Work Week, held on 16 to 20 March 2026, brought together 5,394 attendees, including people with lived and learned experience of social work. All 18 sessions were co-produced with the

sector, demonstrating our commitment to inclusive, partnership-led engagement. The programme showcased our role as the specialist regulator and gathered insight on emerging issues affecting safe and effective practice.

Change the Script

We delivered a second phase of our Change the Script campaign in April 2025. This campaign aims to inform and educate people about the reality and role of social work.

We shared positive stories from people with lived experience of social work and published a guide on reframing negative social work narratives.

Our evaluation of the impact of the campaign highlighted significant media coverage and digital views. This included over 70 pieces of media coverage with a combined potential reach of 23 million people and positive feedback from stakeholders. We also measured the campaign's impact through a perceptions study. The results showed clear positive shifts in understanding about social work and improved sentiment, demonstrating that the campaign effectively improved perceptions of the profession.

A third phase commenced in March 2026 which raised awareness of some of the unseen settings in which social workers work. For example, a mental health social worker for the London Ambulance Service, a palliative social worker and a social worker in a children's charity. We will evaluate the impact of both phase 3 and the entire campaign to date in the next financial year.

National Advisory Forum

This year, we strengthened our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and co-production by recruiting a new cohort of National Advisory Forum members. This brought diverse perspectives to our work, supporting our strategic goal of inclusive collaboration.

Prioritising lived experience and student involvement made the advisory group more representative and relevant. It improved the quality and inclusivity of decision-making and policy development. It also strengthened our ability to address EDI issues and foster genuine collaboration.

In 2026 to 2027, we will recruit social workers and more student representatives to replace members completing their tenure. This will maintain diversity and ensure continued engagement with key stakeholder voices.

Registration rules

We consulted on changes to our registration rules, receiving 58 broadly supportive responses. The updated rules, implemented in September 2025, align our recognition of English language qualifications with other health and care regulators. They also improve how we collect equality and diversity data in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.



Objective 1.2: embed our research function to enhance and inform our understanding of the profession, and to positively impact public policy through evidence-based advice and insight.

We strengthened our evidence-led approach to regulation by expanding our research and planning for a long-term research function. We commissioned 3 independent research projects to address gaps in the evidence base, focusing on the:

- practice educator training landscape
- emerging use of AI in social work education and practice
- the concept of seriousness in fitness to practise within a social work context

We published 3 reports, with a fourth due in spring 2026, enabling us to share insights with stakeholders, social workers and the public.

To complement our research into the emerging use of AI we hosted initial discussions with a range of sector leaders to consider the use of AI in social work including the opportunities and risks.

We also carried out internal research to better understand issues affecting our regulatory functions, including rising fitness to practise referrals and social worker engagement with those processes.

We started to develop our first research strategy in collaboration with colleagues and external networks. Our research strategy will articulate and guide how we deliver our commitment to learning and generating knowledge about social work, understanding the profession and the impact of our regulation.

To support our research work, we established the Alliance Research Network with social work and social care regulators across the UK and strengthened links with academics, research networks and social care research funders.

Our research will expand the evidence base on key regulatory issues and help inform decision-making across our organisation. We will be better prepared to respond to emerging areas of regulatory risk and positively impact public policy through our relationships

with government, social work employers, professional and systems regulators, and professional bodies.

In 2026 to 2027, we will establish a dedicated research function, implement our first research strategy, and continue delivering research on priority topics such as:

- understanding seriousness and referrals in fitness to practise
- student placement sufficiency, quality and assessment
- practice education



Objective 1.3: Reflect on the learning from our recent review of continuing professional development to advance a more comprehensive and valued approach to our CPD requirements, with staged implementation.

We reflected on the learning from our review of continuing professional development in 2024 to 2025 to develop potential options for our future CPD model. This considered other CPD models used in social care regulation and broader external developments in social care policy. We began to test our thinking with social workers through our stakeholder forums and roadshow events.

At our roadshow events, we were encouraged to hear support for redevelopment of our CPD approach. We heard that social workers want us to recognise the range of learning they undertake, are supportive of developing strategies for year-round recording, and would value more support in conveying the importance of CPD to employers. They also highlighted inconsistency in access to CPD and employer-provided time and resources.

During the year, we implemented early improvements to our CPD messaging, making the purpose of CPD clearer to social workers and the public.

In 2026 to 2027 we will review a sample of up to 3% of CPD records following the close of the renewal period on 30 November 2026. We will also continue to consider our longer-term approach to CPD review and will engage further with social workers, employers and sector partners as this work develops. We expect to launch a consultation on our proposed model following conclusion of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation, so we can take account of the outcomes of the review.



Objective 1.4: refine and develop our approach to social work education and training, working in partnership with providers and the social work sector to improve the consistency and quality of courses, and the readiness of graduates for professional practice.

This year we strengthened our oversight of social work education and specialist training through inspections, insight generation, and a review of our regulatory framework.

We introduced an inspection model for AMHP and BIA courses, drawing on learning from social work reapproval inspections and stakeholder feedback. Between October 2025 and February 2026, we completed reapproval of all BIA courses. Reapproval of 19 AMHP courses is scheduled between March and June 2026.

We will use our learning from the AMHP and BIA inspections to help to shape our inspection model for the next social work reapproval cycle, which will commence in 2027.

We continued to work with our [!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b_img.jpg\) Education and Training Advisory Forum \(ETAF\)](#) on a broad range of issues relating to social work education and training. This has included work on our:

- education and training standards
- AMHP and BIA model

In November 2025, we welcomed Andrea Collins, Head of Social Work at Manchester Metropolitan University as our new ETAF chair. Andrea brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience of the education and training landscape.

We also launched our [!\[\]\(6059a5aa8b4ca7bb793408023d6c6e42_img.jpg\) Preparing for practice: social work education in England](#) report at the National Children and Adult Services Conference. This shares learning from our first 5 years regulating social work courses and from the reapproval of 257 programmes. We explored how social work is evolving, capturing the voices of social work students and apprentices on topics such as the cost of living, inclusivity and why they chose to study social work.

Publishing the report demonstrated our commitment to:

- sharing the data and insight that we hold about social work education and training in England
- increasing transparency and understanding of the state of social work education
- strengthening our own evidence base for future policy development

Engagement with the publication has been strong, and we continue to monitor its use and impact. The analysis and research undertaken for the publication has helped us further understand the impact of our education quality assurance processes.

We also progressed a comprehensive evidence-led review of our education and training rules, standards and guidance, using the findings from our research, supported by extensive external engagement. We plan to consult on our proposed changes in summer 2026.

We will publish a report on learning from the first AMHP and BIA reapproval cycles in 2026 to 2027. Insights from these inspections and our first social work education and training reapproval cycle will inform:

- the next social work education and training reapproval cycle in 2027
- further research and engagement on placement quality and sufficiency mentioned in objective 1.5



Objective 1.5: build a more in-depth knowledge of the practice education landscape to inform and support the critical role of practice educators, including exploring potential regulatory levers.

We delivered a substantial programme of activity to strengthen our understanding of practice education. We recruited a dedicated project team and commissioned research into [!\[\]\(e474458956c9a37fbf9586ddb60a7fa1_img.jpg\) the national practice educator training landscape](#). This provided the first clear picture of the scale, structure and variation of training provision across England.

We also strengthened engagement with the sector through our Practice Education Development Group and wider networks. We held 3 regional events and 2 online workshops with social workers, practice educators, employers, academics and those working at higher education institutions. The sessions explored CPD, guidance and professional recognition.

To complement this, we conducted a national survey of social workers asking them to share their view on practice education which received over 4,400 responses. This provided valuable insight into:

- motivation for becoming a practice educator
- training experiences
- the conditions that support high-quality practice education

These activities created the most comprehensive evidence base to date on practice educator training, workforce demographics and the challenges affecting quality and consistency. They have positioned

us to make informed, evidence-led decisions about proportionate regulatory approaches, helping ensure any future regulatory framework is workable, targeted and aligned to professional need.

We will use these insights to determine the regulatory levers that can best support and recognise the practice educator role.

Performance analysis: regulation and protection

More information about this strategic theme is in our  [strategy](#).

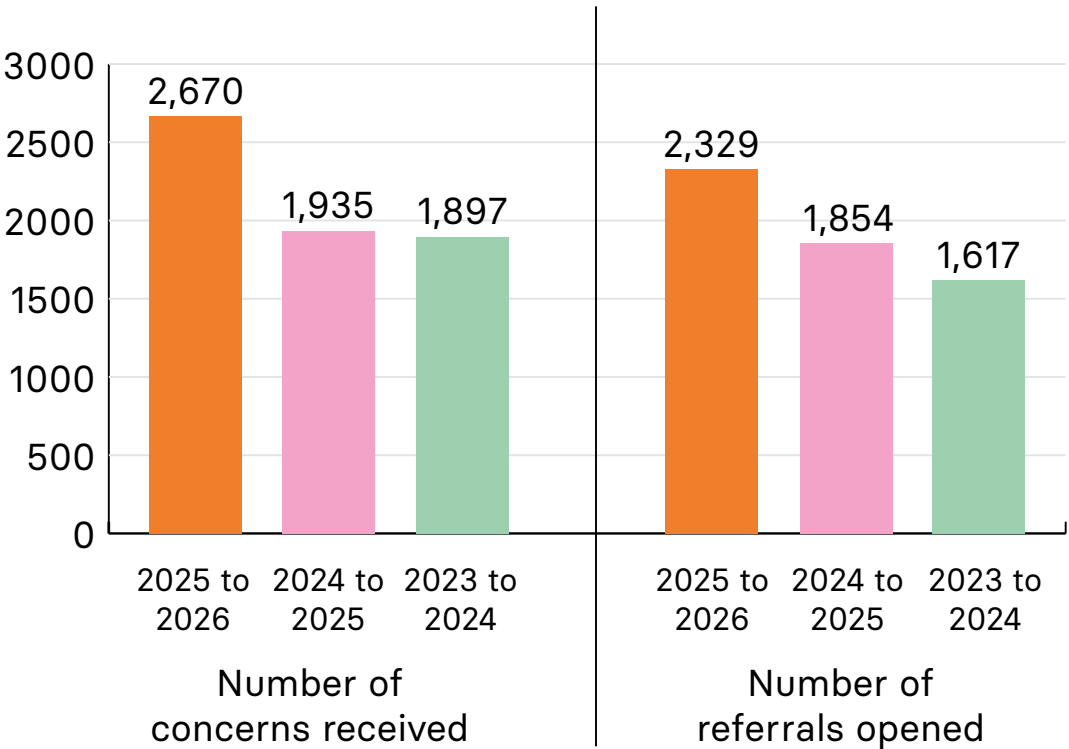


Objective 2.1: Take action to improve timeliness in our triage, investigations and case examiner functions whilst maintaining decision-making quality and fairness.

Triage and investigations

We saw a 38% increase in concerns received into triage in 2025 to 2026 compared with the previous year.

Graph 1. The number of concerns we received each year and how many of these became referrals⁹



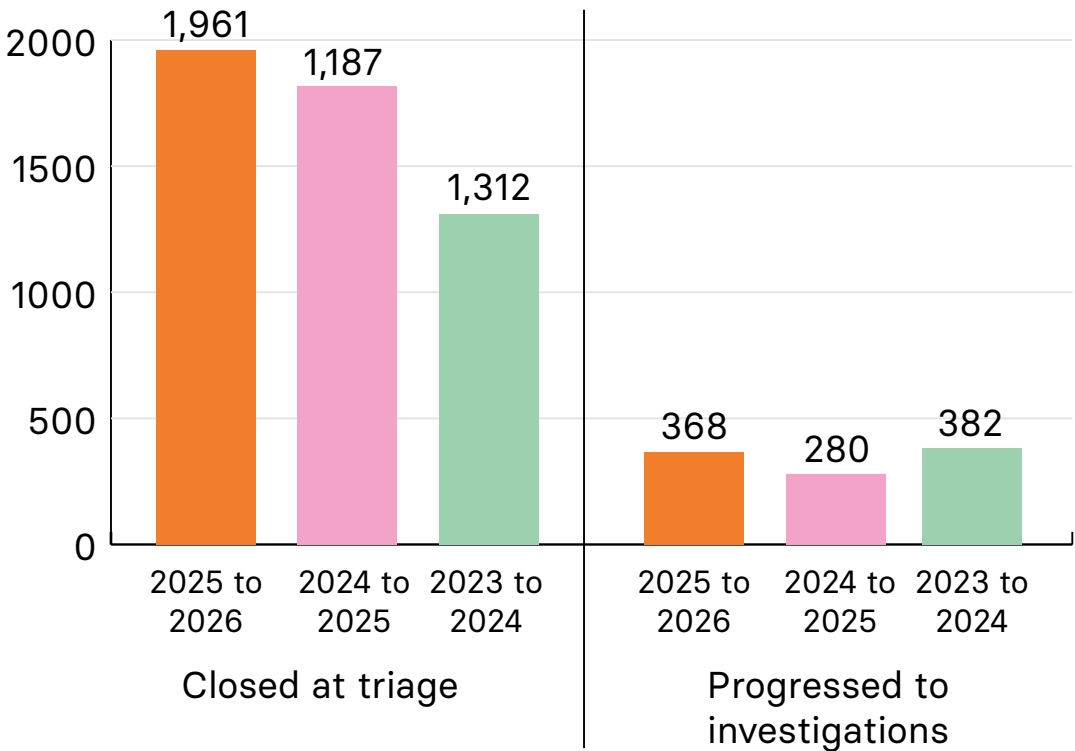
9 We receive a high volume of concerns about issues we cannot investigate, and we can only investigate concerns about a social worker’s fitness to practise. If a concern is not about a registered social worker, the concern is closed before becoming a referral.

Actions taken to address the high volume of cases in triage included:

- recruiting additional fixed term team members and a new permanent head of triage role
- undertaking an end-to-end process review project to streamline processes across triage and investigations
- focusing on performance and employee engagement
- commencing internal research and work with other regulators to understand reasons for the significant increase in referrals which is being seen across almost all health and care regulators

In triage we made 59% more decisions compared to last year. However, the volume of new concerns received continued to increase through the year. This resulted in the triage open caseload being higher at the end of 2025 to 2026 than at the end of the previous year. We continued to respond to this growth and in the final month of the year, we started to have an impact on the caseload by addressing more cases than at any time previously.

Graph 2. The number of triage outcomes



Performance at the investigations stage of fitness to practise has shown improvement throughout the year, with the median timescale reducing from 59 weeks at the end of last year to 49 weeks in March this year. We continue to improve our approach to the investigation of cases and have established new processes for management and monitoring of cases that are currently awaiting a hearing.

The process review in triage and investigations will conclude in April 2026 and recommended new ways of working to respond to increasing referral rates.

We also increased the availability of legal support to the triage and investigations teams. We recruited 3 fixed term paralegals, and brought our professional advisors into the triage team to ensure combined legal and professional advice is available to these teams.

Case examinations

The case examinations team focused on learning and improvements which included:

- a new submissions form for social workers to provide additional structured information
- learning from cases where we reviewed the outcome of a case examination decision under our legal framework
- working with the investigations team to improve learning and quality between the 2 parts of the service
- the implementation of a new decision-making framework for case examiners to ensure consistency and quality assurance

Case progression slowed through the year due to the number of vacancies in case examiners. New case examiners have now been recruited, and we expect case progression to improve.

In 2026 to 2027 we plan to undertake further work to address capacity risks and improve resilience in case examinations, to optimise case progression and decision-making.



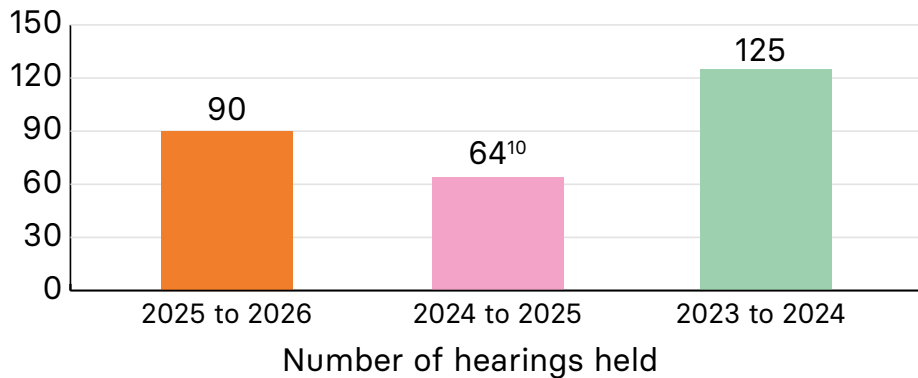
Objective 2.2: Use the additional funding to take action to address the hearings backlog.

