



Department
for Education

Child and Family Social Worker Workforce

Government consultation response

25 October 2023

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Ministerial foreword

David Johnston OBE MP, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

Children's social care has the potential to transform lives for the better, supporting the brilliance of young people. In February 2023, we published 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', which focused on what really matters for children and young people: loving relationships and safe, stable homes. A core pillar underpinning those reforms is our responsibility to ensure there is a valued, supported, and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one.



The *Independent Review of Children's Social Care*, published in May 2022, highlighted that the greatest strength of the children's social care system lies in its workforce. I have seen first-hand the vital work that social workers, including those who choose to work through recruitment agencies, do to support the most vulnerable children and families. Their continued commitment and unwavering resolve to transform lives was clear from across consultation responses.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the many people who took the time to respond to the consultation, including the over 800 responses from social workers and all those who engaged so openly at various consultation meetings and events.

Creating the right conditions to allow all social workers to thrive and do the best social work they can relies on a stable, effective, and supported workforce. The majority of consultation feedback was clear in its agreement that the introduction of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care would support local authorities to deliver this.

We recognise that the proposals consulted on will not, in isolation, respond to the concerns of all social workers or address all the factors contributing to current workforce pressures. We have heard those social workers who have told us that they do not always feel supported, valued, and trusted, and that there is not enough recognition of the difficult decisions they make on a daily basis.

Responding to these pressures will require some local authorities to do more to improve working conditions and create environments that support health and wellbeing, so that all social workers are happy at work and are able to thrive. The Children's Social Care National Framework sets out the purpose, principles, and outcomes that local authority children's social care should achieve, and includes specific enablers which focus on how leaders, managers and practitioners create the conditions for effective social work practice in local authority children's social care.

However, it is vital that local authorities are able to find staff as and when they are needed. We know that many recruitment agencies in the sector are committed to supporting the needs of social workers and local authorities. Our response to this

consultation sets out clearly to you, as a sector, that one of our priorities is to take steps to stabilise the workforce and create a more collaborative market. If you are committed to these same objectives, we look forward to working with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Johnston', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Johnston OBE MP
Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

Introduction

Background

On 2 February 2023, we launched a public consultation seeking views on the introduction of a set of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care.

This consultation followed publication, on 23 May 2022, of the *Independent Review of Children's Social Care*,¹ which reviewed the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by social care. The sector is facing particularly acute workforce pressures and the consultation was in response to recommendations of the *Independent Review of Children's Social Care* coupled with DfE engagement with the sector on the sufficiency and workforce challenges being faced.

Agency social workers play a vital role in allowing the children's social care sector to manage fluctuations in demand, fill in for staff temporarily absent, and manage crises. However, an overreliance on agency social work resource in local authority children's social care contributes to workforce instability, puts pressure on local authority budgets, and can have a negative impact on consistent relationships with children and families.

The consultation was launched alongside *Stable Homes, Built on Love: implementation strategy (Built on Love)*,² the Government's vision to transform children's social care. The strategy set out six pillars of reform, backed by £200 million of additional investment over the next two years. The pillars of reform are:

1. Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families.
2. A decisive multi-agency child protection system.
3. Unlocking the potential of family networks.
4. Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care.
5. A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one.

¹ MacAlister, J. (2022). *The Independent Review of Children's Social Care: Final Report*. <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230308122449/https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/>

² Department for Education. (2023). *Stable Homes, Built on Love*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love>

6. A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

We recognise that the factors contributing to current workforce pressures are complex and longstanding. Social workers have told us that they do not always feel supported, valued and trusted, and that there is not enough recognition of the difficult decisions they make on a daily basis and the skills and expertise required for the role.

This is why we:

- will continue to invest more than £50m every year over the current spending review period on recruiting, training, and developing child and family social workers to ensure the workforce has the capacity, skills, and knowledge to support and protect vulnerable children.
- have established Social Work England as the specialist regulator for social workers.
- train each year an average of 800 new social workers through our fast-track programmes and provide professional development for around 4,000 qualified social workers.
- have clear Post Qualifying Standards which set out the knowledge and skills expected of child and family social workers.
- are supporting the recruitment of over 460 children and family social worker apprentices in 79 local authority areas and designing a new Early Career Framework that will set out the development plans for a social worker's first five years.
- have committed to work with the sector to improve working conditions and create environments that support health and wellbeing, so that all social workers are happy at work and are able to thrive. In January 2023, we launched the National Workload Action Group (NWAG) to identify workload drivers and develop solutions to reduce workload so that social workers can spend more time in direct practice with children and families. In July 2023, we awarded a contract to Research in Practice to develop tools and resources that support local authorities in improving retention, including materials on flexible working, wellbeing, and engaging agency resource effectively and collaboratively.

This document should be read alongside chapter six of *Built on Love* and our response to its consultation. It should also be read alongside the Children's Social Care National Framework and our response to its consultation. The National Framework sets out the purpose, principles, and outcomes that local authority children's social care should achieve. It also includes system-wide enablers to support these outcomes and drive conditions for effective practice. Specific attention should be paid to the enablers in the

National Framework which focus on how leaders, managers, and practitioners create the conditions for effective social work practice.

Consultation proposals

The consultation sought views on the introduction of a set of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care. The national rules included eight proposals that would apply to local authorities:

- 1) A requirement that all procurement routes used by local authorities to engage agency social workers must adhere to the national rules.
- 2) The introduction of national price caps on what local authorities may pay per hour for an agency social worker.
- 3) A requirement for social workers who graduated in or after April 2024 to demonstrate a minimum of five years post-qualifying experience working within local authority children's social care and completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) in order to qualify for an agency appointment.
- 4) No longer using "managed service" / "project" teams for child and family social work.
- 5) A requirement for employers to request and provide references for all agency social worker candidates.
- 6) Not engaging agency workers for a period of three months after they have left a substantive role within the same region (with certain exceptions).
- 7) A requirement for a minimum of a six-week notice period for agency social workers via a reciprocal arrangement between agency workers and local authorities to minimise immediate or quick departures and the associated impact on children and families and the wider workforce.
- 8) The collection and sharing of core agency and pay data, to support better workforce planning and the ability to monitor, enforce, and assess the impact of the proposals.

It is important to note that:

- the proposals set out in the consultation and in this response relate to all registered child and family social workers working within/for/commissioned by local authority children's social care.
- "agency social worker" is used throughout the consultation and this response. It refers to all agency social workers working for/commissioned by a local authority. It includes those described as a "contractor" or "consultant" and those working within a "project team" or other packaged service models or equivalents.

