



Social Work Improvement Fund 2010 / 2011

Report on 151 visits to local authorities

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Introduction

1. Responding to a recommendation from the Social Work Task Force, DfE announced a £23m Social Work Improvement Fund (SWIF) for 2010-11¹. CWDC calculated each local authority's allocation according to the Relative Needs Formula². CWDC was asked by DfE to distribute these funds and support employers to use the funding to reduce pressure on front line social workers and build capacity for reform and improvement in social work with children and families. This additional resource was intended to enable each authority to build on existing strategies to recruit and retain social workers and to reshape the delivery of social work services.
2. To support the effective use of the SWIF a peer support model was identified as the most appropriate way to meet the needs of employers, and provide opportunities for senior staff to work with their peers in other local authorities. CWDC invited senior social work staff working in a strategic role in local authorities to become advisors.
3. The peer support element to the SWIF project has offered employers additional support to implement change and allow individuals to work with other local authorities for 20 days over the year. In recognition of the time involved in this work CWDC has allocated an additional £12,000 of funding to local authorities for each advisor.
4. After each SWIF advisor visit in 2010 / 11 a standard form was completed.³ This was then uploaded into the CWDC's payment system in order for the SWIF monies to be released to the local authorities. As part of the data capture process CWDC was able to analyse how the SWIF monies were used and to gauge the local authorities' views on the CWDC social work programme. The following analysis and tables are based on data from 151 reports available at 1 June 2011 on the first of the two visits completed during 2010/11.⁴

¹ 'Building a Safe and Confident Future: Implementing the recommendations of the social work task force' (HM Government, 2010)

² For further information on the Relative Needs Formula see www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/0607/simpguid.pdf.

³ The same processes are being adopted in 2011/12

⁴ A report on the second visits will be available in mid-July 2011.

Areas explored during visits

▪ Newly Qualified Social Worker Programme

With five exceptions all the local authorities were taking part in the NQSW programme. Only one authority said the programme was not having an impact and eight authorities said that it was too early to say. All the other authorities [91 per cent] reported that it was having an impact.

Table 1: Impact of NQSW programme

Having a high impact	68 / 45%
Having some impact	69 / 46%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	137 / 91% *
Too early to say	8 / 5%
No impact	1 / 1%
Not taking part	5 / 3%
TOTAL	151 / 100%

* 94 per cent of all the authorities taking part in NQSW programme.

▪ Early Professional Development Programme [EPD]

One hundred and one authorities were also involved in the EPD programme. Fourteen of these were already reporting a high impact but the majority were divided between those who said it was beginning to have some impact [n=40] and those who said it was too early to judge [n=46]. Only one authority said it was having no impact.

Table 2: Impact of EPD programme

Having a high impact	14 / 10%
Having some impact	40 / 26%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	54 / 36% *
Too early to say	46 / 30%
No impact	1 / 1%
Not taking part	50 / 33%
TOTAL	151 / 100%

* 53 per cent of all authorities taking part in EPD programme.

▪ Support to Front Line Managers programme

Over half of the authorities [n = 83] were involved in the Support to Front Line Managers project with most [n= 48] saying it was having an impact and the rest reporting that it was too early to be able to tell.

Table 3: Impact of Support to Front Line Managers programme

Having a high impact	23 / 15%
Having some impact	25 / 16%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	48 / 31% *
Too early to say	34 / 23%
Not taking part	68 / 45%
No response	1/1%
TOTAL	151 / 100%

* 58 per cent of those taking part in SFLM programme.

▪ **Step Up to Social Work**

Step Up to Social Work route involves 47 local authorities through regional partnerships. The project started in September 2010 so not long before many of these visits. Just over half of them [n=24] claimed the scheme was already making an impact, while the rest, with three exceptions, said it was too early to say.

▪ **Health check or similar tool**

Just over three quarters of local authorities [n=118] were using the health check or similar tool. The overwhelming majority were finding it helpful to support social work change [very helpful n=56; quite helpful n=59]. Table 4 records the type of individuals or Teams using the Health Check or similar tool.