In 2025 to 2026, we received additional funding to start to address the backlog of cases waiting for a hearing. We used this to support work with our external legal provider to progress the preparation of cases for a hearing, prioritising cases based on risk and age.

We recruited additional hearings staff, plus more than 58 fitness to practise panellists and legal advisers, to increase our overall capacity to hold hearings. These additional resources contributed to more cases being progressed. At the end of the year, we achieved

a caseload of 403 open cases awaiting a hearing. This represents an improvement, compared to our original forecast of 555. We have already begun listing cases for the first quarter of 2026 to 2027.

Graph 3. The number of hearings held



We provided induction and training for new fitness to practise panellists and legal advisers, and refresher training to experienced panellists. This ensured awareness of learning from the past 12 months and understanding of new case law.

The case review team worked to deliver improvements to our guidance and processes for supporting witnesses, complainants and social workers who are involved in an open case.

We have also progressed a project to reprocure our external legal services, as well as moving from a single provider to 2 providers, to increase capacity and resilience. We commenced the tendering for new contracts in 2025 to 2026 and expect contracts to be awarded in July 2026. This will increase our capacity to progress cases for hearings in 2026 to 2027 and beyond.

In 2026 to 2027 we will implement a new process to support social workers, witnesses and complainants who require additional support, and implement an externally delivered emotional support line for social workers involved in fitness to practise cases.

¹⁰ The figure of 70 hearings was previously published in 2024 to 2025. Since then the measure has been changed to exclude remittals and the figure is therefore re-presented as 64.



Objective 2.3: Identify and realise further efficiency and effectiveness opportunities in our hearings and case review functions.

We set out a number of activities across the year to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the later stages of the fitness to practise process.

We created an in-house legal advocacy team, and over the course of the year recruited 6 team members. We developed guidance and handover arrangements to manage the transition of this work from our external legal provider to our new in-house team. This means we will be able to deliver some of our legal advocacy work internally in 2026 to 2027 (including interim order applications and interim and final order reviews). This will reduce our dependency on external legal spend, as well as provide greater opportunities for learning between teams.

In autumn 2025 we consulted on new guidance for an adjudicator consensual disposal process for cases that have progressed to the final hearing stage. This process and new guidance will be introduced from April 2026 and will allow adjudicators and social workers (in suitable cases) to reach an agreed outcome without the need for a final hearing. Ahead of its introduction we have identified several potential suitable cases.

We evaluated the pilot we conducted in 2024 to 2025, of final hearings conducted with 2 adjudicators rather than 3. The findings have resulted in refined criteria for the use of 2 person panels. This will ensure that decision-making resource is applied appropriately and consistently. We will prioritise embedding the revised 2-person panel criteria into business-as-usual processes.

To assist us with fitness to practise, we enhanced our communications with our single points of contact (SPOC) network, which includes a key contact at every local authority in England, as well as several other organisations that employ social workers. We did this by reviewing our information pack and launching a new quarterly newsletter. We also continued to hold single point of contact forum events each quarter, which build understanding of our fitness to practise processes and requirements.

As we move into 2026 to 2027, timeliness within fitness to practise remains a challenge, however we have a clear plan to improve timeliness at each stage of the process, which we are implementing. Reducing delays and improving the experience of members of the public, employers and social workers remains a central priority for the year ahead.

Fitness to practise

It is our responsibility to investigate concerns about social workers' fitness to practise. We take this action to protect the public, maintain public confidence in social workers and uphold  [professional standards](#).

It is vital that we investigate such concerns in a fair and transparent way, and in line with our legal framework.

Information about how to raise a concern about a social worker and how we deal with  [concerns](#) is available on our website.

Fitness to practise data

During the year, we continued to publish  [monthly data relating to our social work register and fitness to practise cases](#). Our yearly summary below shows the overall volume of activity and the proportion of cases that progressed to each stage of the fitness to practise process.

On 31 March 2026, there were 3,477 open fitness to practise cases.

The numbers below are based on the first decision that we made on cases at each stage of fitness to practise during the year. They include cases that we opened in previous years.

We made 2,306 assessment decisions across the triage stage of our fitness to practise process. Of these decisions:

- 85% (1,969) were to close cases with no further action
- 15% (337) were to progress cases to an investigation

Case examiners made 257 decisions, of which:

- 35% (90) were to close with no impairment to the social worker's fitness to practise
- 32% (82) were to close cases by means of  [accepted disposal](#)
- 33% (85) were to refer to a hearing

Of the cases that were closed at the case examination stage with no impairment, we applied the following outcomes:

- 54% (49) no further action
- 20% (18) advice
- 26% (23) warning

Where we found there was a realistic prospect of impairment at the case examination stage, we applied the following accepted disposal outcomes:

- 0% (0) no further action
- 2% (2) advice
- 46% (38) warning orders
- 17% (14) conditions of practice orders
- 17% (14) suspension orders
- 17% (14) removal orders

We decided 90 cases at hearings, finding:

- 68% (61) of cases where the social worker's fitness to practise was impaired
- 32% (29) of cases where no impairment was found

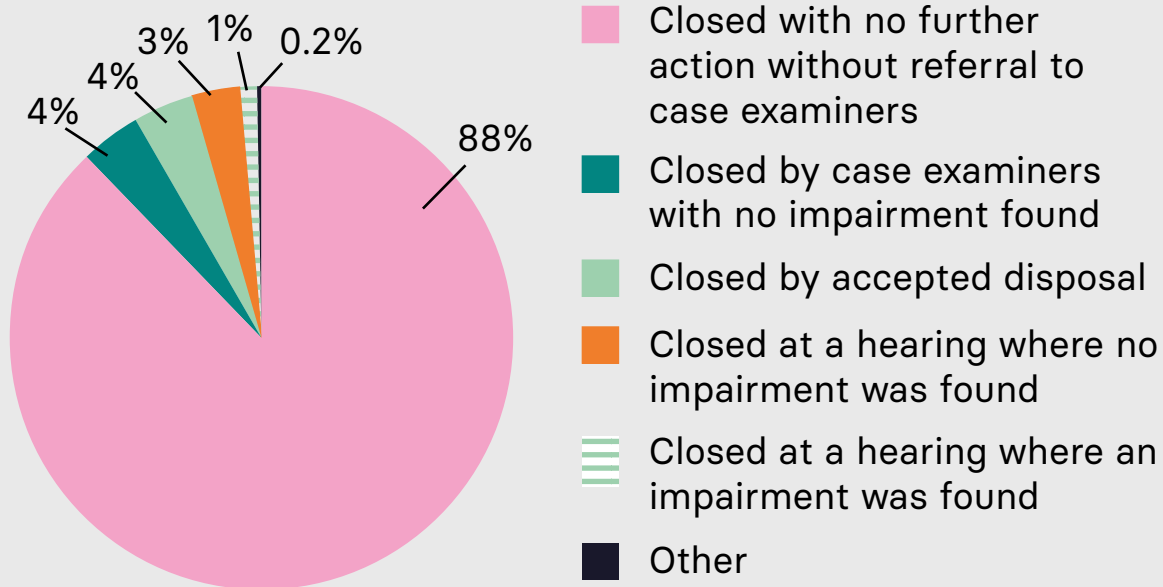
Where we found that the social worker's fitness to practise was impaired at the hearings stage, we applied the following sanctions:

- 2% (1) advice
- 7% (4) warning orders
- 3% (2) conditions of practice orders
- 31% (19) suspension orders
- 57% (35) removal order

Where we found that the social worker's fitness to practise was not impaired at the hearings stage, we applied the following outcomes:

- 90% (26) no further action
- 4% (1) advice
- 7% (2) warning

Fitness to practise case outcomes



During the year, 2,235 cases reached a final outcome, of which:

- 88% (1,969) were closed with no further action, without referral to case examiners
- 4% (90) were closed by case examiners with no impairment found
- 4% (82) were closed by accepted disposal
- 3% (61) were closed at a hearing where impairment was found
- 1% (29) were closed at a hearing with no impairment found
- 0.2% (4) cases were closed for other reasons. For example, voluntary removal from the register or removal from the register on another fitness to practise case

Reflecting on fitness to practise referrals

We continued to deepen our understanding of the number and nature of the concerns we receive. We have further refined how we manage these concerns at all stages of the process.

This year we received 2,670 concerns (1,935 in 2024 to 2025). We receive a high volume of concerns about issues we cannot investigate, as we can only investigate concerns about social workers' fitness to practise. If a concern is not about a registered social worker, the concern is closed before becoming a referral.

We have opened 2,329 referrals (1,854 in 2024 to 2025), of which 1,196 have data that is presented in a structured reporting format comprising quantitative information captured within pre-defined tables. Of these:

- 170 (229¹¹ in 2024 to 2025) were from employers of social workers
- 858 (741¹¹ in 2024 to 2025) were from members of the public
- 168 (180 in 2024 to 2025) were from other sources

Members of the public made 72% of referrals, up from 66% in 2024 to 2025. These referrals were primarily from people who use the services of social workers.

At the triage stage, we referred 58% of the referrals we received from employers into our investigation process (66% in 2024 to 2025). 97% of referrals from members of the public were not appropriate for us to investigate as the regulator (96% in 2024 to 2025). For example, we cannot:

- influence court proceedings
- investigate concerns about social care services or employers of social workers

On our website we publish the  [types of concern we can consider](#).

¹¹ Denotes where 2024 to 2025 figures are re-presented from 2024 to 2025 annual report. We have grouped 3 stages (concern, pre-triage and triage) into one triage stage, and recalculated these accordingly.

Fitness to practise internal quality standards

In 2025 to 2026, we undertook a programme of quality assurance audits across key areas of the fitness to practise process, providing overall assurance on the quality and consistency of risk assessment, decision-making and application of interim orders. The review of interim order activity confirmed strong compliance.

A risk was identified in relation to the level of oversight for paused cases (awaiting hearings) and mitigating actions have now been implemented.

Fitness to practise diversity data and insight analysis

Evidence consistently shows that certain groups of social workers are over-represented in fitness to practise proceedings. Addressing this disparity is central to our regulatory responsibilities and our commitment to a fair, transparent system.

In 2025 to 2026, we deepened our analytical approach to apply more sophisticated methods to understand the factors driving these patterns. We will  [publish outcomes](#) from this work in 2026. This gives us a stronger evidence base from which to act, and better equips us to make lasting, meaningful change.

We engaged with Skills for Care, the PSA, organisations signed up to the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) and other stakeholders, to inform our approach.

We introduced our  [fair referral principles](#). This will help employers decide when to raise a fitness to practise concern with us. By encouraging employers to apply consistent, equitable standards when making referrals, the principles aim to reduce disproportionality in the system. They also aim to ensure that fitness to practise processes are applied fairly across the social work workforce.

Our work in this area earned second place in the 'Innovative Practice' category at the Institute of Regulation Awards. The judging panel recognised the integrity and professionalism of the collaborative work delivered across teams in a sensitive regulatory area. This commendation demonstrates our commitment to evidence-based, inclusive regulation and strengthens public confidence in our practices.

We also launched a joint pilot project focused on the lived experiences of Black, male social work practitioners and leaders in the east region. We hope these findings could be expanded further into other regions in the future.

Performance analysis: delivery and improvement

More information about this strategic theme is in our  [strategy](#).



Objective 3.1: develop and publish a new strategy for 2026 to 2029, supported by an aligned and strengthened approach to annual business planning and performance management.

During 2025 to 2026, we reviewed our approach to business planning and performance monitoring to ensure it continued to support clear accountability, effective oversight and delivery of our priorities. The review confirmed that our existing approach provided a strong foundation and was already supporting a clear focus on organisational priorities, alongside a culture of continuous improvement.

Building on this, we made targeted refinements to strengthen how planning and performance are joined up across the organisation. This included improving alignment between business planning, budget setting and workforce planning, introducing earlier opportunities for board input, and enhancing consistency in how objectives are developed and assessed.

These changes resulted in a more structured and integrated planning cycle, supported by clearer tools and guidance. We have applied this enhanced approach to the development of our  [2026 to 2027 business plan](#).

We also made progress in developing our next strategy by strengthening our understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the organisation. This work included engagement with staff and stakeholders. We subsequently paused this work to ensure that our next strategy can fully reflect the findings of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.



Objective 3.2: finalise and start to implement our new digital, data and technology strategy.

During 2025 to 2026, we defined our approach to digital, data and technology following an external review which highlighted both areas of strength and the need to further develop our digital maturity. Our focus during the year was on establishing a clear direction of travel, addressing immediate capacity and capability gaps, and defining the outcomes we expect digital investment to deliver for the organisation and those who use our services.

We established a dedicated programme and developed our digital, data and technology (DDaT) strategy, which sets out our ambition to become a more user-focused, data-driven, agile and secure regulator over the next 3 years. We developed a phased roadmap for the years ahead, providing greater clarity on priorities, sequencing and expected outcomes.

To progress this work, we addressed key people and capability gaps through targeted recruitment in specialist areas, including data governance and user research. We began to build more consistent service design foundations and made progress in data management, developing our first data governance charter and initiating work to improve our data architecture.

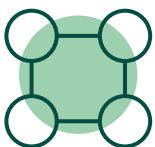
In technology, we focused on improving platform resilience and security, enhancing testing approaches, and strengthening supplier management. Alongside this, we undertook workforce analysis to develop plans for longer-term team structures and skills development.

In parallel, we developed a clearer approach to the adoption of emerging technologies and explored potential use cases to support regulatory delivery, efficiency and effectiveness.

Alongside building these foundations, we delivered targeted digital improvements. This included new functionality to enable staff to communicate directly with stakeholders through our case management system, enhancements to support the inspection of social work education and training courses, and the introduction of a new system to support payroll processing for our partners. We also worked to meet accessibility standards across our digital communications platforms and provided tailored accessibility training to staff.

While most user-facing improvements will be delivered over future years, the progress made during the year strengthened our underlying capability and provided a clearer, more coherent foundation for change. This work positions us to operate as a more digitally mature regulator and to deliver more efficient services and better experiences for social workers, employers and the public. We have carried out a digital maturity assessment to provide a baseline for measuring progress over time.

In the year ahead, we will continue to deliver our programme of improvements, including stronger data architecture and data quality, redesigned priority user journeys, and a dedicated workforce plan to support sustainable delivery in this area.



Objective 3.3: adopt and embed our new behaviours framework.

During 2025 to 2026, we introduced and began embedding a new behaviours framework and cultural change programme. This focused on improving how we work together to support delivery of our organisational priorities. Our people were actively involved in shaping how the framework would be implemented, helping to build early ownership and engagement across the organisation.

A leadership development programme supported implementation, alongside targeted communications, tools and resources to help all

staff teams apply the behaviours in practice. Leaders have played an important role in modelling the behaviours and translating learning into team-based actions, supported by approaches such as 360-degree feedback and coaching.

To support and align with the new behaviours framework, we embarked on a review of governance and decision-making processes which will be completed in 2026 to 2027.

There are clear early signs of progress. Our quarterly pulse survey in February 2026 showed that 83% of respondents reported taking active steps to align with the new behaviours, an increase from 65% in the previous quarter. This indicates growing adoption and awareness across the organisation. We expect the full impact to become more evident as changes to governance and decision-making processes are implemented and embedded.

Alongside this work, we were awarded our first Gold Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) Award, recognising the sustained progress we have made in embedding inclusive practices since beginning the TIDE assessment process in 2021.

Sustainability reporting

Sustainability and the environment

Social Work England has reported on climate-related financial disclosures consistent with HM Treasury's Task Force on Climate Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) aligned disclosure application guidance. This guidance interprets and adapts the framework for the UK public sector.

We aim to be a sustainable organisation that contributes positively to challenges facing society and the environment. We are committed to sustainable development as a guiding principle within our work. This means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

We are located in Sheffield within the clean air zone and with good public transport links, connected by bicycle lanes. Our neighbourhood benefits from Sheffield City Council's ground-breaking  [Grey to Green](#) environmental and economic development strategy. We are a tenant of North Bank, leasing 17,785 square feet, or 30% of the building. This multi-occupancy office building has an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C, valid until 2031.