Who this was for

We are committed to listening to the voices of social workers and those working within the children's social care system. Anyone could submit a response to the consultation, though we specifically sought views from:

- Local government (local authorities, Children's Trusts and Alternative Delivery Models for children's social care, Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives, Finance Directors, Heads of Service, Heads of People/HR, workforce leads, Principal Social Workers and Practice Leaders)
- Child and family social workers who are local authority employees
- Child and family social workers who are agency workers or contractors
- Employers of social workers, recruitment agencies and intermediaries, and central purchasing bodies

Methodology

The consultation ran for 14 weeks from 2 February to 11 May 2023. Responses could be submitted via the Department for Education's (DfE) online consultation portal or by email. We received 1,243 responses, with 1,230 responses submitted via the online consultation portal and 13 by email. All submitted responses were considered.

The consultation asked respondents 21 questions in relation to the proposals, with a mixture of closed- and open-ended questions. 19 questions were mandatory and two were optional. 16 of the mandatory questions sought further information depending on the respondent's answer to the question.

To ensure we received a broad range of responses from across the sector, we actively engaged with key stakeholders across the local government and recruitment agency sectors, including:

- The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), and the Local Government Organisation (LGA);
- The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) and the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) and their members; and
- Public Buying Organisations and Managed Service Providers.

We also engaged the workforce via the Principal Social Worker (PSW) Network, UNISON, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and members of their Diaspora Group and Black and Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium. We held four

virtual consultation events with 132 local authority social workers and 89 agency social workers in attendance.

Purpose of this document

Social workers play a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable children and families. Their continued commitment and unwavering resolve to transform lives was clear from consultation responses. Our aim, across the reforms set out in *Built on Love* and the proposals in the consultation, is to create the right conditions for social workers to thrive and deliver for children and families. This relies on a stable, effective, and supported workforce.

We are grateful to everyone who submitted a response to the consultation. We have carefully considered the responses received and the range of views expressed. The majority of consultation feedback was clear in its agreement that the introduction of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care would support our aim to move towards a more stable and sustainable workforce.

Therefore, we intend to proceed with the introduction of the national rules with some changes.

This document sets out the government's response to the consultation. It is structured by proposal rather than by question to better represent views from online and email responses, and to set out the government's plans more clearly.

Summary of responses

The Department for Education commissioned IFF Research to conduct a full independent analysis of consultation responses. The analysis report titled *Child and Family Social Worker Workforce Consultation Analysis* (the analysis report) is published alongside this document.

Profile of respondents

There was a total of 1,243 respondents, with 1,230 completing the consultation online and 13 providing a non-standard response via email.

The majority of responses submitted online came from individuals (89%), with a much smaller proportion of responses on behalf of organisations (11%). The largest proportion of individual respondents were substantive child and family social workers (42%), whilst around a third described themselves as agency child and family social workers (28%).

The vast majority of responses submitted on behalf of organisations came from local authority/children's services organisations (74%), followed by recruitment agencies (9%).

Eight organisations³ and five individuals submitted responses via email and did not address all consultation questions. For this reason, the base size for quantitative analysis was 1,230.

A table of organisational respondents is at **Annex A** and a full breakdown of respondent demographics is included in the analysis report.

Main findings from the consultation

The full analysis of responses in relation to each of the proposed national rules is included in the analysis report, published alongside this document. The main findings set out here are from the *Conclusions* section of the analysis report.

Implementation of national rules

There were relatively high levels of support for the general principle of implementing the national rules. Support was particularly high amongst those responding on behalf of local authorities and local authority employed staff. Agency social workers and those

³ ADCS, Ofsted, Social Work England, Cafcass, one agency sector organisation, and three responses on behalf of a local authority.

responding on behalf of recruitment agencies had more reservations about the proposals. This trend was observed across the range of specific proposals.

Reasons for agreement focused on the view that the rules would lead to reduced reliance on agency social workers and greater competency in the workforce, and would create a more level playing field between substantive and agency social workers. Many respondents also focused on the ultimate beneficiaries of these changes, citing improved outcomes for children and families.

Those who disagreed reported general concerns about the practicalities of implementation and potential short-term impacts of the changes. These included agency social workers leaving the profession and local authorities struggling with staff resourcing if use of agency social workers reduced. Some concerns were also raised around the proposals being particularly problematic for certain equalities groups, notably those with an increased need for flexibility (e.g., those with caring responsibilities or with disabilities), and those from ethnic minority groups.

Broader negative points related to the proposals representing too much interference in local authority practice by central government and the need for local authorities to be able to act flexibly and in line with their own contexts. Respondents (and especially agency workers and those responding on behalf of agencies) also repeated across a number of questions that agency workers should not be seen as only causing challenges and that more needs to be done to address the underlying issues facing the social worker workforce.

There was a mixed view about the proposed timing of implementation (i.e., by spring 2024), with concerns raised from both those who agreed and disagreed with the proposals in principle. Respondents identified some challenges to implementing the new rules so soon, and that doing so too quickly could diminish the workforce and exacerbate the current recruitment and retention challenges.

Procurement routes, price caps and data collection

There was relatively strong support for the proposals around procurement routes and price caps.

Respondents felt that the proposals around procurement would create greater consistency across local authorities, by eliminating the use of different procurement routes and practices that are currently used. Respondents were also positive that the changes would help eliminate some current agency practices that are perceived to negatively impact the market. Though it should be noted that many respondents focused generally on procurement rules, rather than specifically on the proposed new rule itself.

Those who disagreed raised similar points around the procurement proposals as about the general principle of the new rules. Concerns were raised that the rules would

negatively impact local authorities' ability to develop their own procurement processes to account for their local context.

Similar points were made around the price cap proposals. Those in agreement cited a move to greater consistency across different types of social worker and local authorities as a benefit and opportunity of the proposals. Respondents generally agreed though that there was a need for local variation owing to varying costs of living associated with different local authorities and regions, with those in the Southeast and London facing a higher cost of living. There was a mixed view on whether local authorities should be allowed to exceed the price cap in certain circumstances. Again, the need for local variation and flexibility for local authorities was raised. The responses clearly showed some tension between the desire for national consistency across local authorities and the need for some local variation and flexibility.

Across both the procurement and price cap proposals, respondents felt that if new rules were implemented it would be important to have measures in place to enforce these and ensure they were adhered to by everyone.