Table 4: Who is using the health check or similar tool

DCS	Operational managers	Strategic managers	Senior practitioners	HR teams	Front line teams	Not used
In 36 LAs	In 57 LAs	In 102 LAs	In 27 LAs	In 35 LAs	In 29 LAs	33 LAs

▪ **Workload management**

The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress in workload management. The majority [110] stated that they were making progress and 37 reported that they were 'on top of it' [Table 5]

Table 5

On top of workload management	Making progress with workload management	No progress with workload management
37 LAs	110 LAs	4 LAs

Four authorities said they had not made any progress. When these authorities were asked what would assist them to make faster progress, two identified access to mentoring, one access to web resources and one access to case materials.

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so the following responses were recorded [Table 6]:

Table 6

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
64 LAs	99 LAs	42 LAs

Ninety six authorities [over three fifths of responding authorities] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

▪ **Workflow management**

The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress on workflow management. The majority [n=104] stated that they were making progress and 41 reported that they were 'on top of it'.

Table 7 *

On top of workflow management	Making progress with workflow management	No progress with workflow management
41 LAs	104 LAs	5 LAs

* Figures sum to 150 as one non-respondent

Five authorities said they had not made any progress. Two of the five had also reported that they had not made progress on workload management. When these authorities were asked what would assist them to make progress one identified access to case materials, one mentioned access to mentoring, two mentioned access to web resources, case materials and mentoring but the fifth did not identify anything.

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so the following responses were recorded [Table 8]:

Table 8

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
68 LAs	91 LAs	36 LAs

Ninety five authorities [over three fifths of responding authorities] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

▪ **Right tools to do the job**

The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress on having the right tools to do the job. The majority [113] stated that they were making progress and 34 reported that they were 'on top of it'. Only three authorities said they had not made any progress. One of these stated that case materials and mentoring would help them progress, one wanted access to web resources, case materials and mentoring, and one did offer no response.[Table 9].

Table 9*

On top of having right tools to do the job	Making progress with having right tools to do the job	No progress with having right tools to do the job
34 LAs	113 LAs	3 LAs

*Figures sum to 150 as one non-respondent

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so the following responses [Table 10] were recorded:

Table 10

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
75LAs	83 LAs	59 LAs

Three fifths of authorities [n=91] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

▪ **Making progress with a healthy workplace**

The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress with creating a healthy workplace. The majority [110] stated that they were making progress and 35 reported that they were 'on top of it'. Only four authorities said they had not made any progress. Of these, one authority wanted access to mentoring, one access to case materials and two wanted access to case materials, mentoring and web resources to help with this. [Table 11]

Table 11*

On top of making progress with a healthy workplace	Making progress with a healthy workplace	No progress with a healthy workplace
35 LAs	110 LAs	4 LAs

* Figures sum to 149 as two non-respondents

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so the following responses were recorded and reported here in Table 12:

Table 12

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
68 LAs	93 LAs	43 LAs

Ninety eight [nearly two thirds of respondents] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

▪ **Making progress with effective service delivery**

The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress with effective service delivery. The authorities were asked to assess on a defined scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress. The majority [112] stated that they were making progress and 35 reported that they were 'on top of it'. Only two authorities said they had not made any progress and wanted access to case materials, mentoring and web resources to help with this. [Table 13]

Table 13*

On top of making progress with effective service delivery	Making progress with effective service delivery	No progress effective service delivery
35 LAs	112 LAs	2 LA

* Figures sum to 149 as two non-respondents

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so the following responses were recorded:

Table 14

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
75	84	47

Ninety two authorities [three fifths of respondents] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

▪ Staffing

Agency staff

Authorities were asked to estimate the percentage of their social workers who were agency staff and these estimates are recorded in Table 15.

Table 15⁵ **

0-10 per cent	10-20 per cent	20-30 per cent	30-40 per cent	50+
106	22	10	1	4

** Eight missing responses

Unfilled frontline social work posts unfilled

Authorities were asked to provide details of the percentage of unfilled frontline social work posts and these estimates are recorded in Table 16.

Table 16 **

0-10 per cent	10- 20 per cent	20-30 per cent	40-50 per cent
122	20	1	1

** Seven missing responses

▪ Caseloads

Caseloads of social workers

Authorities were asked to provide details of the average number of cases held by a social worker who has been qualified for two to three years and these details are recorded in Table 17.

Table 17 **

0-10 cases	Under 20 cases	Under 30 cases	Under 40	40+
5	76	57	5	1

** Seven missing responses

Caseloads of managers⁶

Authorities were asked to provide details of the average number of cases held by managers and these details are recorded in Table 18.