Our  [sustainability plan for 2023 to 2026](#) combines both of the following:

- our corporate social responsibilities
- our environmental, social and governance commitments

The plan aligns with the greening government commitments and focuses on near-term areas that we can most influence and build upon in future years. These commitments include action by our people within local communities, procurement, decarbonisation and waste minimisation. Social Work England does not consider climate to be a principal risk, and has therefore complied with the TCFD recommendations and recommended disclosures around:

- governance: recommended disclosures (a) and (b)
- risk management: recommended disclosures (a) to (c)
- metrics and targets: recommended disclosures (b)

Governance

Our board provides strategic oversight of the sustainability plan with support and advice from the audit and risk assurance committee (ARAC). ARAC is responsible for both of the following:

- reporting to our board on the sustainability plan development and implementation
- providing oversight of our approach to managing sustainability risks

The executive director for people and business support sponsors our sustainability plan. The executive leadership team is responsible for the following:

- assessing climate-related risks and opportunities within strategy development, business planning and risk appetite
- approving the sustainability plan and annual action plan
- how we need to respond and adapt to climate-related risks
- monitoring delivery and ensuring we mitigate risks
- ensuring we maximise opportunities

Risk management

We considered the likely impact of climate change, and the risks and opportunities this presents to our organisation and our role.

We have identified that our operations could be affected by the cost of energy, new technology and the increasing risk of severe weather events such as flooding. Climate change has not been identified as a principal risk, nor a significant component of any principal risk or material to our operation in the near-term.

Our climate related risks are monitored through our ongoing horizon-scanning and risk identification and management processes.

Read more about our risk management approach on page 71.

Metrics, targets and reporting

We report our progress bi-annually to ARAC and our board. 2025 to 2026 is the first year that we have submitted quarterly returns on greening government commitments into the cross-sector framework through the Department for Education. We are a member of the Department for Education arm's length bodies greening government commitments quarterly forum.

Our report on sustainability performance for 2025 to 2026 follows statutory requirements. It is in accordance with HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual and Sustainability Reporting Guidance (SRG), subject to the information we can fully disclose.

Mitigating climate change: working towards Net Zero by 2050

Greenhouse gas emissions

We have calculated carbon emissions for our energy related activities and business travel using the Greenhouse Gas Protocol's corporate standard. All our energy emissions fall under scope 3 of the UK greenhouse gas emissions reporting.

- Scope 1 direct emissions is not applicable as we do not own energy sources or hire or lease car fleets.
- Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy. Our lease agreement does not give us operational control over our energy, gas and water suppliers and therefore scope 2 is not applicable to our organisation.
- Scope 3 emissions are all indirect emissions not included in scope 2, that occur as a consequence of our activity but are not owned or controlled by us.

Consumption

We have made a commitment to hybrid working. This achieves work-life balance for people and delivers benefits for us towards delivering our sustainability plan.

This approach and being a leasehold tenant in a multi-occupancy building, provides context to the year-to-year changes in our consumption reported below. We are dependent on the landlord supplying us with meter readings. Therefore, where estimates are made for reporting purposes and where data has not previously been supplied by the landlord, this is reconciled and updated in future periods.

In 2025 to 2026 the total cost of electricity is based on actual usage.

Gas usage is based on meter readings for the whole building. Usage has been apportioned based on the floor space we occupy, which is 30%.

Category	Unit	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024	2022 to 2023	% movement since 2023
Electricity	Kilowatt hours	153,363	96,134	116,234 Note 2	143,319 Note 1	+7%
Gas	Kilowatt hours	139,007	193,776	not available	not available	not available
CO ₂ (electricity)	Tonnes	27.15	22.4	27.3	29.9	-9.2%
CO ₂ (gas)	Tonnes	25.43	35.7	not available	not available	not available
Expenditure (electricity)	£	51,600	26,976	50,889	104,086	-50.4%
Expenditure (gas)	£	10,397	14,234	not available	not available	not available

Note 1: The cost of electricity was significantly higher in 2022 to 2023 as the landlord issued invoices based on estimated usage.

Note 2: The landlord carried out a reconciliation and issued a credit note in respect of estimated costs which had been overcharged in 2022 to 2023. This credit note was used against 2023 to 2024 invoiced costs.

The changes to our energy consumption in 2025 to 2026 have been affected by the level of service provided by our landlord. 3 out of 4 boilers were out of service during the winter period and to compensate for this we had to rely on portable space heaters to ensure that our office space was heated to a suitable temperature. This reduced gas consumption and increased our usage of electricity.

Where we have control over our energy consumption, to increase energy efficiency, we use LED lights that switch on and off according to room occupancy. We have adjusted light sensor timings in meeting rooms to prevent unnecessary energy usage. Fixtures and fittings we purchased during 2025 to 2026 had a high energy efficiency rating.

Our consumption of finite resources (water, energy and raw materials) is limited to water and energy. Our total expenditure on finite resources is reported as 'utilities' within our operating expenditure on page 121 of the financial statements.

To highlight energy use within our organisation and become more sustainable, we continued to deliver our 'Turn Teal' internal communications campaign. This campaign supports the actions laid out in our sustainability plan.

Business travel

We are committed to hybrid and flexible working and the work-life balance it brings people. This commitment supports our efforts towards net zero by 2050. Travel is minimised by using video conferencing for hearings, board meetings and other stakeholder meetings where appropriate.

We promote use of public transport as the more environmentally friendly and economically viable option through our travel and expenses policy. Emissions linked to travel slightly increased in the past year; this is in line with increased engagement activity as reported on page 30 of the performance analysis. We saw an increase in use of taxi, rail and bus and a reduction in car journeys compared to 2024 to 2025.

Means of transport	2025 to 2026 £	2025 to 2026 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2024 to 2025 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2023 to 2024 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2022 to 2023 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2021 to 2022 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)
Car	5,763	3.45	3.71	2.92	3.55	2.15
Taxi, rail and bus	49,372	6.20	3.59	6.46	6.49	0.21
Air	5,482	2.98	2.50	2.60	2.47	0.11
Total	60,617	12.63	9.80	11.98	12.51	2.47

Breakdown of air travel	2025 to 2026 distance travelled (miles)	2025 to 2026 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2024 to 2025 distance travelled (miles)	2024 to 2025 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2023 to 2024 distance travelled (miles)	2023 to 2024 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)
Domestic short Haul (economy)	5,482	2.98	5,472	2.40	5,257	2.31
International short haul (economy)	0	0	328	0.10	974	0.29
Total	5,482	2.98	5,800	2.50	6,231	2.60

Waste management

From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, we produced 1.28 tonnes of combined waste. 40% of this is general waste, 0.51 tonnes. This has reduced significantly from 0.94 tonnes in the previous year. Improved waste segregation and management have contributed to this reduction. In other waste, we recorded 0.22 tonnes of food waste, 0.23

tonnes of paper recycling and 0.32 tonnes of mixed recycling. We have continued to focus on reducing packaging in our purchases and have increased the use of refillable and reusable products

No waste goes to landfill. 100% is sorted for re-use and recycling. Any waste that cannot be re-used or recycled is incinerated to generate energy. The total cost of waste management during the year 2025 to 2026 was £1,794 (£1,276 2024 to 2025).

Single-use plastics

In line with the government's 25-year environment plan, we are committed to reducing consumer single-use plastics and use plastic-free packaging wherever possible. Our hydro taps encourage staff to use reusable water bottles and glasses. We provide reusable crockery and facilities to store and reheat food to encourage homemade lunches.

In 2025 to 2026, we began to collate data on purchasing of single-use plastic, recording purchases of 29,552 items. In 2026 to 2027 we intend to change our purchasing practices and benchmark with other similar-sized organisations to further reduce our use of single-use plastics.

Paper use

We seek to reduce the use of paper by taking a digital-first approach. Where we use paper, we limit its consumption by requiring double-sided printing. Our paper supply was replenished in 2025 to 2026 with 22 reams of recycled paper.

Reducing our water use

Our use of water is monitored and billed as part of our utilities service charge. We calculate usage on a pro-rated square footage basis. We understand from the landlord that historical issues concerning the lack of water metering have now been resolved. Water meter readings were available to the landlord at the end of 2025 to 2026 and therefore we anticipate being able to report on our water use in 2026 to 2027. We manage our water use to our best abilities by having hydro taps and dishwasher facilities installed.

Sustainable procurement

Our commercial approach delivers effective procurement and contract management that:

- secures value for money
- minimises our environmental impact
- promotes sustainability and social value

We comply with all applicable legislative requirements and always strive to improve our knowledge in this area. The new Procurement Act 2023 came into force on 24 February 2025. All commercial staff received training from our sponsor department and the Government Commercial College including 'Deep Dive' training on the changes to procurement policy and practice. The requirements of the Social Value Act 2013 are embedded into our procurement and compliance processes.

Where practical, we use the Crown Commercial Service framework contracts to establish suppliers' compliance with environmental standards. When undertaking new procurement, we ensure that business cases include an analysis of modern slavery risks. We apply best practice to identify high risk areas as described in the government modern slavery guidance and use the Home Office's Modern Slavery Assessment Tool.

Nature recovery and biodiversity

We do not have any natural capital or landholdings. Our sustainability plan includes a commitment to raise awareness of opportunities to protect and restore biodiversity. In 2025 to 2026 this was delivered through a new learning module for staff.

Reducing environmental impacts from ICT and digital

As a predominantly cloud-based organisation, we do not maintain on-premise servers or significant physical digital infrastructure, which reduces the volume and complexity of ICT waste generated.

All ICT equipment reaching end of life during the year was made available for reuse through our buy back scheme for employees. A total of 75 devices were sold to our people during 2025 to 2026.

As a result, all disposals are categorised as reuse, and no ICT waste was sent to landfill or incineration. While we are able to identify the number of devices disposed of through this route, we do not yet systematically capture complete data on the associated mass (tonnes) or net financial value.

We recognise that this is a new mandatory reporting requirement and are working with our internal teams and suppliers to improve data capture and reporting processes.

To monitor emissions from our digital services, we rely on information provided through the emissions impact dashboard of our third-party supplier. The ICT hosting data available to us records a total climate impact of 1.61 tCO₂e (metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) for 2025 to 2026.

Communities and partnerships

As part of our sustainability plan, we have a volunteering policy in line with our values and status as a public body.

Employer supported volunteering gives employees the chance to:

- build connections with their local communities
- give back to society
- develop new skills

At the same time, it contributes to the achievement of our sustainability priorities. The scheme entitles all employees to one day of paid volunteering leave each year. In 2025 to 2026, 12 days were taken up for paid volunteering.

We continue to explore how to strengthen charity engagement. Following internal consultation with employees this year, we plan to introduce payroll-giving in 2026 to 2027, allowing employees to donate directly to charity from their salary.

Adapting to climate change

In 2025 to 2026, we engaged our board and our people in learning and development about climate change. This involved carbon literacy training delivered by the Department for Education for board members and a sustainability learning module for our people.

We have no natural capital or landholdings. As a tenant of a multi-occupancy building, we do not have direct control of decisions about energy supply. Nor do we have direct control over measures to protect the building and its surroundings from the impact of climate change.

The main climate risk we have identified that may affect our operations is the increased risk of local flooding to our offices in North Bank, Sheffield. More broadly, climate change continues to be an aggravator to our financial resources corporate risk and may potentially increase business continuity incidents. Our business continuity arrangements address this risk and enable us to quickly move to a model of home-based working.

Financial commentary

The following commentary summarises our net expenditure and financial position as at 31 March 2026. Further detail is available in the financial statements and the notes to the financial statements. As an arm's length body our financial statements are classified to the central government sector. The Department for Education will therefore consolidate them into its 2025 to 2026 annual accounts.

Statement of comprehensive net expenditure

During the year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, we received income in the form of fees from social workers of £11.42m (£10.17m 2024 to 2025). Further detail is available in note 2 of the financial statements.

We also received £16.53m (£12.11m 2024 to 2025) from the Department for Education in the form of grant-in-aid; to be used in furtherance of our objectives.

Revenue expenditure for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 was £28.52m (£23.24m 2024 to 2025), an increase of £5.3m.

Expenditure is inclusive of staff and other staff related costs, IT and telecommunications costs, legal and professional fees, and depreciation.

Further detail is available below and in notes 3 and 4 of the financial statements.



Total expenditure
£28.52m
(£23.24m 2024 to 2025)

Staff and staff related costs:
£16.71m (£11.98m 2024 to 2025)
Consists of staff costs £16.04m and other staff related costs including board fees and travel and subsistence of £0.67m.

Other operating expenditure:
£9.40m (£9.26m 2024 to 2025)
Consists of professional fees of £6.86m, depreciation and amortisation of £2.42m and other operating costs of £0.12m.

Infrastructure costs
£2.41m (£2.00m 2024 to 2025)
Consists of IT and telecommunications costs of £1.88m and building related costs of £0.53m.

Statement of financial position

Non-current assets obtained during the year cost a total of £2.64m (£2.14m 2024 to 2025).

Further development of our registration and case management system incurred costs of £2.36m (£1.94m 2024 to 2025). Other non-current assets cost £0.28m (£0.20m 2024 to 2025).

As at 31 March 2026, the cash and cash equivalent balance was £5.26m (£4.21m 2024 to 2025).

Going concern

The board has reviewed and approved the annual budget for the year ending 31 March 2027. Funding for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 has been confirmed in writing by the Department for Education.

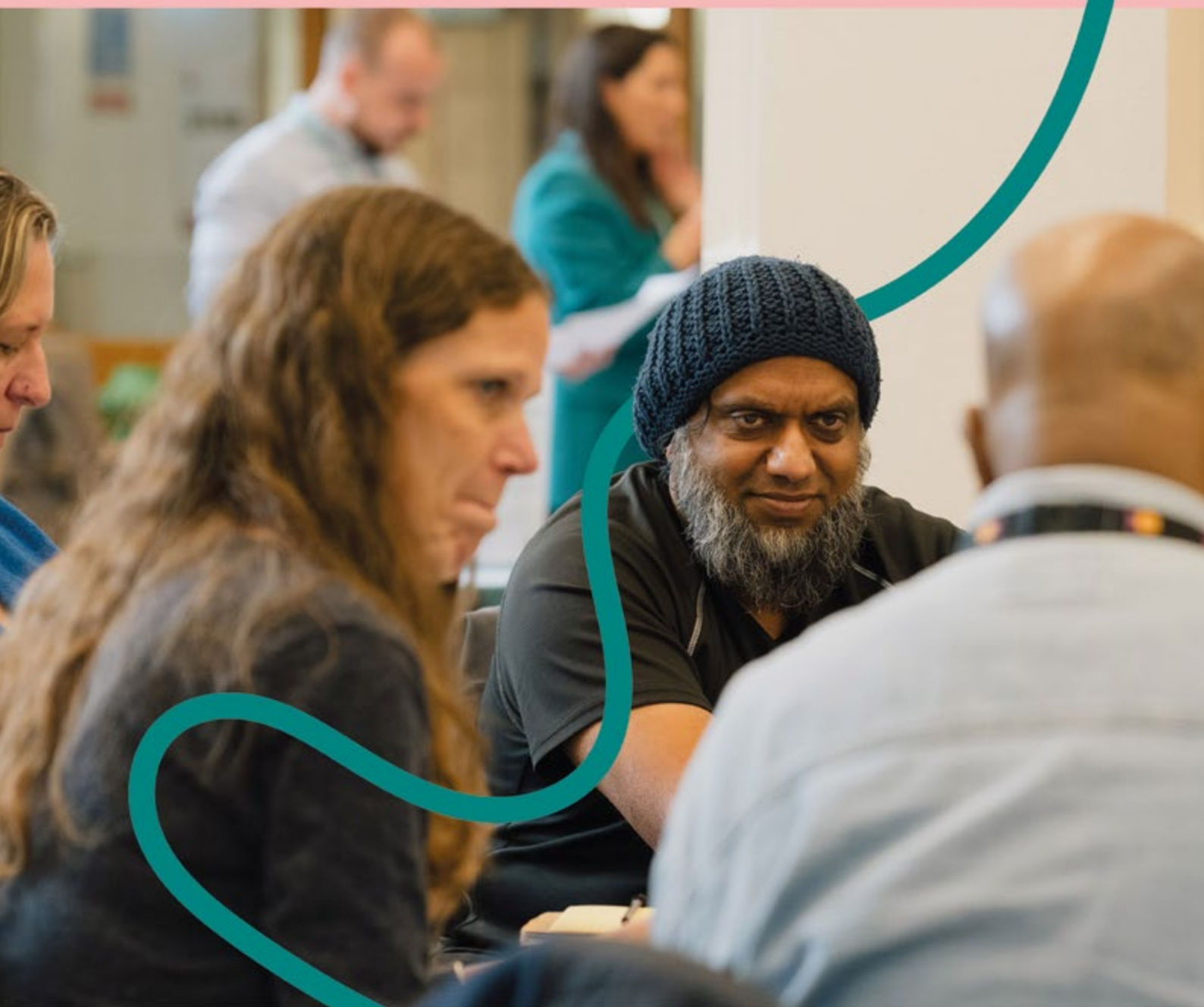
Social Work England will continue to receive registrant fee income, which will offset a significant proportion of our operating expenditure. The remaining forecasted balance is to be financed by the Department for Education by way of grant-in-aid.