The view on data collection was mixed, though the relatively high level of 'don't know' responses suggests respondents (and in particular those responding as individuals) were unsure.

Project teams, cool-off period, notice period

There were high levels of agreement with the proposal for notice periods, with respondents highlighting that this would ensure adequate handovers and provide stability for other staff and families. Having said that, there were mixed views on the length of the notice period.

There was also relatively strong support for the proposal for a cool-off period. Though again respondents raised a note of caution around the timing and speed of implementation, including the potentially destabilising effects on the workforce through exacerbating the current recruitment and retention challenges.

There was support for the proposal on the use of project teams. Those who felt that project teams should be used were asked when they felt it was appropriate to use such teams for children and family social work. Most commonly this was when caseloads were high or when the local authority has a high number of vacancies or staff absences.

Post-qualifying experience, references

These were the areas of the strongest agreement within the consultation. Most respondents agreed with the proposals around references and the introduction of a minimum period of post-qualifying experience for UK and international social workers.

Both were felt to provide greater accountability and provide transparency on a social worker's skills and experience.

Suggestions were made to shorten the length of time that was required for post-qualifying experience. Some respondents also suggested that references should be provided regardless of length of employment. Agency workers in particular felt that there should be no difference in reference requirements between agency and permanent staff.

Summary of national rules

We have considered the full range of views submitted in response to the consultation. A summary of the revised national rules is set out here. Later sections of this document describe our response to consultation findings around each proposal and the rationale for any changes.

Local authorities should ensure that all new contractual arrangements to supply agency child and family social workers comply with the following rules from the date of their introduction.

National rules

Local authorities should:

- work within their region to agree and implement agency social worker price caps that each local authority within the region should comply with.
- ensure all contractual arrangements to supply social work resource (including those described as project teams) comply with the following requirements:
 - clear identification of all constituent workers;
 - disaggregation of the worker cost component and any other service provided; and
 - governance arrangements that allow the local authority to maintain complete oversight and control of social work practice delivered via the arrangement.
- align the notice period for each agency social work assignment with the local authority's contractual notice period for substantive staff in the same or an equivalent job role.
- not engage agency social workers for a minimum period of three months after they have left a substantive role within the same region.
- only engage agency social workers with a minimum of three years post-qualifying experience in direct employment in a UK local authority.
- provide a detailed practice-based reference for all agency social workers on assignment, and require detailed practice-based references for agency social workers before offering an assignment.
- provide the Department for Education with quarterly survey data on the use and cost of agency social workers (including where supplied via project teams or other packaged models).

Introducing national rules

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that the Department would set out the national rules alongside the government response to the consultation in **September 2023**, and that from **spring 2024** local authorities should comply with the national rules.

This timeline was proposed to allow for sufficient time to fully analyse responses to this consultation and for local authorities to have sufficient notice to work towards compliance in time for the start of the 2024-25 financial year.

As part of the consultation, we also sought views on the measures that would support local authorities to comply with the national rules and reduce overreliance on agency social work resource.

Headline consultation findings

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents agreed with the general principle of the national rules, while over half of respondents agreed that the rules should be set out in September 2023 (56%) and that local authorities should comply with the rules by spring 2024 (57%).

The majority (84%) of substantive local authority employed child and family social workers agreed with the national rules in principle. A much smaller proportion (16%) of agency child and family social workers agreed. Respondents who agreed with the national rules in principle were significantly more likely to agree with them being set out in September 2023 (83% of those who agreed with the rules in principle agreed with the proposed timing), while the vast majority (92%) of those who disagreed with the rules in principle, also disagreed with the proposed timing.

Respondents felt the best measures to support local authorities to comply with the national rules and reduce overreliance on agency social work resource would be:

- A forum to discuss agency workforce issues and market concerns (49%)
- Best practice materials and case studies on effective retention strategies (46%)
- Commercial and HR support (37%)
- Best practice materials and case studies on agency usage (31%)
- Recruitment materials (30%)
- Toolkits (25%)

Government response: introducing national rules

While there was broad agreement with the introduction of national rules in principle and the proposed timing, that agreement is strongly correlated to whether respondents were employed by or represented local authorities or organisations in the recruitment agency sector.

We welcome agreement from respondents that the introduction of national rules would raise the quality of practice, make the social work profession fairer, and create greater consistency for children and families. We also agree that there should be a greater focus on improving conditions for all social workers, which is why we have committed to work with the sector to support local authorities to provide environments that support health and wellbeing, so that all social workers are happy at work and are able to thrive. This will be a key part of the work being taken forward by Research in Practice as part of the National Workload Action Group.

While a minority of comments encouraged setting out the national rules sooner than proposed in the consultation due to the urgency of the workforce challenges, we note that a number of comments also raised concerns that local authorities should be given more time to transition given the substantial nature of the proposed changes.

What we plan to do

We will issue statutory guidance under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (LASSA) to introduce national rules on local authority engagement of agency social work resource in children's social care.

We recognise that the introduction of national rules represents a substantial change for local authorities, agency social workers, and organisations operating within the children's social care and recruitment agency sectors. The consultation highlighted the complexity of these issues and the importance of engaging widely across the sector on the detail of any national rules.

As such, we will work with sector representatives to draft new statutory guidance which we will consult on in spring 2024. Subject to this consultation, we expect local authorities to comply with this statutory guidance in autumn 2024.

Price caps

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed introducing a national cap on the rate that local authorities may pay for an agency child and family social worker. The objectives of the proposal were to:

- a) bring agency workers' pay more fairly in line with substantive workers' pay (taking into consideration a degree of uplift to acknowledge contract differences e.g. holiday pay); and
- b) create greater national consistency and fairness around pay for social workers (whether they are employed substantively or working for a local authority via an agency) who are carrying out the same role in different local authorities or regions.

Headline consultation findings

There were a number of questions in this section of the consultation. Headline findings are:

- Just under two thirds of respondents agreed that there should be greater consistency between local authorities in terms of their basic pay to substantive employees for the same role profile type (65%)
- Over half of responders agreed that agency worker pay should be brought more fairly in line with substantive worker average pay considering employment differences (58%)
- Just under half of respondents felt there should be different price caps between local authorities/regions for the same social worker agency role (48%)
- Similar numbers agreed and disagreed with the proposal that there are reasons why local authorities should be allowed to exceed caps (46% and 43% respectively)

The same proportion agreed there should be a cap on agency fees (62%) and on framework fees (62%)

Government response: price caps

Pay consistency

Just under two thirds (65%) of respondents agreed in principle that there should be greater consistency between local authorities in basic pay for substantive employees doing the same role. Most respondents that agreed thought that greater consistency

would benefit practice by supporting retention of substantive staff and shifting focus to improving non-pay conditions.