Table 18 **

0-10 cases	Under 20 cases	Under 30 cases	Under 40	40+
132	7	1	1	4

** Six missing responses

Unallocated cases⁷

Authorities were asked to provide details of number of unallocated cases in past month and these details are recorded in Table 19.

Table 19 *

0-10 cases	Under 20 cases	Under 30 cases	Under 40 cases	Under 50 cases	50+
124	8	5	2	3	5

* Four missing responses

⁵ When / if the template is redesigned we need to make these groupings mutually exclusive so I have labelled to help with reporting

⁶ Some caution should be exercised around these numbers as authorities differ in responsibility for cases which managers assume.

⁷ These data seem very low – possibly reflecting higher thresholds so again need for caution.

▪ Challenges

Local authorities were asked to identify the three most challenging issues - from the list contained in Table 20 - which faced the social work workforce in their authorities. The most frequently identified challenge was establishing effective workload management.

Table 20: Challenges faced

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGE	First choice [n of LAs]	Second choice [n of LAs]	Third choice [n of LAs]
Effective workload management	99	31	25
Proactive workflow management	23	62	32
Having the right tools	16	27	32
A healthy work place	6	24	36
Effective service delivery	5	6	24
Ensuring appropriate office space	-	-	-
No response	2	1	2
Total	151	151	151

Authorities were then asked to identify for each issue a specific issue from a list of related topics which was provided. Few responses were reported but those received are recorded below in Tables 21 – 25.

Table 21: Effective workload management

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	No of LAs
Reducing the numbers of cases held by each full time equivalent	12
Improving opportunities for attendance at CPD	6
Improving supervision sessions for all social work staff	12
Reducing turnover rates	7
Improving vacancy rates-current unfilled posts	5
Developing additional responsibilities for staff e.g. student on placement, acting as mentor to other team member, undertaking action research	1
Covering posts which are filled but where staff are absent- e.g. long term sick, maternity leave	4
Managing the average hours worked by staff on a weekly basis	6
Establishing a system to respond to feedback from service users, stakeholders/other professionals	1
Improving access to professional services	1
Reducing current levels of TOIL and/or leave to be taken by team members	2
Improving vacancy rates – agency	3
Making best use of skills within the team	1
Establishing a system to respond to staff survey results	1
Establishing a system to respond to exit interview analysis	1

Table 22: Proactive workflow management

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	No of LAs
Reducing re-referral rates	14
Making best use of skills within teams and wider service	19
Reducing delays in transfer of cases between teams	10
Removing specific blocks to work flow which need to be considered e.g. efficiency of commissioned services, relationships with other agencies, transfer between teams/services	14
Managing changes in work flow over time (peaks and troughs)	13
Ensuring quality of risk assessment for unallocated cases	6
Reducing the number of unallocated cases	10
Reducing the need for social workers to cancel meetings	2
Identifying and managing number of cases that are unallocated	2

Table 23: Having the right tools

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	No of LAs
Improving access to equipment	11
Improving access to resources	12
Ensuring appropriate office space	3
Improving access to professional services	6
Improve visibility of senior managers	1

Table 24: A healthy workforce

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	No of LAs
Establishing a system to ensure quality of supervision	19
Improving 360 degree appraisal	5
Ensuring quality of team meetings	3
Improving visibility of senior managers	2
Addressing sickness levels and patterns and trends	2
Developing a system for managing stress levels	4

Table 25: Effective service delivery

IDENTIFIED ISSUE	No of LAs
Establishing a system to respond to feedback from service users, stakeholders/other professionals	13
Establishing a system to respond to findings from compliments, comments and complaints	6
Establishing a system to respond to exit interview analysis	1
Establishing a system to respond to staff survey results	1
Improving access to equipment	1
Improving vacancy rates – current unfilled posts	1

Use of SWIF

Local authorities were asked how they plan to use or have used the Social Work Improvement Fund allocation. Five option areas were provided and their responses are captured in Table 26.

Table 26*

SWIF used or will be used for:	No of LAs
Social work staff	110
I T solutions	10
Other staff	14
Restructuring	13
Capital expenditure or equipment	2

* Figures sum to 149 as two non-respondents

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