The Department for Education's estimates and forward plans include provision for Social Work England's continuation and ongoing funding. Based on this information, the board considers that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

Colum Conway

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
29 June 2026

Accountability report



Corporate governance report

Here we explain our governance structure and how it supports us to achieve our objectives.

This section of the report includes information about our non-executive directors. It confirms the chief executive's responsibilities as Accounting Officer and how they are assured. It outlines our governance framework, including the work of the board and its committees and it assesses the risks to the organisation.

The corporate governance report has 3 sections.

1. Directors' report
2. Statement of Board and Accounting Officer's responsibilities
3. Governance statement

The report on personal information breaches is on page 62.

Directors' report

How Social Work England is organised

Our chair, board and chief executive have decision-making authority at board level as per the  [governance framework](#). Our executive leadership team and staff support them in discharging their duties.

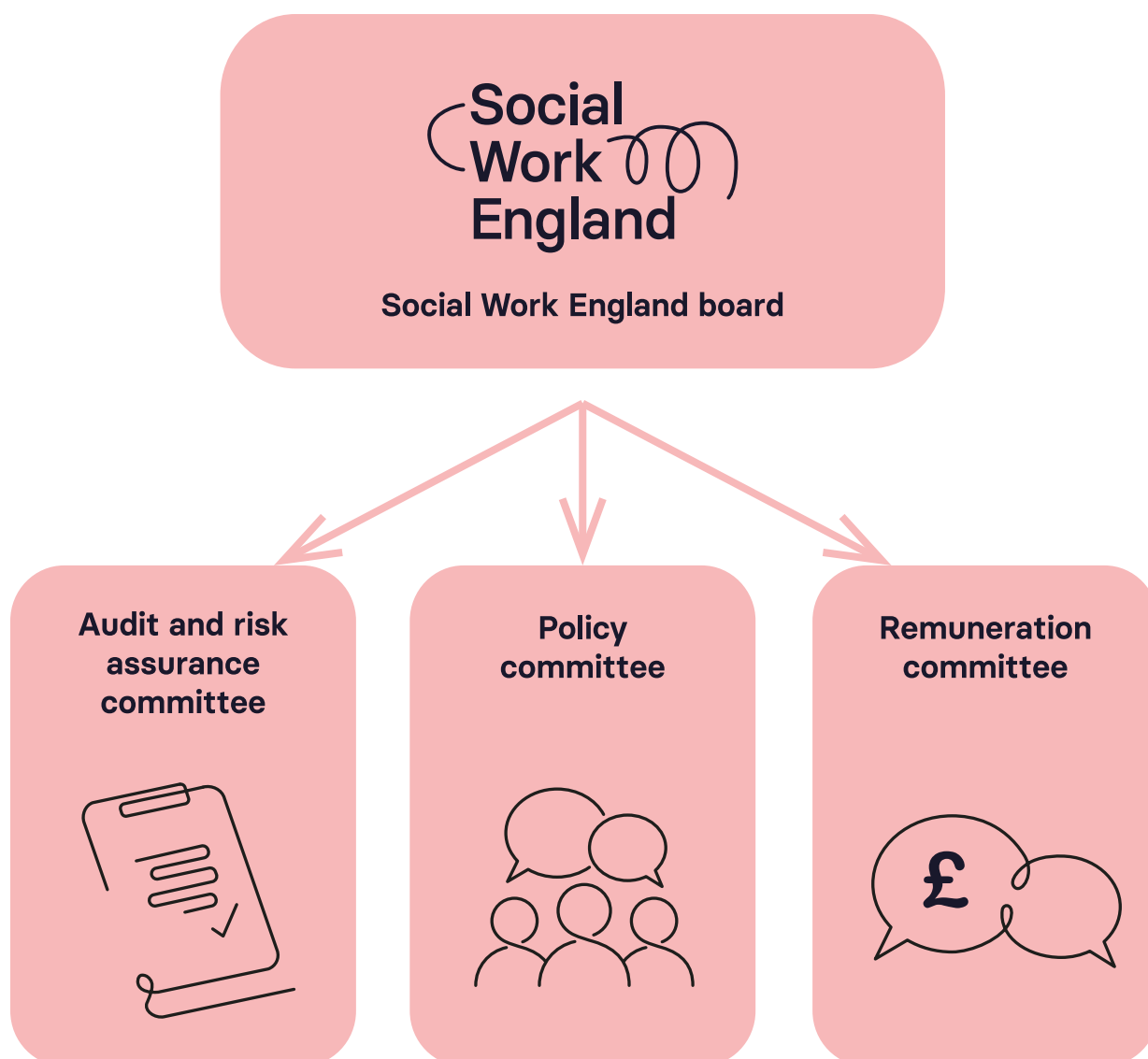
Board and committee structure as of 31 March 2026

Our board ensures effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control. It has sub committees on:

- audit and risk assurance
- policy
- remuneration

The committees support the board with its leadership, direction and a steer on our overall strategy. The board works to a governance framework agreed with our sponsor, the Department for Education, in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Care. It also works in accordance with  [Managing Public Money](#) published by HM Treasury.

This diagram shows our corporate governance structure for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.



Board composition

On 31 March 2026, the  membership of the board comprised:

- the chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch
- the deputy chair, Dr Adi Cooper
- 5 non-executive directors
- the chief executive, Colum Conway



Dr Andrew
McCulloch



Colum Conway



Dr Adi Cooper



Cheryl Hobson



Amrat Khorana



Simon Lewis



Chris Nicholson



Dr Sue Ross

Our chair, Dr Andrew McCulloch, was appointed on 20 September 2024 by the Secretary of State for Education. His term of office runs until 19 September 2027. He is supported by deputy chair, Dr Adi Cooper.

In June 2025, 3 new board members were appointed: Cheryl Hobson, Amrat Khorana and Chris Nicholson. Our board made minor amendments to its terms of reference to clarify the responsibilities associated with the deputy chair role.

The board agreed to extend the tenure of the existing boardroom apprentice, pending a decision about future sponsorship of the UK programme by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Register of interests

We maintain a  register of interests that details our board members' company directorships and other significant interests.

All executive directors have also declared their outside interests for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. They did so for the purposes of ensuring full disclosure regarding related party transactions.

See page 131 in the financial statements.

Report on personal information breaches

As a non-departmental public body, we are required to report personal data related incidents in our annual report.

This reporting is in accordance with the standard disclosure format issued by the Cabinet Office. We also regularly report to our audit and risk assurance committee.

We had 53 personal data related incidents this financial year (2024 to 2025: 52). None of these incidents met the threshold of risk that required us to report them to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); this is consistent with 2024 to 2025.

Most of our data incidents relate to errors in our communications. We continue to make improvements to our systems and to the training provided to employees in order to address this. We continue to look for opportunities to improve both our systems and employee training.

Statement of the board and Accounting Officer's responsibilities

Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Secretary of State for Education has directed Social Work England to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Social Work England and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State for Education, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Secretary of State for Education has designated the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of Social Work England. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding Social Work England's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money published by the HM Treasury.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that Social Work England's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

As the Accounting Officer, I confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and that I take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

Governance statement

The purpose of the governance statement

Our governance statement describes the corporate governance, risk management and assurance frameworks we used in the 2025 to 2026 financial year. It identifies our compliance with our responsibilities for risk management and internal control systems. These responsibilities are set out in the Corporate Governance for Central Departments Code of Good Practice and the Treasury's handbook Managing Public Money. They also follow the audit and risk assurance committee handbook and UK government's  [The Orange Book: management of risk – principles and concepts](#).

Our board

Our board oversees the full range of our regulatory responsibilities, including all of the following:

- setting professional standards and standards for education and training for social workers
- establishing and running a fitness to practise system
- holding a register of social workers in England

Our board holds the chief executive and executive leadership team to account and provides our strategic steer. It oversees our performance and use of resources and ensures a sound system of internal control and risk management. Our board also provides strategic oversight of the sustainability plan with support and advice from the audit and risk

assurance committee (ARAC). Please see page 48 to 49 for further details of our board's governance of our sustainability plan.

We provide our board with quarterly performance reports and data that track our performance against business objectives. Publishing quarterly enables our board to see trends and performance within the year and against previous years. This year, our board has been satisfied that it has been able to compare this year's performance with last year.

The Secretary of State appoints the chair and non-executive members under paragraph 2, schedule 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. These appointments are subject to the  [Public Appointments Order in Council 2019](#).

As such they must comply with the  [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). Each board member brings a distinct set of skills and expertise. Their areas of expertise include:

- health and social care
- social work
- regulation
- policy
- finance
- risk management
- law
- business planning

Our governance arrangements

Our board met regularly and kept the effectiveness of our system of risk management and internal control under review. Our board and its committees received regular reports on performance, risk management and assurance. This diagram shows the governance arrangements in place for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Audit and risk assurance committee

Membership: 3 non-executive directors

Ann Harris (chair) (until 18 July 2025)

Cheryl Hobson (chair) (from 25 July 2025)

Dr Sue Ross (until 31 October 2025)

Simon Lewis

Amrat Khorana (from 31 October 2025)

Attendees: chief executive, executive director, people and business support and internal and external audit teams, boardroom apprentice

Met: 4 times

The audit and risk assurance committee provides assurance to our board in the areas of audit, risk management, governance and internal control. It acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Remuneration committee

Membership: 3 non-executive directors

Dr Sue Ross (chair)

Adi Cooper (until 31 October 2025)

Chris Nicholson (from 31 October 2025)

Simon Lewis

Attendees: chief executive and chair of our board as requested, executive director, people and business support

Met: 3 times

The remuneration committee provides assurance to our board in the areas of remuneration, performance, people and culture. It acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.

Policy committee	
Membership: 2 non-executive directors, 2 executive directors, 2 National Advisory Forum members and 1 co-opted member Dr Adi Cooper – chair Chris Nicholson (from 31 October 2025) Phil Hallam – executive director, regulation Sarah Blackmore – executive director, professional practice and external engagement Rachael Clawson – National Advisory Forum member (until 19 September 2025) Cathy West – National Advisory Forum member (from 5 December 2025) Lynn Romeo – co-opted member Attendees: chief executive and chair of our board as requested, boardroom apprentice Met: 4 times	The policy committee provides assurance to our board with regard to the process and content of our policy programme. It acts only in an advisory capacity and has no executive or decision-making powers.
Reports to	
Social Work England board	
Membership: 7 non-executive board members and chief executive Dr Andrew McCulloch (chair) Dr Adi Cooper (deputy chair) Cheryl Hobson (appointed 16 June 2025) Amrat Khorana (appointed 16 June 2025) Simon Lewis Chris Nicholson (appointed 16 June 2025) Dr Sue Ross Attendees: boardroom apprentice Met: 5 times for regular board meetings, plus an additional awayday.	Our board provides leadership, direction and a steer on our overall strategy. It ensures effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control.

Performance of our board and its committees

We hold our board meetings in public using video conferencing. 7 members of the public and 9 of our employees observed a board meeting during 2025 to 2026.

In accordance with high standards of corporate governance good practice, our board conducts regular appraisals of its performance. The recommendations from the external review of board effectiveness in 2023 to 2024 have been implemented and the improvement plan was closed at the board meeting on 13 March 2026. The next self-appraisal will be conducted following the conclusion of the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

Board members have met with the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation team and have engaged with Dame Annie Hudson to inform the review process. The findings to this review are expected in 2026.

The following policies were reviewed as part of the board's regular policy review cycle:

- code of conduct policy
- board declarations of interest and conflict resolution policy
- gifts and hospitality policy
- travel and expenses policy
- whistleblowing (internal) policy
- whistleblowing (prescribed person) policy and role of our board

In accordance with its training plan, our board received bespoke training on the following areas:

- equality, diversity and inclusion
- carbon literacy
- information governance

Audit and risk assurance committee

The committee's terms of reference were reviewed in February 2026 with no changes made. Key areas of focus for the audit and risk assurance committee during 2025 to 2026 were all of the following:

- digital, data and technology programme and strategy
- scrutiny and advising the board on business and key decisions
- budget management in-year
- accounts and audit preparation
- management judgement and estimates
- internal audits

- external audit, annual audit plan, progress updates and value for money papers
- scrutiny of the annual report and accounts
- internal quality assurance, feedback and complaints
- key findings and plan to further develop the assurance framework
- corporate risk review, deep dives and risk appetite
- data protection and information governance
- oversight of our sustainability plan
- cyber-security

As part of ongoing good practice, the committee chair produced a year-end report. Due to changes in membership, the committee decided to defer its effectiveness review until 2026 to 2027.

Remuneration committee

Over the course of 2025 to 2026, the committee has taken a key role in advising on all of the following:

- remuneration and pay remit
- delivery of our people strategy
- culture and employee engagement
- broader workforce issues and risks, including sickness absence, recruitment and retention

Policy committee

During 2025 to 2026, the committee terms of reference were reviewed, no changes were required. The committee advised on topics such as:

- the implications of the government social care reform agenda for our role and regulation
- education and training priorities, including our ongoing review of the education and training standards and the implementation of our new inspection model for AMHP and BIA courses
- the learnings from our first round of inspections of social work courses in our [!\[\]\(8d139a66f540002704b5c70b7fe6cc7a_img.jpg\) preparing for practice: social work education in England report](#)
- our work to build a more in-depth knowledge of the practice education landscape to inform our plans for regulating specialist and advanced practice
- our review of our approach to continuing professional development (CPD)
- our engagement strategy, including key milestones such as Social Work Week 2026

Board member attendance in 2025 to 2026

Attendance at board and committee meetings over the year is recorded as the following:

Name and role	2025 to 2026 meetings attended			
	Board	Audit and risk assurance committee	Policy committee	Remuneration committee
Dr Andrew McCulloch Chair	5/5		1/4*	3/3*
Colum Conway Chief Executive Officer	5/5	4/4*	1/4*	2/3*
Dr Adi Cooper Non-executive director	5/5		4/4	3/3
Cheryl Hobson Non-executive director	4/4	2/2		
Dr Sue Ross Non-executive director	5/5	2/2		3/3
Simon Lewis Non-executive director	4/5	4/4		3/3
Amrat Khorana Non-executive director	4/4	2/2		
Chris Nicholson Non-executive director	4/4		2/3	1/1

*This denotes attendance by the chair and chief executive officer as contributors not as committee members.

Collectively 5 board members also observed 8 meetings of committees they were not members of, to support induction, wider knowledge and learning.

Board members also attended 5 private strategy meetings. They participated in 2 strategic planning sessions and met with the team leading the Independent Review of Social Work Regulation.

Management control activities

Our framework agreement sets out our delegated authorities, which the Department for Education reviews annually. The chief executive has delegated responsibility from our board for leading the organisation on an everyday basis. He is the executive decision maker at board level. The chief executive determines which duties are discharged by members of the executive leadership team, through line management arrangements. The executive leadership team works with our board to discharge duties as a collective.

The executive leadership team meets fortnightly to provide strategic and operational oversight of progress and performance. They also hold monthly business performance review meetings, which heads of function join on a quarterly basis. The executive leadership team reviews risks monthly, agreeing to escalate to our board when appropriate.

These management control systems have been in place for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts.

In addition, during 2025 to 2026 we undertook a review of our organisational assurance framework to ensure it meets evolving needs and provides meaningful value. Proposals for the future framework were approved by the executive leadership team and the audit and risk assurance committee in February 2026.