Challenges were raised relating to variation in pay between local authorities and regions, cost of living differences, different requirements of the same job role, and different labour markets. Responses also noted that greater consistency could destabilise existing local authority pay grading structures and intervene in local authorities' role as employers.

The question of whether agency worker pay should be brought more fairly in line with average substantive pay for the same role provoked strong views from all respondents. Local authorities and local government sector organisations were broadly in support of the proposed price caps and thought it would improve consistency and fairness amongst social workers.

Views were mixed as to the extent to which earnings differed between substantive posts and agency workers once contractual differences were accounted for including, for example, holiday and sick pay. However, many agency workers stated that higher pay is the main reason they chose to work for an agency or be self-employed. Several agency respondents also said that they would leave the profession if their pay were brought more in line with what a substantive worker would be paid in an equivalent role.

We believe there are benefits to greater transparency around pay and to a more consistent understanding of different role types. For example, one Managed Service Provider described over 500 different job titles under the '*social worker*' category across their local authority portfolio. Greater harmonisation of job roles could have the dual benefit of improving understanding of career progression across local authorities and improving transparency between substantive roles and agency assignments.

Regional vs national caps

Just under half of respondents, including many local government sector leaders, felt there should be flexibility for regional variation in price caps for the same social worker agency role. This could, for example, enable caps to reflect differences in the cost of living and local markets. Conversely, others – especially local authorities on regional borders – felt that regional variation would undermine the proposals.

The Department does not currently collect data on agency or substantive social worker pay. Nor is any regional data available on a national footprint. For example, not all regions have price caps in operation and, of those that do, the methodology is too inconsistent to use as a basis for a centrally determined price cap. There is also too much variation in substantive pay between local authorities to determine price caps for agency workers at a regional or national level calculated via an uplift to substantive pay.

To be able to monitor compliance with regional price caps, assess their impact on existing costs, and model centrally determined caps, we first need greater harmonisation

and more robust data. For this reason, we will set out in statutory guidance a process for mapping social worker job titles to broader groupings that agency costs can be reported against consistently across regions.

Option to exceed caps

Respondents were asked whether there were reasons why local authorities should be allowed to exceed a price cap when engaging with agency social workers. Similar numbers agreed and disagreed with this proposal (46% and 43% respectively). Those who felt that there were instances where price caps may need to be exceeded cited examples such as: a high number of vacancies, a recent poor Ofsted report, or a large or complex caseload. Conversely, ADCS and others felt exceptions would undermine the proposals and could be difficult to administer.

A process that enables local authorities to exceed a price cap may limit its impact but would allow for adjustments to market reaction and local circumstances. An exemptions process with effective governance, reporting procedures, and monitoring arrangements could act as a safety valve while at the same time encouraging greater transparency and disincentivising price cap circumvention.

Because of the complexity, we need to first understand current compliance with regionally determined price caps. To this end, we will set out in statutory guidance a list of data to be collected from local authorities that will enable us to monitor how often and by how much local authorities exceed regionally determined price caps.

Agency fees and framework fees

The same proportion of respondents agreed that there should be a cap on agency fees (62%) and on framework fees (62%). However, consultation engagement indicates the current level of framework fees are low and generally charged at the same rate across all agency assignments (not just social work). The benefit of capping framework fees therefore appears to be limited given the administrative burden of implementing a cap only for social work assignments.

From the information provided, agency fees also appear to be relatively low and vary according to the underlying framework agreement. Local authorities will either negotiate call-off contracts with, for example, Managed Service Providers (MSP) at prices set on the framework, or undertake further competition which may include price negotiation. It appears from engagement with the recruitment sector and MSPs that the majority of agency social work supply is via these routes. Given agency fees via MSPs on-framework are already relatively low, capping them may encourage agencies to negotiate off-framework contracts and is unlikely to provide significant savings.

Given the limited benefit and additional complexities outlined above, we are not minded to cap framework fees and agency fees at this time.

What we plan to do on price caps

In deciding whether, when, and how to implement price caps, we note the strength of feeling of social workers, local authority employers, recruitment agencies, and others that took the time to respond and engage with the consultation.

We want to reach a position where there is greater workforce stability and fairness in pay between agency and substantive workers carrying out the same role. Voices in the recruitment sector and many agency workers cited the risk that social workers may choose to move out of the profession if earnings are brought more in line with substantive staff. Conversely, we recognise that many in the local government sector are clear that the costs currently associated with engagement of agency resource are unaffordable, and that overreliance on agency resource negatively impacts social work practice. The financial impact of not taking action to cap prices could present similar or even greater risks to workforce stability and ultimately outcomes for children and families.

We do not have the data to be able to implement centrally determined price caps with national coverage at this stage, nor do we have the data and systems in place to be able to assess and monitor the impact of any such cap regionally or nationally.

We will, therefore, set out in statutory guidance that local authorities should work within their region to agree and implement agency worker price caps that all local authorities within the region should comply with. Regional collaboration leading to closer cross-regional alignment will be encouraged. Regionally determined price caps should apply to all contractual arrangements to supply social work resource in local authority children's social care, including all models described as project teams.

We will also work with local authorities and the recruitment sector to build a more consistent and robust evidence base (see data proposals in the next section). This will allow us to monitor and possibly strengthen the impact of regional price cap arrangements, and provide a basis for modelling centrally determined price caps and understand their potential impact.

Following collection of these data, we will undertake a further consultation prior to any replacement of regionally determined price caps with new centrally determined price caps.

Data collection

Consultation proposal

The aim of the data collection proposals set out in the consultation was to;

- Build understanding of supply and demand to support workforce planning
- Encourage collaborative working at a system and regional level
- Enable monitoring of and compliance with the proposed national rules
- Encourage greater transparency

In the consultation, we proposed collecting the following data from local authorities on a quarterly basis:

- agency worker job type and pay rate;
- substantive worker job type and pay rate;
- vacancies by job type;
- use of market and other supplements;
- substantive worker full time equivalent (FTE);
- leavers FTE; and
- agency worker FTE.

We proposed that a data sharing agreement would be put in place to provide consent for these data to be shared with the DfE and between local authorities and regional leads.

Headline consultation findings

When asked whether the above proposed data collection was the right data to monitor the impact of the national rules and support workforce planning:

- 51% of respondents felt it was the right data to collect on agency social workers
- 39% felt it was the right data to support workforce planning
- 37% felt it was the right data to collect on substantive social workers

Just over one-in-ten (13%) respondents reported that they did not think any of the data suggested was correct to monitor the impact of the national rules on child and family social workers and support workforce planning. Among organisations, the disagreement rate was negligible at 1%. Around a quarter (23%) of respondents were not sure whether the correct data had been put forward.

Respondents were also asked if there were listed data items that should not be collected and/or additional data items that should be collected.

A small proportion of respondents (7%) provided suggestions for additional items. The most common was the type of work covered by agency workers, such as: sick leave, maternity leave, and short-term vacancies. Other suggestions included: leaving data, including exit rates and reasons for leaving; performance data for local authorities, including Ofsted reports, management reports, and caseload profiles (quantity and complexity); pay scale data for all social workers (substantive and agency); data relating to the enforcement of and compliance with the national rules; and data on hiring route (e.g. whether procured via a Managed Service Provider or through direct engagement with an agency).

Government response: data collection

As described in the price caps section, data is of fundamental importance in being able to model suitable price caps. It is also of wider importance in understanding the workforce market and being able to monitor the impact of the proposals taken forward. However, responses indicated a lack of consistency in the data collected by local authorities and other organisations, as well as in local resource and capacity.

What we plan to do on data collection

We will work closely with the sector to refine the list of data to be collected, taking into account which data are also of value to the sector. We aim to balance the need for regular and detailed information with ensuring reporting burdens are proportionate and manageable.

We will set out in statutory guidance the data items for collection on a quarterly basis alongside a consistent data collection methodology, including an approach for job mapping.

During the period of consultation on the draft statutory guidance, we intend to work with local government and the recruitment sector, including managed service providers. We will carry out a New Burdens Assessment and work with the Department's Star Chamber Scrutiny Board⁴ in advance of the introduction of any new statutory data collection requirement.

⁴ The Department for Education's Star Chamber Scrutiny Board supports DfE to review its data collections. <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/star-chamber-scrutiny-board>. (Accessed October 2023).

Project teams

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that local authorities would no longer engage project teams for child and family social work. The proposal included a condition that, while a local authority may engage multiple social workers from the same agency, each project team worker should contract individually with the local authority.

Headline consultation findings

Over half (57%) of respondents agreed that project teams should no longer be used, whilst nearly a third (30%) disagreed.

Substantive local authority employed child and family social workers were more likely to agree with the proposal in comparison to agency social workers (69% compared to 24%), while agency social workers were more likely to disagree (67% compared to 17%).

A similar pattern was noted in organisational responses. Local government representative bodies and local authorities typically agreed with the proposal that project teams should not be used. Many local authority responses noted the damaging impact that a reliance on project teams can have on relationship-based practice and the consistency of social work relationships for children and families.

Recruitment agencies and their representative bodies were less likely to agree with this proposal, though there was some nuance in responses and some recruitment agency organisations were supportive.

The consultation also asked those respondents who disagreed with the proposal when they thought it would be appropriate to use project teams for child and family social work. Respondents tended to think this was when caseloads were high, when local authorities had a high number of vacancies or staff absences, or to support struggling local authorities. Some recruitment agency organisations also noted that while ideally project teams would not be needed, they are sometimes necessary such as to 'plug' staffing gaps or at critical times.

Government response: project teams

The discharge of local authority functions by child and family social workers is subject to Ofsted inspection and regulation under section 136(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. We note a number of responses highlighting that project teams transfer supervision of their social workers' practice from the local authority to the supplier of the self-managed team. Where this is occurring, day-to-day management of casework is transferred to an external supplier and self-managed team that is not subject to the

ILACS regulatory inspection framework.⁵ This can make it difficult for the local authority to maintain effective oversight and management of social work practice in line with their statutory duties relating to cases held by the project team. This can make it more difficult for local authorities to remain accountable for delivery of their statutory duties, present a risk to effective safeguarding, and increase burdens for permanent staff.

We note also that respondents raised a number of other risks around the use of project teams in child and family social work, including: restricted local authority access to agency social worker supply; divergence between practice models used by project teams and host local authorities; and contracts that make it more difficult for local authorities to make an accurate assessment of the breakdown of costs and comparability with individually contracted agency workers, or understand costs within regionally determined price caps. These can contribute to workforce instability, increase pressures on the permanent workforce, and present greater risks to effective social work for children and families.

We have seen a significant increase in the use of project teams in recent years, and note that the majority of organisational responses from local authorities supported the proposal.

We also recognise that a number of respondents identified circumstances where it may be appropriate for local authorities to use project teams. We therefore do not think it is right to fully restrict local authority flexibility to use project teams where they can be used appropriately at this time. However, we want to ensure that the specific concerns outlined are addressed directly through a set of principles which will apply across all contractual arrangements to supply agency social work resource. We want to support local authorities to ensure that social work practice delivered by project teams is accountable and subject to proper local authority oversight, and that project team costs and constituent workers are properly identified.

What we plan to do on project teams

Local authorities hold statutory responsibility for children's social care and must be able to maintain appropriate oversight and management of all agency child and family social work practice, whatever the model of deployment, to ensure practice reflects the interests of children and families. Ofsted have also raised the importance of organisational line management accountability for child and family social work. In practice, this means that

⁵ Ofsted. *Inspecting local authority children's services*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services>. (Accessed October 2023).

local authorities cannot have statutory cases managed at arm's length through a separate entity.

We will set out in statutory guidance that all contractual arrangements to supply social work resource (including those described as project teams) should comply with the following requirements: clear identification of all constituent workers; disaggregation of the worker cost component and any other service provided; and governance arrangements that allow the local authority to maintain complete oversight and control of social work practice delivered via the arrangement.

The engagement of each of the constituent workers of any agency team contracted within local authority child and family social work (including those described as project teams) will be subject to all the other national rules we will set out in statutory guidance and referred to in this document.

Local authorities must also consider, when making an employment determination, whether the work of such teams is in fact a project/fully contracted service. If it is not, the off-payroll working rules (commonly referred to as IR35) apply. For example, it is likely that case-holding staff will be considered to be employees for tax purposes, although each engagement will depend on the specific contractual and working arrangements.