Whistleblowing policy

We have a whistleblowing policy in place, supported by mandatory training for all of our people in the organisation. This enables them to raise concerns in confidence and without fear of detriment. This policy is reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date with legislation and reflects any learning. We promote a culture where our people feel able to speak up, and offer a number of ways in which they can do this.

Our  [partners](#) also have a raising concerns and whistleblowing policy included in the partner handbook.

We also have an anti-fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy and a gifts and hospitality policy. We review and update these policies annually, with approval by the audit and risk assurance committee and board. Everyone working with, and for us, has mandatory anti-fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption training.

Risk management

Context

Our risk management approach aligns with our purpose of protecting the public and raising standards across social work in England. It also aligns with the principles set out in the HM Treasury's Orange Book.

Our approach involves all of the following:

- identifying and managing risks at strategic (corporate) and operational levels
- using our risk appetite to determine our risk response
- integrating assurance and internal control review
- creating an organisation-wide culture that builds increasing risk maturity

As part of our strategic decision-making process, executive directors individually own and manage each strategic risk. The executive leadership team highlights risks for the audit and risk assurance committee to discuss and challenge, via a schedule of "risk deep dives". We also apply shared learning from the Department for Education arm's length body risk lead meetings.

Risk appetite statement

Our board and executive leadership team decide the level of risk we are willing to accept as we pursue our objectives. They review this risk appetite annually or in the event of strategy change. We balance the cost of mitigating each risk with the impact of it being realised.

Our risk appetite is reflective of all of the following:

- our role as a regulator
- our strategy
- the controls and assurances we have in place
- our resources
- external factors

Our risk appetite for 2026 to 2027 will reflect the parameters above. The new risk appetite statement comes into effect in summer 2026.

Corporate risk register

Our risk register outlines our risk environment. It helps us to keep in place the mitigations and controls to manage risks effectively. Our risk appetite enables sound, consistent judgement and decision-making.

While we categorise our risks, we recognise the interplay between different risks. There is potential for risk mitigations in one area to alter risk in another area.

Our risk categories

Financial governance		Credibility	
Strategic approach		Cyber security	
Processes		People and culture	
Statutory functions		Governance and compliance	
Innovation and change		Equality, diversity and inclusion	

Corporate risks

Outlined below are the most pertinent risks to our regulatory role for the period ending 31 March 2026. We have taken action to mitigate these risks and expect to see the impact of our actions in the future.

Risk title	Risk description	Trend since April 2025	What we have done to mitigate this risk in the 2025 to 2026 business year
Education provision	Our work in policy and standards does not lead to improvement in social work education.		- analysed and published learning from our course inspections - asked more detailed questions in our annual monitoring process to better understand shifting dynamics and trends - advanced a comprehensive review of our education and training rules, standards and guidance, supported by extensive external engagement - delivered a substantial programme of activity to strengthen our understanding of practice education to determine the regulatory levers that can best support and recognise the practice educator role
External environment	We fail to be ready to respond to strategic, political or workforce changes.		- continually monitored the political and media landscape to stay abreast of, and consider any regulatory risks associated with, key and developing issues that could impact regulation and social work - through the policy committee, explored the implications of external policy priorities and Social Work England's position as the regulator - worked to develop our research strategy, ready for implementation in 2026 to 2027
Registration demand	We are unable to meet registration demand and process renewals and applications within reasonable timescales with existing resources.		- improved how we record information within our case management system, to make processes more efficient - recruited temporary staff to ensure we can continue to work efficiently and effectively during busy periods

Risk title	Risk description	Trend since April 2025	What we have done to mitigate this risk in the 2025 to 2026 business year
Timeliness and quality within triage and investigations	We cannot achieve quality and timeliness within triage and investigations.		- developed approaches to performance management across both triage and investigations teams - conducted a process review across triage and investigations - undertook research on social worker engagement and reasons for referrals - additional resource put in place
Our people and capacity	We do not have the capacity and resources, skills set, talent development and sustainable people strategy that we need to effectively deliver our business and strategic objectives.		- completed delivery of our people strategy for 2023 to 2026 - recruited additional partners to support our regulatory activity - recruited new staff to support our digital, data and technology work
Cultural shift	As we continue to evolve and develop as an organisation, we inadvertently lose aspects of our culture that we consider to be positive and important.		- implemented actions from our annual people engagement survey - launched our new behaviours framework as part of a wider programme to preserve and build upon positive aspects of our culture
Cyber security	A cyber, ransomware or socially engineered attack that reaches beyond our business continuity programme and prevents us from operating.		- implemented remaining recommendations from the cyber-security audit, including a new security operations centre - introduced regular reporting to improve visibility and knowledge of cyber threats and how they potentially impact us

Risk title	Risk description	Trend since April 2025	What we have done to mitigate this risk in the 2025 to 2026 business year
Managing our budget	We are unable to plan and manage our annual budget effectively.		- maintained regular liaison and reporting to ARAC, the board, and the Department for Education - enhanced monitoring of budgets and delivery plans for external suppliers - implemented in-year adjustments to grant-in-aid to manage emerging underspend positions - progressed procurement plans for 2 legal service providers to strengthen delivery flexibility and resilience for future years
Financial resources	The lack of certainty about future funding levels makes it difficult to plan effectively and carry out our work efficiently, particularly within fitness to practise.		- consulted on and increased our registration fees - worked with Department for Education to establish budget and grant-in-aid for 2026 to 2027

Effectiveness of the internal control framework

As Accounting Officer, I review the effectiveness of our system of internal control. My review is informed by the work of the internal auditors, by feedback from the executive directors, assistant directors and heads of functions who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework and by comments made by the National Audit Office in their audit completion report. We are subject to review by the National Audit Office, including statutory audit and value for money reports. We are also subject to oversight by the Department for Education and provide the department with regular reporting on risk, performance and budget monitoring as well as our contribution towards greening government commitments.

Internal audit

Out of the 6 audits conducted this financial year, 4 received substantial assurance or good progress and 2 received reasonable assurance. Internal audit reports to our board and audit and risk assurance committee were as follows.

Internal audit	Level of assurance
Stakeholder engagement	Substantial
Fitness to practise – decision-making ¹²	Reasonable
Sickness absence	Reasonable
Payroll	Substantial
Performance reporting	Substantial
Follow up audit	Good progress

RSM UK conducted our internal audit in 2025 to 2026. Based on their reviews during the year, their end of year report stated that we have an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control. RSM UK identified further enhancements to ensure that the framework remains adequate and effective. During 2025 to 2026, we agreed management actions to address the findings from the internal audit.

¹² Following the amendments to the regulations and rules in 2022, this review focussed on the controls in processes in place for managing Voluntary Removals and power to review case examiner decisions.

To ensure the highest standards, we complemented internal audits from RSM UK with our own quality assurance programme, aligned with Social Work England's quality assurance framework. These activities, as approved by the executive leadership team, focused on detailed process reviews and audits of our regulatory functions. The outcomes were shared and discussed by the audit and risk assurance committee which was satisfied with the level of assurance these activities provided.

Conclusion

As Accounting Officer, I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of Social Work England's system of internal controls as set out in the governance statement. Social Work England has not suffered from any significant internal control failures during 2025 to 2026. The systems for risk management and internal control have been in place during 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts.

My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal controls was informed by all of the following:

- assurance from executive directors that they have acted in accordance with their delegations and the operation of our governance framework
- independent assurance from our internal auditors in their annual audit report
- scrutiny and advice provided by the audit and risk assurance committee
- discussion of the annual report and accounts with the audit and risk assurance committee and board in June 2026

Based on my review of the evidence I am assured that we have a strong system of governance, risk management and internal controls to support the delivery of our strategy.

Remuneration and staff report

Remuneration report

This report sets out our remuneration policy for all staff and board members and details actual costs.

From 1 September 2025, our partners were deemed to have worker status. Partners are engaged on a day rate basis. Further information relating to our partners is available on page 88. Where appropriate, data relating to our partners has been included in the remuneration report.

Remuneration policy

Our employees are public servants. HM Treasury, Cabinet Office and Secretary of State approve our pay levels.

As a non-departmental public body, we must adhere to the pay guidance the Cabinet Office sets each year. The Secretary of State for Education also requires us to submit a pay remit business case for approval. In 2025 our approved pay award included a salary increase of 3.25% across our pay levels, with those who earn the least receiving the higher percentage increase. We awarded a one off £650 non-consolidated pay award to eligible employees below executive leadership level, in recognition of people's contributions to our achievements overall.

Executive leadership team remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (audited)

Executive leadership team	Salary £000	Non-consolidated performance Award £000	Benefits in kind (to the nearest £100)	Pension benefit (to the nearest £1,000)	2025 to 2026 total £000
Colum Conway	175 – 180	0 – 5	0	16	190 – 195
Sarah Blackmore	105 – 110	0 – 5	0	8	115 – 120
Philip Hallam	105 – 110	0 – 5	0	6	115 – 120
Linda Dale	105 – 110	0 – 5	0	10	115 – 120

Separate disclosures relating to pension entitlements are not applicable. We operate an unfunded multi-employer defined contribution pension scheme provided by the National Employment Savings Trust. There are therefore no value or lump sum increases.

The chief executive determines executive leadership team performance awards, taking account of advice from the remuneration committee. Performance awards for the chief executive are based upon the recommendation of the chair of our board. They are subject to remuneration committee approval to our board.

The following table is included for comparison with the prior year.

Executive leadership team 2024 to 2025	Salary £000	Non-consolidated performance Award £000	Benefits in kind (to the nearest £100)	Pension benefit (to the nearest £1,000)	2024 to 2025 total £000
Colum Conway	165 – 170	0 – 5	0	13	185 – 190
Sarah Blackmore	100 – 105	0 – 5	0	7	110 – 115
Philip Hallam	100 – 105	0 – 5	0	6	110 – 115
Linda Dale	100 – 105	0 – 5	0	8	110 – 115

Board members' remuneration (audited)

Name	Position	Appointment term	2025 to 2026 fees £000	2024 to 2025 fees £000
Dr Andrew McCulloch	Chair	10 August 2018 to 19 September 2027	35 – 40	40 – 45* (re-stated)
Dr Adi Cooper	Non-executive director	4 October 2021 to 3 October 2027	5 – 10	5 – 10
Dr Sue Ross	Non-executive director	4 October 2021 to 3 October 2027	5 – 10	5 – 10
Simon Lewis	Non-executive director	1 March 2024 to 28 February 2027	5 – 10	5 – 10
Cheryl Hobson Full Year-Equivalent (FYE)	Non-executive director	16 June 2025 to 15 June 2029	5 – 10 5 – 10	
Chris Nicholson Full Year-Equivalent (FYE)	Non-executive director	16 June 2025 to 15 June 2029	5 – 10 5 – 10	
Amrat Khorana Full Year-Equivalent (FYE)	Non-executive director	16 June 2025 to 15 June 2029	5 – 10 5 – 10	
Ann Harris Full Year-Equivalent (FYE)	Non-executive director	19 June 2019 to 18 July 2025	0 – 5 10 – 15	10 – 15

Members of our board are not entitled to any pension or other financial benefits. The remuneration disclosed consists of board fees only.

Total non-executive board expenses for the year were £1,662 (2024 to 2025: £2,007).

*To 31 May 2024, Dr Andrew McCulloch's time commitment, as interim chair, was up to 144 days per year. From 1 June 2024 onwards, the time commitment reduced to 80 days per year. He was appointed chair of the board from 20 September 2024 for a period of 3 years. The 2024 to 2025 fees have been re-stated. The chair was overpaid £12,000 in 2024 to 2025, which was identified in 2024 to 2025. £3,530 was recovered during 2024 to 2025, and remainder £8,470 was recovered during 2025 to 2026.

Fair pay disclosure (audited)

Reporting bodies must disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the organisation's highest paid director and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. Non-executive directors fall outside the scope of fair pay disclosures.

Partners fall outside the scope of the fair pay disclosures. Partners are paid as workers on a day-rate basis, or for completing specific activities, rather than through standard employment arrangements or pay, meaning there is no consistent or comparable measure of contracted hours. As a result, it is not feasible to calculate full-time equivalent (FTE) figures for individual partners. Including partners within the fair pay calculations would therefore risk distorting the reported pay ratios. This ensures that the fair pay disclosures remain meaningful, consistent, and representative of the employed workforce.

In 2025 to 2026, nil employees (2024 to 2025: nil) received remuneration in excess of the highest paid director. Total remuneration ranged from £27,478 to £180,000 (2024 to 2025: £25,815 to £175,000). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid director during the year ending 31 March 2026 was £175,000 to £180,000. This reflects an increase of 2.9% since 2024 to 2025 (£170,000 to £175,000) based upon the mid-point of the bands which is solely attributable to an increase in salary and allowances. There was no change to the rate of performance pay and bonuses of the highest paid director.

The remuneration of the highest paid director was 4.24 times the median employee remuneration (2024 to 2025: 4.8). The median pay ratio is consistent with our pay, reward and progression policies.

The pay ratio at the 25th percentile has decreased to 5.56:1 (2024 to 2025: 5.59) along with the pay ratio at the 75th percentile which has decreased to 3.39:1 (2024 to 2025: 3.6). This is reflective of our approved pay award which included an average salary increase of 3.25%, with those who earn the least receiving a higher percentage increase.

The average salary and allowances per employee in the year ended 31 March 2026 was £47,262 an increase of 10.81% from 2024 to 2025 (£42,650). There was no change to the average bonuses per employee in 2025 to 2026.

Following a review of role profiles in 2025 to 2026, 6 positions were re-evaluated and re-graded from level 9 to level 10. This along with an annual pay increase effective from 1 September 2025 has led to the overall increase in the average salary and allowances.

The tables below show the pay and benefits for each percentile along with the accompanying pay ratios.

2025 to 2026	25th percentile	Median (50th percentile)	75th percentile
Pay ratio	5.56:1	4.24:1	3.39:1
Annual salary	£31,262	£41,211	£51,768
Non-consolidated performance award	£650	£650	£650
Total pay	£31,912	£41,861	£52,418

2024 to 2025	25th percentile	Median (50th percentile)	75th percentile
Pay ratio	5.59:1	4.80:1	3.60:1
Annual salary	£30,205	£35,285	£47,303
Non-consolidated performance award	£650	£650	£650
Total pay	£30,855	£35,935	£47,953

Pension scheme (audited)

The National Employment Savings Trust provides our pension scheme. It is an unfunded multi-employer defined contribution scheme.

In September 2025, Social Work England partners were moved onto worker status contracts and became eligible to join the pension scheme.

Employees and workers are auto enrolled in the pension scheme and can opt out if they choose.

Pension scheme membership increased by 166 in 2025 to 2026, as a result of the change in partners' eligibility and an overall increase in organisational headcount.

For employees, we continue to operate a salary exchange pension scheme. Our minimum contribution is set at 4% employee and 6% employer contribution. There are options to increase contributions in increments of 1%, the maximum employee contribution during 2025 to 2026 was 9%. This increased to 10% from 1 April 2026.

Employee pension contribution	Employer contribution from 1 April 2025	Employer contribution from 1 April 2026
4%	6%	6%
5%	7%	7%
6%	8%	8%
7%	9%	9%
8% +	9%	10%

Partners are enrolled into the NEST pension scheme once they meet the required auto-enrolment criteria. For our workers, Social Work England contributes 3% of gross earnings.

Total employer pension contributions for the year ended 31 March 2026 were £841,915 (2024 to 2025: £654,082). The 2025 to 2026 total includes a backdated element arising from the change in status of partners. This element had been recognised as a provision in 2024 to 2025 and is reflected in employer pension contributions in 2025 to 2026 when the related payments were made; accordingly, it is not included in the comparative figure.

No one retired early on the grounds of ill health.

Salary

Salary includes gross salary, overtime and allowances. This report is based on accrued payments made by Social Work England and therefore recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in kind

Benefits in kind is the monetary value of benefits in kind. It covers any benefits provided by Social Work England and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as taxable.

Non-consolidated performance awards

For 2025 to 2026 our budgeted non-consolidated performance award was 2% of the total salary bill. The non-consolidated performance award figures include awards paid or agreed in the 12 months up to 31 March 2026.