This rule will apply to all contractual arrangements to supply social work resource in local authority children's social care. This will include all models described as project teams, irrespective of the precise structure, name or definition of the project team in question. Project teams are generally teams of social workers created or organised by a supplier, sometimes with their own manager and administrative staff, but not necessarily comprising the same individuals at all times, to provide relevant social care services to a local authority under a single contract.

It is important that local authorities are able to engage agency social workers as required to maintain services for children and families and avoid incurring unnecessary expense. We expect agency suppliers to work with local authorities to offer access to agency workers in ways that support effective workforce planning and the best interests of children and families. Most of the responses to the consultation indicated that project teams, or other packaged services, are not appropriate to fulfil the majority of a local authority's agency social worker workforce needs. However, there remains a place for project teams and each local authority's resource needs will depend on their specific circumstances.

We will set out further detail on application of this rule in the consultation in 2024. We will review the efficacy of this approach and remain open to further restrictions on the use of project teams to supply local authority child and family social workers to ensure every model of resourcing social workers supports the best interests of children and families.

Notice periods and cool-off periods

Notice periods

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that local authorities should make provision for a minimum six-week notice period for agency social workers via a reciprocal arrangement between agency workers and local authorities.

Headline consultation findings

The majority of respondents (81%) felt there should be some sort of notice period, with around a quarter (26%) saying it should be a shorter notice period and under one in ten (6%) wanting a longer notice period.

Of the respondents who agreed with the proposal but suggested a shorter time period, most felt it should be of four weeks. Reasons for this included that agency workers are employed on a flexible and short-term basis, and three-months would limit that flexibility. It was also noted that a four-week notice period is in line with other sectors. Some respondents also felt that notice periods should not be longer than those required of substantive staff.

Cool-off periods

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that local authorities should not engage agency workers for a period of three months after they have left a substantive role within the same region. This did not relate to staff moving to substantive roles in other authorities within the region, or workers who may choose to take up an agency assignment in a different region. It also included an exemption for workers who have been made redundant by their last local authority employer.

Headline consultation findings

Three-fifths (60%) of respondents agreed with the proposal that local authorities must not engage agency workers for a specified period after they had left a substantive role. Within this, 7% agreed but with a shorter period of time and 18% agreed but with a longer time period. A third (33%) disagreed. Disagreement was higher amongst individuals (35% compared to 14% from organisations) and especially agency social workers (63%).

We note that support was higher among those responding on behalf of local authorities and individuals who identified as local authority employed staff. Respondents who

identified as agency social workers and those responding on behalf of recruitment agencies were more likely to disagree. Respondents raised concerns that this rule would potentially destabilise the workforce further through exacerbating the current recruitment and retention challenges.

While only 18% of respondents thought there should be a longer cool-off period, local authorities and social worker representative bodies were particularly likely to respond in this way. Of those who thought there should be a longer time period, most said it should be of three to six months or nine to twelve months.

Government response: notice periods and cool-off periods

A stable workforce is vital to enable social workers to build high quality, consistent relationships with children and families. Frequent moves and immediate or quick departures can be detrimental to children and families and increase pressures and demands on the workforce.

Departures of social workers with little or no notice can make it more difficult for local authorities to ensure casework is transitioned smoothly and completed with a high quality handover plan. Similarly, a high number of workers moving from permanent jobs to agency roles within the same region has contributed to increased competition between local authorities and escalating costs.

What we plan to do on notice periods

We will set out in statutory guidance that the notice period for all agency social work assignments in local authority children's social care should align with the local authority's contractual notice period for substantive staff in the same or an equivalent job role.

The notice period should be a reciprocal arrangement between agency workers and the local authority, unless in the case of gross misconduct.

We noted that, while responses regarding the proposal to introduce a notice period were generally positive, a number of responses raised concerns that six weeks is longer than the notice period for substantive staff in many local authorities.

Alignment of notice periods for agency workers with those of substantive staff will therefore take into account differences between local authorities. It will also account for differing notice periods within local authorities dependent on role and circumstance, for example for workers in a probationary period and those in specialist or senior positions.

What we plan to do on cool-off periods

We will set out in statutory guidance that local authorities should not engage agency workers for a minimum period of three months after they have left a substantive role

within the same region. An exemption will apply for workers who have been made redundant by their last local authority employer.

We have taken into account the steps regions have already taken to stabilise the regional workforce. Since the introduction of regional MOUs in 2014,⁶ several regions have operated cool-off periods, of varying lengths, to support stabilisation and regulate competition within the region. We do not wish to undermine these current arrangements and therefore, while we are setting three months as the minimum cool-off period, this rule does not prevent local authorities from deciding not to engage agency social workers for periods of longer than three months after they have left a substantive role within the same region should they wish to do so.

The rule will apply to all social work agency assignments in local authority children's social care including, for example, any project team or packaged service assignments.

The rule will not apply to staff moving to substantive roles in other authorities within the region or to workers who may choose to take up an agency assignment in a different region.

⁶ ADCS. *Agency Social Work MoUs*. <https://adcs.org.uk/workforce/article/agency-social-work-mous>. (Accessed October 2023).

Post-qualifying experience and references

Post-qualifying experience (PQE)

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that to qualify for an agency appointment, social workers who graduated in or after April 2024 should demonstrate a minimum of five years PQE working within local authority children's social care and have completed their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). We also proposed that DfE funding should not be used to support agency social workers in the attainment of their ASYE and sought views on how the PQE rule should be applied to internationally qualified social workers.

Headline consultation findings

The majority (88%) of respondents agreed that there should be a minimum PQE period in local authority children's social care before moving into agency work.

Over half agreed with the proposed five year minimum (53%), whilst over a third agreed with the principle but suggested a different timeframe (35%). This was broadly similar amongst individuals and organisations (53% of individuals and 55% of organisations agreed, whilst 35% of individuals and 36% of organisations disagreed).

Nine-in-ten (90%) respondents agreed that international recruits should demonstrate a minimum level of PQE. Over three-quarters (78%) agreed with the proposal as outlined, whilst a tenth agreed but with some variations (12%).

References

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that local authorities should require and provide references for all agency social worker candidates, including a fully comprehensive reference that relates to the standard of practice of any agency worker at the end of assignments that are three months or longer, using a standardised template.

Headline consultation findings

The majority (87%) of respondents agreed that local authorities should be required to provide references for all candidates, whilst only 9% disagreed. There were no significant differences between the views of organisations and individuals.