Reporting of exit and other compensation packages (audited)

There were no exit, compensation, special severance or non-contractual packages in the year ending 31 March 2026. This was the same for the year ending 31 March 2025.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) article 21 staff disclosure

No staff members asked for their entitlements not to be disclosed in the year ending 31 March 2026. This was also the case for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Staff report

Part A (audited)

Analysis of staff costs

Category	Permanently employed staff £000	Partners £000	Others £000	2025 to 2026 total £000	2024 to 2025 total £000
Wages and salaries	11,305	1,202	1,566	14,073	10,368
Social security costs	1,424	171	131	1,726	1,047
Pension Costs	717	100	60	877	679
Total	13,446	1,473	1,757	16,676	12,094
Less:					
Capitalised staff costs	(519)	0	(119)	(638)	(552)
Total	12,927	1,473	1,638	16,038	11,542

Others include staff employed on a fixed-term basis or engaged via short-term contracts, for example agency or temporary workers. We pay a flat fee for agency staff, which includes social security and holiday pay. Others also include the salary and on costs (including social security and pension) of inward secondments.

From 1 September 2025, our partners were deemed to have worker status. Fitness to practise and education quality assurance partners are engaged on a day rate basis. Registration partners are paid per assessment carried out. All partners receive holiday pay at a rate of 12.07%.

Partners were also eligible to join the pension scheme from 1 September 2025.

Total staff costs include an element of capital expenditure relating to employees who work solely on the development of our internally generated software.

Staff composition

In 2025 to 2026, our average full-time equivalent number of employees was 285.0 (compared with 237.9 in 2024 to 2025).

Staff composition analysis	2025 to 2026 total	2024 to 2025 total
Social Work England permanent	251.1 (88.1%)	226.5 (95.2%)
Social Work England fixed term	27.5 (9.7%)	8.5 (3.6%)
Agency/temp	5.1 (1.8%)	2.3* (1.0%) (re-stated)
Secondment	1.3 (0.4%)	0.6 (0.3%)
Total	285.0 (100%)	237.9 (100%)

*An omission of data for agency/temporary staff was identified in relation to 2024 to 2025. This data has been re-stated to account for all agency/temporary workers on our human resources system, this has resulted in a 1.6 full-time equivalent increase in the number reported.

We recruited additional fixed term resource in 2025 to 2026 to provide capacity in critical areas, in response to business risk see page 88 for further detail.

Our partners are not included in the above figures.

Part B (unaudited)

Staff by level and gender

On 31 March 2026, our full-time equivalent (FTE) was 310.9, split as per the following table.

Levels	Permanent contract: males	Other contract: males	Permanent contract: females	Other contract: females	Total
Chief executive	1.0	0	0	0	1.0
Executive leadership team	1.0	0	2.0	0	3.0
Assistant directors	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	6.0
Heads of functions	7.0	0	11.7	0	18.7
Other levels	62.4	14.9	174.5	30.4	282.2
Total	73.4	15.9	190.2	31.4	310.9

'Other' includes fixed term appointments, secondees and agency or temporary workers. This table excludes partners.

Average headcount

Staff composition analysis	2025 to 2026 total	2024 to 2025 total
Social Work England permanent	262 (88.2%)	238 (95.2%)
Social Work England fixed term	29 (9.7%)	9 (3.6%)
Agency/temp	5 (1.7%)	2* (0.9%) (re-stated)
Secondment	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.3%)
Total	297 (100%)	250 100%

*An omission of data for agency/temporary staff was identified in relation to 2024 to 2025. This data has been re-stated for 2024 to 2025 to account for all agency/temporary workers on our human resources system, resulting in an increase of 1.0 in the figure reported.

This table represents the average headcount across the year. Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.

There was a 11.1% turnover of staff during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 (2024 to 2025: 13.5%).

This table excludes partners.

Our people

Our staff policies and practices

In 2025 to 2026, we continued to work in partnership with several external organisations and schemes including:

- Disability Confident Scheme
- Business in the Community: Race at Work Charter
- Mindful Business Charter
- Onvero

We are proud to have achieved a Gold Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) award, recognising the progress we have made in developing and sustaining an inclusive workplace.

We are committed to building an inclusive workplace where equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded across the organisation. We ensure our recruitment processes are fair and accessible, making reasonable adjustments at all stages and actively encouraging applications from disabled candidates. As a Disability Confident Employer, we guarantee interviews to applicants with a declared disability who meet the essential criteria.

We support anyone who become disabled during their employment through workplace adjustments, occupational health support, and, where appropriate, redeployment and training, enabling them to remain in work. We also promote equal access to learning, development and career progression for all colleagues, including disabled employees.

Our people engagement survey took place in May 2025. Our overall engagement score, which measures how positive people feel about working here was 75%, an improvement from 70% the previous year. Our leadership score was 47% compared to the public sector benchmark score of 56%. Leadership capability is being supported through a leadership development programme which includes coaching.

Following extensive employee engagement and co-production to develop a new behaviours framework to underpin our values, we launched the new framework in May 2025. It is being embedded into everyday practice through communications, a leadership development

programme and updated people policies and processes. Leaders are actively role-modelling and reinforcing the behaviours. We have introduced mechanisms such as pulse surveys and quarterly workshops to understand engagement and impact, see further details on pages 47 to 48.

Our leadership development programme began in July 2025 and continued throughout the year, shaped by stakeholder feedback. All participants completed a 360-degree feedback assessment. The insights are informing targeted follow-on development, particularly coaching, so colleagues can access support tailored to their needs.

We enhanced our positive action mentoring with insights from the past 3 years. Mentoring was also encouraged across the wider organisation through a management buddy scheme. Peer learning groups and pairings was also created to support core learning activity as part of the leadership development programme.

Our approach to people management focuses on developing talent, supporting career progression, and ensuring we have the right skills across the organisation. We aim to support both individual and organisational growth through ongoing development and planning.

In 2025 to 2026, we reviewed and refreshed our health and safety statement, policies, procedures and risk assessments. We also launched new online health and safety training for all employees. One accident was reported in the workplace, which was not preventable and did not meet the threshold for RIDDOR¹³ reporting.

Social Work England does not formally recognise a trade union.

Change in contract arrangements for partners

Social Work England partners' contractual arrangements changed from "self-employed" to "worker status", from 1 September 2025.

This change is in line with developments in employment case law and requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This has meant changes to contracts, holiday pay and pension.

91% (203) of our existing partners transferred onto the new contractual arrangements on 1 September 2025 and are now paid through the payroll.

During this transition period, to support business continuity, we identified the need to recruit further fitness to practise partners,

¹³ RIDDOR stands for the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. We are required to report specific workplace accidents, occupational diseases, and near-misses to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

registration partners and triage associates. Another key aim was to increase diversity and lived experience representation. Our recruitment campaign commenced in May 2025 and was successfully delivered, with 64 new partners and 5 new triage associates joining us in January 2026.

With the recent recruitment activity, in total we contracted with 272 partners who are deemed to have worker status. Work is allocated on an ad-hoc basis.

See the remuneration and staff report on pages 78 to 87 for further information.

Sickness absence

We benchmark our sickness absence against Civil Service absence figures, as a comparable measure. In 2023 to 2024, the Civil Service figure was 7.8 days per employee. This figure was used as our benchmark for 2025 to 2026. In 2025 to 2026 we lost the equivalent of 7 days per employee over the rolling 12 months. Our figure of 7 days per employee was below the Civil Service benchmark.

We continue to be proactive in our health and wellbeing support, exploring the best ways to provide our people with support for their specific needs. Recommendations from the internal audit on sickness absence that were due to be completed in 2025 to 2026 have been actioned.

Diversity statistics (unaudited)

Gender data

Gender identity for whole workforce	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Female	72%	70%	69%
Male	28%	30%	31%

Gender split for executive leadership team	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Female	67%	67%	67%
Male	33%	33%	33%

Gender split for assistant directors	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Female	50%	60%	67%
Male	50%	40%	33%

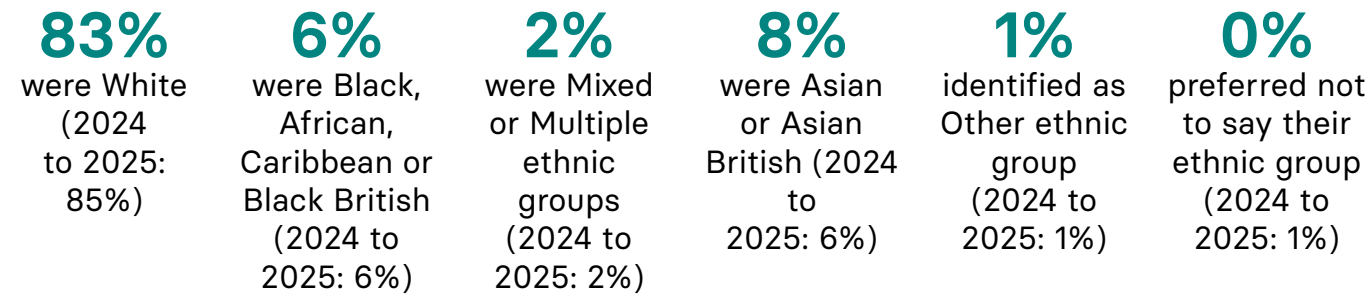
Gender split for heads of functions	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025	2023 to 2024
Female	65%	53%	40%
Male	35%	47%	60%

Diversity data

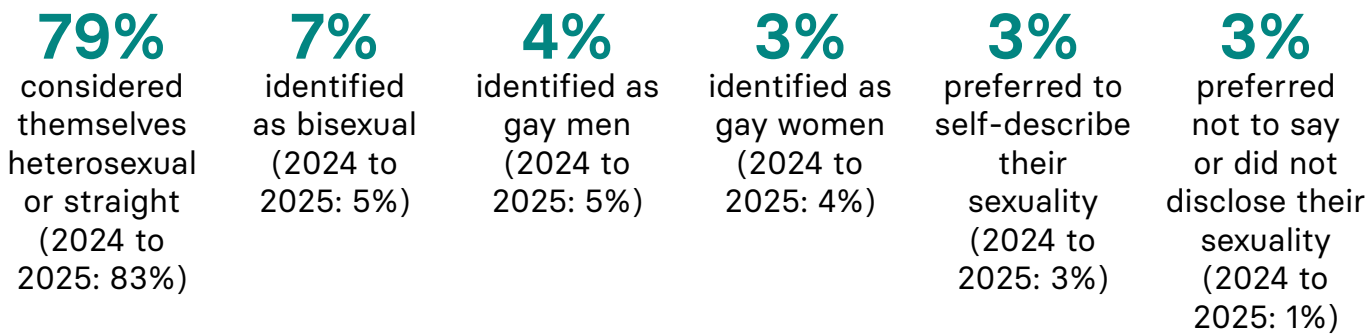
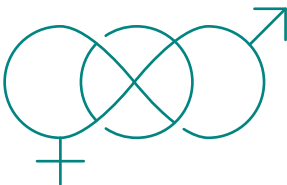
We encourage staff to upload their diversity data into our human resources system Enable, though it is not mandatory. Due to rounding, not all percentages add to 100%.



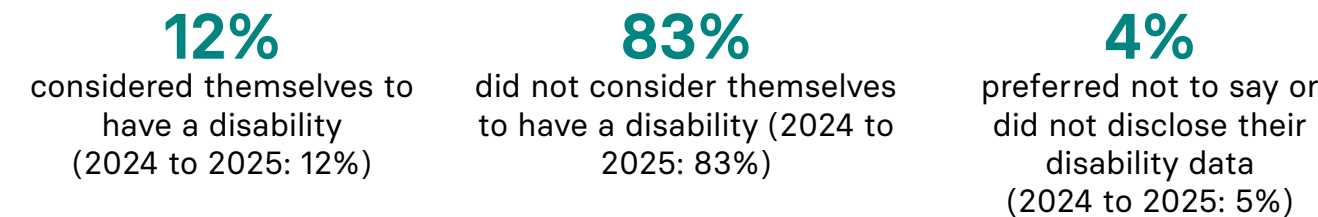
Of the 70% of employees who shared their data, for ethnicity:



Of the 71% of employees who shared their data, for sexual orientation:



Of the 69% of employees who shared their data, for disability:



Consultancy spend

During the year ending 31 March 2026, consultancy expenditure was nil (2024 to 2025: £0.08m).

Off-payroll engagements

Reporting bodies must publish information regarding their highly paid and/or senior off-payroll engagements. The table below contains details of off-payroll engagements as at 31 March 2026 who were paid a day-rate of more than £245.

There were no individuals assessed as within the scope of IR35.

Off-payroll engagements	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025
Number (No.) of existing engagements as at 31 March 2026	3	3
Of which, no. that existed:		
Less than one year	3	3
Between one and two years	0	0
Between two and three years	0	0
Three or more years	0	0

Off-payroll resources were utilised during the year to provide temporary cover within the finance team, for the head of finance and commercial and senior finance business partner roles whilst a permanent recruitment exercise was undertaken. These roles are critical to the organisation’s financial management and commercial oversight, and immediate cover was required to ensure continuity of operations and effective governance. These arrangements covered a total period of 7 months during the year.

Off-payroll IT resource was also engaged to support digital development and provide operational IT support. All off-payroll engagements were assessed and determined not to fall within the scope of off-payroll working legislation.

All highly paid off-payroll engagements at any point during the year ended 31 March 2026, earning £245 per day or greater	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025
Number of temporary off-payroll engagements during the year	9	3
Of which:		
Not-subject to off-payroll legislation	9	3
Subject to off-payroll legislation and determined in scope of IR35	0	0
Subject to off-payroll legislation and not determined in scope of IR35	0	0
No of engagements reassessed for compliance or assurance purposes during the year	0	0
Of which: Number of engagements that saw a change in IR35 status following review.	0	0

Off-payroll resources were utilised during the year to provide temporary cover within the finance team, for the head of finance and commercial, and senior finance business partner roles whilst a permanent recruitment exercise was undertaken. These roles are critical to the organisation's financial management and commercial oversight, and immediate cover was required to ensure continuity of operations and effective governance. These arrangements covered a total period of 7 months during the year.

Off payroll IT resource was also engaged to support digital development and provide operational IT support. All off payroll engagements were assessed and determined not to fall within the scope of off payroll working legislation.

The table below outlines off-payroll engagements of board members and senior officials with significant financial responsibility during the year.

Engagements by category	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025
Number of off-payroll engagements of board members and/or senior officials with significant financial responsibility	2	1
Number of individuals deemed board members or senior officials with significant financial responsibility, including both off-payroll and on-payroll engagements	15	12

We consider that all board members, executive directors and the head of finance and commercial have significant financial responsibility and reimburse them through payroll.

Parliamentary accountability report

Parliamentary accountability disclosures

A1 Losses statement (audited)

Losses statement	2025 to 2026	2024 to 2025
Number of fruitless payment cases	150	41
Number of special payments	2	0
Number of losses	0	2
Value		
Fruitless payments	£63,695	£187,094
Special payments	£2,293	£0
Losses	£0	£3,648

A fruitless payment is one the recipient is legally entitled to even though we receive nothing of use in return. During 2025 to 2026 they included payments we made to partners in relation to cancelled fitness to practise hearings.

A2 Special payments (audited)

There were 2 special payments made during the 12-month period ending 31 March 2026. (Period ending 31 March 2025: nil).

A3 Fees and charges (audited)

Income of £11.42m was received in the form of registration fees (2024 to 2025; £10.17m). Following a 12-week consultation, registration fees were increased from 1 September 2025. Fees will continue to increase by 1.85% each year until 2029.

Further detail is available in note 2 of the financial statements on page 118.

Total expenditure for 2025 to 2026 was £28.52m (2024 to 2025: £23.24m); net expenditure for the year was £17.10m (2024 to 2025: £13.07m). More analysis is available in notes 3 and 4 of the financial statements on pages 120 to 121.

A4 Remote contingent liabilities (audited)

Social Work England has no remote contingent liabilities that require disclosing under parliamentary reporting requirements.

A5 Government functional standards (unaudited)

The Government functional standards are used to guide our activity and promote continuous improvement, as relevant and proportionate to our size and arrangements.

A6 Regularity of expenditure (audited)

The Accounting Officer is responsible for ensuring the regularity of expenditure.

To discharge this responsibility the following activities are in place:

- formal delegation of budget
- detailed monitoring of expenditure
- monthly management reporting against budget

To the date of this statement, there have been no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or non-compliance discovered during the financial year.