Government response: post-qualifying experience and references

We note the high levels of support given from all stakeholders for the proposed introduction of a minimum level of PQE and the standardised use of detailed references for social work agency assignments in local authority children's social care.

Local authorities need confidence that where the use of agency child and family social workers is the most appropriate resourcing option, the individuals put forward for assignments have the skill, experience, and confidence to operate with a high level of independence, across the full range of roles in children's services departments.

The nature of agency assignments allows scope for social workers who demonstrate poor performance or inexperience to leave local authorities without the performance and development issues being addressed, potentially pushing the problem out to other local authorities. Embedding standardised quality assurance measures into agency recruitment supports stability in the workforce by:

- allowing a more comprehensive understanding of a social worker's skills, knowledge, and capability to support local authorities to make better recruitment decisions and address performance and development issues; and
- ensuring agency social workers have the right level of PQE and are therefore more likely to adapt quickly to the role requirements and less likely to leave an assignment early.

What we plan to do on post-qualifying experience

We have listened to respondents who raised concerns that introducing the PQE rule for those qualifying in 2024 onwards would create a two-tier system and have made changes to mitigate against this. Instead of applying the rule to newly qualified workers only, we will make clear in statutory guidance that the PQE minimum will apply to all child and family social workers irrespective of year of first registration. Consequently, we will not include mandatory completion of ASYE, recognising that not all social workers have had access to this programme.

Following careful consideration of the responses that put forward a range of alternative minimum PQE periods, we will proceed with introducing a three-year minimum PQE requirement for all agency child and family social workers.

Several respondents thought that five years was longer than necessary to achieve sufficient practice experience and some raised concerns that mandating five years PQE could have an impact on workforce sufficiency. Therefore, in consideration of the responses received, we have reduced the minimum PQE requirement for agency child and family social workers.

Three years in direct local authority employment ensures that child and family social

workers can develop the broad range of competencies required for statutory social work and undertake employer based early career development programmes such as ASYE and the Early Career Framework.

This change strikes a balance between allowing social workers new to local authority children's services sufficient time to consolidate their learning and understanding in a statutory context without significantly impacting on local authorities' ability to access agency child and family social workers where it is the most appropriate resourcing option.

We welcome the helpful input from respondents on how PQE requirements should apply to social workers who have qualified outside of the United Kingdom. Respondents across all groups expressed high levels of support for internationally qualified social workers completing a minimum level of PQE before being accepted on agency assignment. We agree with respondents who highlighted the need for internationally qualified social workers to have time to adapt and develop their practice in the UK. Therefore, we will make clear in statutory guidance that the PQE minimum will need to be completed in a UK local authority setting and will apply to all social workers irrespective of pathway to the profession.

We have noted that several respondents told us that internationally recruited social workers often require additional support and development to thrive in local authority children's services, with some suggesting that a bespoke induction programme similar to ASYE would be beneficial. We recognise that internationally trained social workers can be an important part of the social work workforce and benefit from an effective support structure to adjust to the specific policies and processes of statutory social work in children's services. We will continue to work with local authorities to better understand how they support internationally trained social workers and explore opportunities for further improvement across the sector.

What we plan to do on references

We have listened carefully to respondents' concerns that detailed references should be provided following all agency assignments and not limited to those of three months or more.

We agree that the rule on using a standardised detailed reference should be strengthened to include assignments of any duration and we will take this revision forward into statutory guidance.

Some respondents raised concerns about the current quality and reliability of detailed references. We will be engaging further with stakeholders ahead of the consultation to develop and refine the technical detail of the statutory guidance to mitigate this potential risk.

Procurement routes

Consultation proposal

In the consultation, we proposed that from spring 2024 all procurement routes used by local authorities to engage agency social workers should comply with the national rules.

We proposed that compliance would be monitored via regular data collection set out in the *Data and Monitoring* consultation proposals, and local and regional spot checks.

Compliance measures proposed in the consultation included:

- Local authorities restricting agencies/recruiters that seek to circumvent the national rules from accessing new vacancies, and excluding them from their preferred supplier lists
- DfE working with central purchasing bodies and others to support embedding compliance within framework agreements

Headline consultation findings

Just under two-thirds (65%) of all respondents agreed that all procurement routes used by local authorities to engage agency social work resource should adhere to the proposed rules, whilst a quarter disagreed (25%). There was a strong correlation between respondents who agreed with introducing national rules in principle and those who agreed that procurement routes should be compliant (93% of those who agreed with the rules in principle agreed that local authorities should ensure compliance across their procurement routes, while 71% of those who disagreed with the rules in principle also disagreed that local authorities should ensure compliance across procurement routes).

Responses from organisations were much more likely to agree than individuals that procurement routes used by local authorities to engage agency social work resource should adhere to the proposed rules (90% compared to 61%). Responses from organisations were also more likely to think the proposed approaches to ensuring compliance would be effective, across the full range of options.

Responses from Public Buying Organisations⁷ (PBO) and Managed Service Providers (MSP) highlighted a risk that introducing new or additional framework agreements into the market, whether national or regional, may require amendments to current contracts and disrupt existing commercial arrangements.

⁷ Also referred to as Central Purchasing Body and Purchasing Organisation in the consultation.

We noted that many respondents commented in this section about the general introduction of rules rather than specifically about the proposal that local authorities should ensure agency procurement routes comply with wider national rules. Furthermore, individuals were more likely than organisations to respond ‘don’t know’ on whether procurement routes should adhere to the proposed rules (11% compared to 4%) and on whether the proposed approaches would be effective at ensuring compliance (19% compared to 9%). This suggests that the proposals in this section were of limited relevance to individual social workers. We recognise that this is an area that could be further clarified.

Government response: procurement routes

Local authorities engage agency social work resource via a range of procurement routes, though consultation responses from organisations, including local authorities, agencies, MSPs and PBOs, make it clear that the majority of such engagement sits within call-off contracts from framework agreements between local authorities and MSPs. Responses also indicate that the majority of local authorities incorporate their spend on agency social work resource into their overarching MSP contract for temporary labour requirements across the council.

As existing framework agreements are well established in the sector, stipulating the use of new framework agreements and removing spend on agency social work resource into specialised contracts has the potential to cause significant disruption to local authority procurement processes. While there is clear benefit to standardising approaches to engaging agency social work resource across local authorities, consultation responses support the view that this can be better achieved by encouraging compliance and minimising off-framework spend across the range of procurement routes open to local authorities than by mandating a single particular route.