Colum Conway

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
29 June 2026

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of Social Work England for the year ended 31 March 2026 under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The financial statements comprise Social Work England's:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2026;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the financial statements is applicable law and UK adopted International Accounting Standards.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of Social Work England's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and its net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 *Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2024)*. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's *Revised Ethical Standard 2024*. I am independent of Social Work England in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that Social Work England's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on Social Work England's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for Social Work England is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which requires entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other Information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the financial statements and my auditor's certificate and report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Children and Social Work Act 2017; and
- the information given in the Accountability and Performance Reports for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of Social Work England and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Accountability and Performance Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by Social Work England or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the board and Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of the board and Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the board and the Accounting Officer are responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- providing the C&AG with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit;
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within Social Work England from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- preparing the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Children and Social Work Act 2017; and
- assessing Social Work England's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Social Work England will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations including fraud

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of Social Work England's accounting policies
- inquired of management, internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to Social Work England's policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including Social Work England's controls relating to Social Work England's compliance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Managing Public Money;
- inquired of management, internal audit, and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
- discussed with the engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within Social Work England for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, posting of unusual journals, complex transactions, and bias in management estimates. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of Social Work England's framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which Social Work England operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of Social Work England. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Managing Public Money, relevant employment law and pensions legislation.

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the financial statements;
- I enquired of management, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and in-house legal counsel concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the board and internal audit reports;
- I addressed the risk of fraud through management override of controls by testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements on estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business; and
- I addressed the risk of fraud in revenue recognition; and used analytical procedures to identify any unusual transactions or movements. I also considered income cut-off to ensure that transactions had been recorded in the correct financial year.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the [!\[\]\(5a132f13505a6571904d622757b7a8f0_img.jpg\) Financial Reporting Council's website](#). This description forms part of my certificate.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies

06 July 2026

Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

Financial statements



Statement of comprehensive net expenditure

For the year ending 31 March 2026 (re-presented)

Statement of comprehensive net expenditure	Note	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000
Income	2	(11,420)	(10,169)
Staff costs	3	16,038	11,542
Other expenditure	4	10,450	8,542
Depreciation and Amortisation and other non-cash charges	4	2,004	3,125
Net operating expenditure		17,072	13,040
Lease Interest	4	24	28
Net expenditure for the year		17,096	13,068

Following a review of the financial statements, the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure (SoCNE) for the 2024 to 2025 period has been re-presented. Due to the materiality and scale of depreciation and amortisation, it was considered more appropriate to present these items separately to improve transparency and the relevance of information for users of the financial statements. The re-presentation of 2024 to 2025 has also influenced the way the 2025 to 2026 figures are presented for comparative purposes.

There was no impact on the bottom line following the re-presented figures for 2024 to 2025.

There are no discontinued operations.

There are no other recognised gains or losses.

The notes on pages 109 to 131 form part of these accounts.

Statement of financial position

As at 31 March 2026

Statement of financial position	Note	31 March 2026 £000	31 March 2025 £000
Non-current assets			
PPE	9	1,041	1,187
Intangibles	10	9,117	8,755
Total non-current assets		10,158	9,942
Current assets			
Receivables	5	665	823
Cash and cash equivalents	6	5,256	4,205
Total current assets		5,921	5,028
Total assets		16,079	14,970
Current liabilities			
Payables	7	(10,797)	(8,031)
Provision	8	(38)	(900)
Total current liabilities		(10,836)	(8,931)
Total assets less current liabilities		5,244	6,039
Non-current liabilities			
Payables	7	(404)	(639)
Provision	8	(141)	(138)
Total non-current liabilities		(545)	(777)
Assets less liabilities		4,698	5,262
Taxpayers' equity:			
General fund		4,698	5,262
Total taxpayers' equity		4,698	5,262

The notes on pages 109 to 131 form part of these accounts.

The financial statements were approved by the board on 28 June 2026, and were signed on its behalf by:

Colum Conway, 29 June 2026

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, Social Work England.

Statement of cash flows

For the year ending 31 March 2026

Statement of cash flows	Note	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000 (restated)
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure	Statement of comprehensive net expenditure	(17,072)	(13,040)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions	4	2,004	3,125
Profit from the disposal of non-current assets	4	(8)	(14) *
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	5	158	(128)
Utilisation of provision	8	(441)	(42)
Increase/(decrease) in non-lease payables	7	2,868	1211
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(12,491)	(8,888)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	10	(450)	(28)
Purchase of intangibles	11	(2,387)	(1,921)
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment	4 and 10	8	14*
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(2,829)	(1,935)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Exchequer supply from sponsor department	Statement of changes in taxpayers' equity	16,532	12,105
Payments of lease liabilities	12	(137)	(99)
Payment of lease interest	4	(24)	(28)*

Statement of cash flows	Note	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000 (restated)
Net cash inflow from financing activities		16,371	11,978
Net increase /(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		1,051	1,155
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	6	4,205	3,050
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	6	5,256	4,205

*The prior year cashflow statement has been restated to ensure comparability with the current year figures. Payments of lease interest of £27,521 have been moved from cash flows from operating activities to cash flows from financing activities. Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment of £13,898 were not separately disclosed in the prior year and is now included in cash flows from investing activities and removed from cash flows from operating activities.

Statement of changes in taxpayers' equity

For the year ending 31 March 2026

Statement of changes in taxpayers' equity	Note	General Fund £000
Balance at 31 March 2024		6,225
Grant-in-aid from sponsor department		12,105
Comprehensive expenditure for the year	Statement of comprehensive net expenditure	(13,068)
Balance at 31 March 2025		5,262
Grant-in-aid from sponsor department		16,532
Comprehensive expenditure for the year	Statement of comprehensive net expenditure	(17,096)
Balance at 31 March 2026		4,698

The notes on pages 109 to 131 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the financial statements

1. Accounting policies

Entity Status and principal Activities

Social Work England is a statutory body established in England under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and is domiciled in the United Kingdom. Its principal place of business is 1 North Bank, Blonk Street, Sheffield, S3 8JY.

Its principal activity is the regulation of social workers in England, including maintaining the register, setting professional standards, approving education providers, and overseeing fitness to practise.

Social Work England is an arm's length body of the Department for Education, which is its parent department. The ultimate controlling party is the UK Government.

Basis of Preparation

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) 2025–26, as set out in a statutory accounts direction issued pursuant to paragraph 18(3), Schedule 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and in accordance with UK-adopted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as adapted for the public sector context.

Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting treatment, Social Work England has selected the policies considered most appropriate to give a true and fair view. These policies have been applied consistently to material items in the financial statements.

There have been no significant changes to the FReM during the year other than the continued phased implementation of Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) reporting requirements, where applicable.

From 1 April 2025, HM Treasury introduced changes to the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) relating to the valuation of non-investment assets, including intangible assets. Under the updated requirements, intangible assets are measured at historical cost rather than fair value.

This change in accounting policy has been applied prospectively in accordance with the FReM adaptation to IAS 8, with no restatement of prior year figures. The change does not have a material impact on the financial statements, as the organisation previously held intangible assets at cost as a proxy for fair value.

1.1 Reporting period

The figures in the financial statements are prepared for the 12-month period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

1.2 Accounting convention

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention except where stated otherwise for certain assets and liabilities measured at current value in existing use or as a cost proxy in accordance with FReM.

1.3 Functional and presentation Currency

The financial statements are presented in Pounds Sterling (£) which is the functional and presentation currency of Social Work England. All values are rounded to the nearest £1,000 unless otherwise stated.

1.4 Going concern

Each year Social Work England receives registrant fee income which offsets a significant proportion of our operating expenditure. The remaining forecasted balance, programme and capital, is financed by the Department for Education by way of grant-in-aid.

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis, in accordance with the definition set out in Table 2 of paragraph 8.2.1 of the FReM as "the anticipated continuation of the provision of a service in the future, as evidenced by the inclusion of financial provision for that service in published documents".

The going concern assessment period is 12 months from the date the financial statements are authorised for issue. We do not expect any change to either our funding arrangements or the value of registrant fee income, for the next financial year as well as the 12-month period from the approval date of these annual accounts, that would negatively impact our going concern assessment.

We have robust budgetary control processes and are currently unaware of any information or legislation that would have a material impact on our going concern assessment.

The going concern assessment can be found at page 57 in the annual report.

1.5 Income and funding

Grant-in-aid

Social Work England records all draw down of grant-in-aid as financing, as we regard draw down of grant-in-aid as contributions from our controlling party giving rise to a financial interest. Social

Work England records draw down of grant-in-aid as financing in the Statement of Cash Flows and draw down of grant-in-aid to the General Reserve.

Fee Income

Fee income is collected under statute by Social Work England. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has approved Social Work England to retain this fee income to offset against its expenditure. Fee income comprises of registration and renewal fees, restoration fees and scrutiny fees. The annual registration period runs from 1 December to 30 November.

Social Work England has adopted IFRS 15 "Revenue from Contracts with Customers" with fees accounted for as described below.

Registration and renewal fees

Registration and renewal fees are collected in advance and are calculated based upon the length of time remaining before the end of the current fee year. For registration fees relating to new applicants, the fee must be paid in full once an application has been deemed successful. Renewal fees can be paid in full in advance of the new fee year or can be paid in 6-monthly instalments twice a year via Direct Debit.

Under IFRS 15, performance obligations can be satisfied, and therefore revenue can be recognised, either at a point in time or over time. As Social Work England fulfils its performance obligation by maintaining a social worker's registration over the annual registration period, registration and renewal fees are therefore recognised over the same period. The balance at the end of the financial year is shown in the statement of financial position as deferred income and released to the statement of comprehensive net expenditure proportionately over the period that the fee relates to.

Deferred registration fee income that is recognised within the statement of financial position relates to the following financial year only and is recognised as a current liability.

Restoration fees

Restoration fees are applicable where a social worker has previously been registered with Social Work England but has left the register for a period and wishes to restore to the Social Work England register.

Under IFRS 15, performance obligations can be satisfied, and therefore revenue can be recognised, either at a point in time or over time. Restoration fees are paid by a social worker prior to their application being considered and are recognised immediately upon receipt within the statement of comprehensive net expenditure.

Restoration fees are non-refundable and represent the time and resources involved in assessing a restoration application.

Scrutiny fees

Scrutiny fees are applicable to those whose social work qualification was gained outside of the UK. The scrutiny fee is paid prior to an application to join Social Work England's register being submitted. Under IFRS 15, performance obligations can be satisfied, and therefore revenue can be recognised, either at a point in time or over time.

The scrutiny fee is non-refundable. It represents the time and resources involved in assessing this type of application and therefore is recognised immediately upon receipt within the statement of comprehensive net expenditure.

1.6 Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of these financial statements requires Social Work England to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenditure. These assumptions are based on historic and other factors that are believed to be reasonable, the results of which form the basis for making judgements. These judgements, estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. The main items included in these financial statements are:

- Accruals and prepayments: judgement as to when revenue earned or expenses incurred impact the financial statements, irrespective of the transfer of physical payment, and the associated impact on the assets and liabilities within the statement of financial position
- Intangible asset recognition involves critical judgements by management. Further information is set out in paragraph 1.11
- Intangible asset amortisation requires management to assess when an asset is available for use. This involves judgement in determining when the asset is in the condition and location necessary for it to operate as intended by management.

Amortisation commences once the asset is available for use and is charged over its estimated useful economic life. This judgement is particularly relevant for internally developed or implemented IT systems, where determining when the asset is ready for use may require assessment of testing, implementation and operational readiness.

- We have recognised provision amounts in accordance with our accounting policy for provisions as described in note 1.8 below.

1.7 Segmental reporting

In accordance with IFRS 8: Operating Segments, Social Work England has considered the requirements for disclosure of operating segments.

Operating segments are identified on the basis of internal reports reviewed by the Chief Operating Decision Maker (CODM), which is responsible for allocating resources and assessing performance.

Social Work England operates as a single regulatory body, and financial information is reported and reviewed on a unified basis. The CODM reviews financial performance at an overall organisational level rather than by discrete business activities or components.

Accordingly, Social Work England has determined that it has a single operating segment for the purposes of IFRS 8, and no further segmental analysis is required.

1.8 Pensions

Social Work England has adopted IAS 19 Employee Benefits to account for its pension scheme. All eligible employees and workers are auto enrolled into Social Work England's defined contribution pension scheme (NEST).

Social Work England's contribution varies dependent on the level of employee contribution. For the year ended 31 March 2026, the maximum level of employer contributions was 9% of gross salary. This increased from 8% in 2024 to 2025. The contribution is recorded as expenditure in the statement of comprehensive net expenditure.

Following the change in classification of our partners as 'workers' from 1 September 2025, they are now eligible to join the NEST pension scheme. Workers are enrolled into the NEST pension scheme once they meet the required auto-enrolment criteria. For workers, Social Work England contributes 3% of gross earnings.

1.9 Provisions and Contingent Liabilities

Social Work England recognises provisions in accordance with IAS 37 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets.

Provisions are recognised when there is a present legal or constructive obligation arising from past events, it is probable that an outflow of economic or service potential will be required to settle the obligation, and a reliable estimate can be made.

Provisions typically relate to obligations arising from the organisation's regulatory activities, including legal claims and other operational liabilities.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation at the reporting date.

Discounting

Provisions are not discounted where the impact of discounting is not material. Where discounting would be material, provisions would be measured at the present value of the expected future cash flows using a discount rate prescribed by HM Treasury.

Review and reversals

Provisions are reviewed at each reporting date and adjusted to reflect the current best estimate. Where it is no longer probable that an outflow of resources will be required, the provision is reversed.

Contingent liabilities

In accordance with IAS 37 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets, contingent liabilities are disclosed where there is a possible obligation or a present obligation that is not recognised because an outflow of resources is not probable or cannot be measured reliably.

1.10 Property, plant and equipment

The minimum level of capitalisation for expenditure on property, plant and equipment is £2,000. In the case of IT equipment and furniture, all items recorded as capital expenditure are capitalised, and those of a similar type which fall below the capitalisation threshold are grouped together and recorded as bulk assets. Bulk assets are those with an individual purchase value of £500 or lower. The location of bulk assets is not tracked where it is not economical to do so.

The asset value on capitalisation is measured as all direct cost, including installation, attributable to bringing them into working condition. Where assets have short useful lives or low values the asset value is held at historical cost.

Gains and losses on disposal of an item of property, plant and equipment are determined by comparing the proceeds from disposal with the carrying amount of property, plant and equipment, and are recognised within other administrative expenses in the statement of comprehensive net expenditure.

The carrying value of property, plant and equipment is assessed annually and any impairment is charged to the statement of comprehensive net expenditure.

1.11 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the value of property, plant and equipment by equal instalments over their estimated useful lives.

Asset lives are in the following ranges:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| 1. IT equipment | 3 years |
| 2. Fixtures and fittings | 10 years |
| 3. Land and Buildings | 10 years |

1.12 Intangible assets

Development costs that meet the recognition criteria of IAS 38 are capitalised where the resulting asset is intended for internal use. This primarily relates to the development and enhancement of digital systems and platforms supporting the organisation's regulatory functions.

Capitalisation occurs only when management is satisfied that:

- there are probable economic or service potential benefits arising from the project
- there is an intention and ability to complete and use the asset
- adequate technical, financial and other resources are available
- the project is technically feasible
- expenditure attributable to the asset can be reliably measured.

Only directly attributable costs incurred in developing and bringing the asset into use are capitalised

Measurement

Intangible assets are measured at historical cost and are not revalued. This is in line with the FReM 2025–26 update, under which historical cost is adopted rather than being used as a proxy for fair value.

Amortisation and impairment

Assets under construction are not amortised. Intangible assets in use are amortised on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful economic lives, which range from 5 to 7 years.

Assets under construction and intangible assets are tested annually for impairment, with consideration given to whether the asset remains technologically and economically viable. Useful economic lives are reviewed annually.

1.13 Leases

IFRS 16 requires a lessee to recognise right of use assets and financing liabilities for all leases, apart from a number of exemptions including low value assets.

Social Work England has chosen to apply the low value exemption for leases relating to office printers.

Social Work England recognises a right of use asset and lease liability at the commencement date of a contract. The right of use asset is initially measured at cost, which comprises the amount of the lease liability adjusted for direct costs, prepayments or incentives, and costs related to restoration at the end of a lease.

Right of use assets are subsequently measured at either fair value or current value in existing use in line with property, plant and equipment assets. The cost measurement model in IFRS 16 is used as an appropriate proxy for current value.

Right of use assets are depreciated using the straight-line method from the commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right of use asset or the end of the lease term. The estimated useful lives of the right of use assets are determined on the same basis of those of property, plant and equipment assets. Social Work England applies IAS 36 Impairment of Assets to determine whether the right of use asset is impaired and to account for any impairment loss identified.

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease, or if that cannot be readily determined, the rate provided by HM Treasury.

The lease payment is measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. It is re-measured when there is a change in future lease payments arising from a change in the rate, or a modification to the lease terms, or a reassessment of whether it will exercise a purchase, extension or termination option.

1.14 Financial instruments, assets and liabilities

In accordance with IFRS 9 (Financial Instruments), Social Work England recognises financial assets and liabilities when it becomes party to the contracts that give rise to them. Social Work England does not hold any complex financial instruments i.e. long-term loans or equity investments.

1.15 Receivables

Trade and other receivables are recognised at carrying value and under IFRS 9 these are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method, less provision for impairment.

1.16 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is the current balance at the bank and Social Work England does not have any cash equivalents. Social Work England is permitted by its sponsor department, the Department for Education, to maintain a cash balance sufficient to cover its working capital requirements.

1.17 Payables

Trade and other payables are recognised at carrying value. At 31 March 2026, the value of payables predominantly consists of fee income received in advance and recognised as deferred income.

1.18 Financial risks

Liquidity risk

Parliament votes annually on the financing of Social Work England's net revenue resource requirements, as well as its capital expenditure. With no borrowings, Social Work England does not consider itself exposed to any significant liquidity risks.

Interest rate risk

Social Work England's financial liabilities carry either nil or fixed rates of interest. Social Work England does not consider itself exposed to any significant interest rate risk.

Foreign currency risk

All material assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling. Social Work England does not consider itself exposed to any significant currency risk.

1.19 IFRSs in issue but not yet effective

In accordance with IAS 8 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors, Social Work England discloses standards that have been issued but are not yet effective and have not been early adopted.

IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027. The standard has recently been endorsed for use in the UK; however, it has not yet been adopted within the FReM and no implementation timetable has been confirmed by the Financial Reporting Advisory Board (FRAB). Early adoption is not currently permitted. Social Work England will assess the impact of the standard on its financial statement presentation and disclosures once it is incorporated into the FReM.

IFRS 19 Subsidiaries without Public Accountability: Disclosures is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027. This standard is not applicable to Social Work England, as it does not have subsidiaries.

1.20 Taxation

The organisation is not subject to corporation tax as it operates as a nontrading public body within the public sector framework.

1.21 Value Added Tax

The majority of the organisation's activities are outside the scope of VAT and output VAT is not generally charged. Input VAT is largely non-recoverable and is therefore charged to the relevant expenditure category or capitalised as part of the cost of assets where appropriate.

2. Income

Income	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000
Fee income		
Registration fees	10,723	9,489
Scrutiny fees	498	509
Restoration fees	199	171
Total Fee Income	11,420	10,169

Registration fees for 2025 to 2026 include £3.68m of deferred income released from 2024 to 2025. Registration fees for 2024 to 2025 include £3.46m of deferred income from 2023 to 2024.

Further information regarding fee income can be found in section 1.5 of the notes to the financial statements.

Fee income comprises:

Registration and renewal fees

Initial registration fees relate to social workers who make a new application to join the Social Work England Register. The fee is paid in full once an application is deemed successful and is calculated based on the length of time remaining before the end of the current fee year. Renewal fees are due annually and will be paid by social workers who wish to remain on the Social Work England register.

Following a public consultation, registration and renewal fees were increased from £90 to £120 from 1 December 2025. Fees will continue to increase incrementally until 2029, in line with inflation. The fee year runs from 1 December to 30 November.

Restoration fees

Restoration fees are applicable where a social worker has been previously registered with Social Work England (or prior to December 2019, with the HCPC) but has since left the register for a period of time and wishes to restore their registration.

A restoration fee is paid when an application to restore is submitted and is non-refundable. Restoration fees represent the time and resources it takes to assess a restoration application.

Restoration fees were increased from £135 to £180, effective from 1 December 2025, following a public consultation.

Scrutiny fees

Scrutiny fees are applicable to those whose social work qualification was gained outside of the UK. The scrutiny fee is paid when an application to join Social Work England's register is submitted.

Scrutiny fees increased from £495 to £670 from 1 December 2025, following the public consultation on fees. The fee is a non-refundable and represents the time and resources it takes to assess this type of application.

3. Staff costs

For the financial year ending 31 March 2026

Staff Costs	Permanently Employed Staff £000	Partners £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	10,873	1,202	1,466	13,541
Social security costs	1,366	171	118	1,655
Pension costs	688	100	54	842
Total	12,927	1,473	1,638	16,038

Staff costs represent the cost recognised in the statement of comprehensive net expenditure and exclude staff costs which form part of intangible assets and the changes in the provision for worker status. 'Others' relates to the cost of short-term agency staff, those employed on fixed-term contracts and inward secondments during the year.

From 1 September 2025, our partners were deemed to have worker status. Partners are engaged on either a day rate basis or per assessment carried out, and receive holiday pay at a rate of 12.07%. Partners also became eligible to join the pension scheme from 1 September 2025.

For the financial year ending 31 March 2025

Staff Costs	Permanently Employed Staff £000	Others £000	Total £000
Wages and salaries	9,344	540	9,884
Social security costs	974	30	1,004
Pension costs	635	19	654
Total	10,953	589	11,542

4. Operating expenditure

Operating expenditure	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000
Staff related costs	455	268
Legal and other professional fees	6,862	5,593
Premises costs	408	368
IT and Telecommunications costs	1,883	1,519
Travel and subsistence	120	80
Research and development	70	121
Advertising and marketing	99	72
Irrecoverable VAT on lease payments	32	25
Lease interest	24	28
Board fees	93	87
Utilities	62	70
External audit fees	88	92
Internal audit fees	36	57
Bank charges	122	109
Other expenditure	128	95
(Profit)/Loss on disposal of assets	(8)	(14)
Total	10,474	8,570

The increase in legal and other professional fees relates to additional fitness to practise activity including hearings. IT and telecommunications expenditure has increased due to a rise in digital development revenue expenditure and implementation of the new security operations centre. Higher expenditure on travel and subsistence reflects additional engagement activity which has taken place during the year.

Board fees relate to the fees paid to the chair of the board, Dr Andrew McCulloch and the non-executive directors as disclosed in the remuneration and staff report.

Amortisation, depreciation and other non-cash charges

Amortisation, depreciation and other non-cash charges	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000
Amortisation	1,999	1,613
Depreciation	425	436
Provision	(420)	900
Impairment	0	176
Total	2,004	3,125

Depreciation is charged on all property, plant and equipment expenditure as shown in note 10. Amortisation is charged on internally generated software as shown in note 11.

5. Receivables

Receivables	2026 £000	2025 £000
Other receivables	1	24
Prepayments	664	799
Total	665	823
Amounts falling due after one year	0	0

6. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents	2026 £000	2025 £000
Balance at 1 April	4,205	3,050
Net change in cash and cash equivalents balances	1,051	1,155
Balance at 31 March	5,256	4,205

The balances were held at Government Banking Service.

7. Payables

Payables	2026 £000	2025 £000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade and other payables	2,312	876
Accrued Expenditure	2,927	2,888
Deferred Income	5,072	3,679
Lease liabilities	230	131
Capital accruals	256	457
Total	10,797	8,031
Amounts falling due after one year		
Lease liabilities	404	639
Total	404	639

Deferred income has increased compared to 2024 to 2025, this is due to the increase in registration fees effective from 1 December 2025 as well as an overall increase in the number of registered social workers.

The increase in trade and other payables relates to increased legal fees invoiced but not paid at year end and an increase in statutory payroll liabilities. Our partners were deemed to have worker status from 1 September 2025, meaning that PAYE tax, employer National Insurance contributions and pension contributions now apply. As a result, payroll-related liabilities have increased.

Social Work England recognises financial liabilities when it becomes party to the contracts that give rise to them.

Financial liabilities include trade and other payables, lease liabilities under IFRS 16 and accruals, for the year-ended 31 March 2026, there were financial liabilities of £5.72m (2024 to 2025: £4.35m).

8. Provisions

Provisions	Litigation Cost £000	Dilapidations £000	Worker Status £000	Total £000
At 1 April 2024	42	136	0	178
Arising in the year	0	2	900	902
Amounts utilised	(42)	0	0	(42)
At 1 April 2025	0	138	900	1,038
Arising in the year	0	3	27	30
Amounts utilised	0	0	(441)	(441)
Amounts released in the year	0	0	(448)	(448)
At 31 March 2026	0	141	38	179
Amounts falling due within one year	0	0	38	38
Amounts falling due after more than one year	0	141	0	141

The provision for dilapidations represents the estimated settlement cost to Social Work England in relation to the dilapidation clauses included in a property lease. These costs are expected to be incurred on the termination of the property lease. The provision has been calculated based on our best estimate considering independent professional assessments of the wider market and the amount forms part of the right of use asset.

The provision for worker status represents the estimated costs relating to the change in employment terms for Social Work England partners. The majority of costs were settled in 2025 to 2026 and the value reflects our best estimate of the costs to settle the obligation fully during the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

The provision is based on various assumptions which leads to a level of uncertainty in the valuation of the provision. The level of uncertainty, however, is not material.

9. Contingent liabilities

Partner worker status

In addition to the provision noted above, Social Work England has identified a potential exposure to further claims relating to partner worker status and historic holiday pay. These exposures arise from possible future claims, alternative legal routes, and potential developments in case law or legislation.

At the reporting date, these represent possible obligations, as it is not considered probable that an outflow of resources will be required. Accordingly, no provision has been recognised and this matter is disclosed as a contingent liability.

- Nature: Potential claims associated with employment status and holiday pay.
- Financial effect: While elements of potential exposure can be estimated based on known populations, a sufficiently reliable estimate of the overall financial effect has not been disclosed due to uncertainty regarding the number and success of future claims.
- Uncertainties: The extent and timing of any outflow remain uncertain and depend on future events, including whether further claims are brought, the legal basis on which they are pursued, and the outcome of any associated proceedings.
- Reimbursement: No reimbursement is expected in respect of these potential liabilities.

Ongoing legal cases

Social Work England is a defendant in a small number of ongoing legal cases where the likelihood of an outflow of resources is assessed as possible but not probable. These cases are therefore disclosed as contingent liabilities and no provision has been recognised.

- Nature: Legal claims arising in the normal course of operations.
- Financial effect: A reliable estimate of the financial effect cannot be made due to uncertainty regarding the number, nature, and outcome of the claims.
- Uncertainties: The timing and amount of any outflow will depend on the progression and resolution of legal proceedings.
- Reimbursement: No reimbursement is expected in respect of these cases.

10. Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment	Land & Buildings £000	Fixtures & Fittings £000	IT Equipment £000	Right-of-use Asset (Lease) £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2025	1,265	337	1,199	1,125	3,926
Additions	0	9	266	3	278
Disposals	0	0	(98)	0	(98)
At 31 March 2026	1,265	346	1,367	1,128	4,106
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2025	(993)	(320)	(903)	(523)	(2,739)
Depreciation charge	(72)	(2)	(192)	(158)	(424)
Disposals	0	0	98	0	98
At 31 March 2026	(1,065)	(322)	(997)	(681)	(3,065)
Carrying value					
31 March 2026	200	24	370	447	1,041
31 March 2025	272	17	296	602	1,187

Property, plant and equipment	Land & Buildings £000	Furniture, Fixtures & Fittings £000	IT Equipment £000	Right-of-use Asset (Lease) £000	Total £000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2024	1,265	327	1,173	1,123	3,888
Additions	0	10	193	2	205
Disposals	0	0	(167)	0	(167)
At 31 March 2025	1,265	337	1,199	1,125	3,926
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2024	(920)	(319)	(871)	(360)	(2,470)
Depreciation charge	(73)	(1)	(199)	(163)	(436)
Disposals	0	0	167	0	167
At 31 March 2025	(993)	(320)	(903)	(523)	(2,739)
Carrying value					
31 March 2025	272	17	296	602	1,187
31 March 2024	345	8	302	763	1,418

11. Intangible assets

Intangible assets	Assets under construction £000	Internally generated software £000	Total intangibles £000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2025	931	11,389	12,320
Additions	2,361	0	2,361
Transfers	(106)	106	0
Impairment	0	0	0
At 31 March 2026	3,186	11,495	14,681
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2025	0	(3,565)	(3,565)
Amortisation charge	0	(1,999)	(1,999)
At 31 March 2026	0	(5,564)	(5,564)
Carrying value			
31 March 2026	3,186	5,931	9,117
31 March 2025	931	7,824	8,755

Intangible assets at 31 March 2026 relate to a suite of digital services developed to enable Social Work England to carry out its regulatory role.

During the year 2025 to 2026, management deemed the development of part of our assets under development as fully operational. The related development cost was transferred from assets under construction to internally generated software and amortised over their useful economic life.

Further development of the suite of digital services is ongoing and continues to be categorised as assets under construction. During the year additional development costs of £590,000 were recognised as an expense (2024 to 2025: £257,000).

Intangible assets	Assets under construction £000	Internally generated software £000	Total intangibles £000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2024	2,750	7,808	10,558
Additions	1,938	0	1,938
Transfers	(3,581)	3,581	0
Impairment	(176)	0	(176)
At 31 March 2025	931	11,389	12,320
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2024	0	(1,952)	(1,952)
Amortisation charge	0	(1,613)	(1,613)
At 31 March 2025	0	(3,565)	(3,565)
Carrying value			
31 March 2025	931	7,824	8,755
31 March 2024	2,750	5,856	8,606

Carrying value of material intangible assets

Carrying value of material intangible assets	2025 to 2026 Net book value £000	2025 to 2026 Average remaining useful life years	2024 to 2025 Net book value £000	2024 to 2025 Average remaining useful life years
Case management	3,182	5.26	3,908	6.26
Registration and renewals	1,567	2.17	2,364	3.17
Public facing website and register	742	2.52	1,008	3.52
My Account and CPD	346	1.75	544	2.75
Worker Status	95	4.46	0	0

The assets have multiple components with different remaining useful lives, and so the average remaining life has been reported.

12. IFRS 16 – Leases

IFRS 16 - Leases	31 March 2026 Property Lease £000	31 March 2025 Property Lease £000
Leases for which IFRS 16 applies in full		
Not later than one year (cash flows)	242	155
Later than one year and not later than 5 years (cash flows)	420	667
Later than 5 years (cash flows)	0	0
Total	662	822
Less future interest charges	(28)	(52)
Present value of obligations	634	770
Analysed as:		
Payables: amounts falling due within 1 year	225	131
Payables: amounts falling due after more than 1 year	409	639
Total	634	770

13. Commitments

Commitments are the value of non-cancellable contracts not already on the statement of financial position, which commit Social Work England to expenditure in future periods.

13.1 Capital commitments

We had no capital commitments in the year ending 31 March 2026 (31 March 2025; nil).

13.2 Other financial commitments

Contracted financial commitments at 31 March not otherwise included in these accounts	31 March 2026 £000	31 March 2025 £000
Software licenses	0	269
Total	0	269

The financial commitment at 31 March 2025 relates to the committed cost for the use of software licenses where a non-cancellable contract exists. There were no financial commitments as at 31 March 2026.

14. Related party transactions

Related Party Transactions	2025 to 2026 £000	2024 to 2025 £000
Department for Education	16,532	12,105

Social Work England is sponsored by the Department for Education and for the purposes of these accounts, the department is regarded as a related party. There were material transactions with the Department for Education in respect of grant-in-aid. In addition, Social Work England is co-sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care, with which there were no financial transactions.

Compensation paid to management, expense allowances and similar items paid in the normal course of business are disclosed in the remuneration report. There were no other related financial transactions during 2025 to 2026.

15. Events after the reporting period date

The accounts were authorised for issue by the Accounting Officer on the date of the certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General. These accounts do not consider events after that date.

There were no adjusting or non-adjusting events between 31 March 2026 and the date of certification.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different language or format, please contact us.

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