We want to facilitate a system in which local authorities can have greater oversight and collaborative management of their agency contracts, and in which agency supply chains support local authorities to comply with the national rules. However, we recognise that contractual arrangements are in place for a number of years and there is variable commercial capacity and unclear oversight of temporary labour supply contracts within children’s services departments in some local authorities. Therefore, moving towards greater standardisation and compliance with the national rules will require a transition period.

What we plan to do

We will set out in statutory guidance that local authorities should ensure all **new** contractual arrangements to supply agency social work resource to local authority children’s social care, including any project team or packaged service assignments, comply with the national rules from the date of their introduction.

Over time, we expect local authorities to ensure all contractual arrangements to supply agency social work resource to local authority children's social care comply with the national rules as soon as is practicable.

This rule will apply to all routes to market that a local authority may use to engage agency social work resource.

Equalities

Consultation proposal

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of any equality issues or of any groups for whom the proposals could have a detrimental or differential impact.

Headline consultation findings

Half of respondents (51%) were not aware of any equality issues. Over a quarter said they were aware of some (26%) and under a quarter (23%) said they did not know.

Agency child and family social workers were more likely to feel that there were equality issues (40%* compared to 15% for substantive local authority employed child and family social workers). Those who disagreed with the national rules in principle were also more likely to report being aware of equality issues (45%* compared to 15% who agreed with the national rules).

Respondents who provided further details highlighted ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, health concerns, or caring responsibilities as groups who might be particularly affected by the proposals. The impact of workplace culture was identified by respondents as an important factor for all workers deciding to leave direct local authority employment to move to agency work.

Government response: equalities

We have considered how the national rules will impact registered social workers and children and families who are supported by the profession. We have completed an assessment of the impacts on social workers against each protected characteristic and identified impacts under age, sex, race and disability.

Responses to the consultation indicated concerns that social workers who may have a need for increased flexibility (including those with caring responsibilities, disabilities or health conditions), and social workers from ethnic minority groups may be affected by the proposals.

The impact of poor workplace culture was a common theme that ran through responses and was an important factor in workers deciding to leave local authority social work to move to agency work. The rules aim to stabilise the workforce and reduce spend on agency resource, giving local authorities the opportunity to free up resource to invest in supporting children and families and enhance the offer to permanent employees.

What we plan to do

Responses show the importance of closely monitoring and understanding impact on equality. Overall, we believe the impact of introducing national rules on agency use is justifiable and that the reduction in the use of agency staff will have a positive impact on children and families in receipt of support from children's services, because overreliance on temporary workers has a negative impact on workforce stability and quality of social work practice, and is not financially sustainable for local authorities.

It will be important to monitor the equalities impact of the national rules following implementation, so that appropriate action can be taken if any significant adverse impact should arise.

We will be working with local government so that social workers currently employed by recruitment agencies and working in local authorities can be offered the opportunity to transition to permanent staff. We want to ensure that there is a simple and effective means to complete the transition of those agency workers who wish to transition to substantive local authority employment.

In *Built on Love* we committed to creating a national virtual hub to identify and spread evidence-based practice to retain social workers. It will contain resources to improve working conditions, including on health, wellbeing and flexible working. We have set up a National Workload Action Group (NWAG) to tackle unnecessary workload and burnout, and have procured Research in Practice (RiP) to lead on this work. RiP possess a significant understanding of child and family social work practice, workload drivers, and social worker retention challenges. They are established in the field, with strong sector connections and bring with them an accomplished team of academic experts.

Through the creation of a cross-sector pledge, we will work with the sector to develop a set of key commitments that builds on work already taking place to tackle social worker retention challenges. We will also review and strengthen the language in the Children's Social Care National Framework which will be issued as statutory guidance by the end of the year. We will ensure that language in the revised National Framework about the social work workforce is more inspirational, includes a focus on the ongoing professional development for the whole children's social care workforce and will set out what conditions are needed so that the workforce is supported to develop in their practice and provide the very best support to children and families.

Next steps

This document sets out our response to the *child and family social worker workforce consultation*. We will consult on draft statutory guidance to underpin the national rules in spring 2024. Subject to this consultation, we expect local authorities to comply with that statutory guidance in autumn 2024.

In the longer term, we will review the efficacy of the national rules and carry out a further consultation prior to the introduction of any further restrictions to the use of project teams or replacement of regionally determined price caps with new centrally determined price caps.

We are grateful for all the comments that we received as part of this consultation and will use them to help shape the consultation on draft statutory guidance. We will also be engaging further with stakeholders ahead of the consultation to develop and refine the technical detail of the statutory guidance.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

- Acacium Group
- Achieving for Children
- Association of Directors of Childrens Services (ADCS)
- Association of Professional Staffing Companies (Global) Ltd (APSCo)
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Council
- Birmingham Children's Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Bournemouth Christchurch Poole Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Bristol City Council
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- Buckinghamshire Council
- CFS Care
- Charles Hunter Associates
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- City of Wolverhampton Council's
- Comensura
- Connect2Hampshire
- Connect2Kent
- Connect2Luton
- Connect2Surrey
- Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)
- County Councils Network

- Coventry City Council Children's Services
- Croydon Council
- Devon County Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Durham County Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Enfield Council
- Essex County Council
- Ghanaian Social Workers Union
- Hampshire County Council
- Hays
- Herefordshire Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Kent County Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- London Borough of Brent
- London Innovation & Improvement Alliance (LIIA) (RIIA)
- Milton Keynes City Council
- National Principal Child and Family Social Work Network
- Newcastle City Council
- Norfolk County Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- North Tyneside Council
- North West ADCS

- North Yorkshire Council
- Northeast Lincolnshire Council
- Northeast Procurement Organisation (NEPO)
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Ofsted
- Oldham Council
- Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)
- Redbridge Council
- Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
- Reed
- Reed Talent Solutions
- Regional Adoption Agency
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sandwell Children's Trust
- Service Care Solutions
- Sheldon Phillips
- Skills for Care
- Slough Children First
- Social Work England
- Social Workers Union (SWU)
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Southend on Sea City Council
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Surrey County Council
- Thurrock Council
- Together for Children

- Torbay Children's Services
- Tripod Partners Ltd
- UNISON
- Wakefield Council
- Wandsworth Borough Council
- Warrington Council
- West Berkshire Children and Family Services
- West Midlands Regional Directors for Children's Services
- Westminster City Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Wirral Council
- Worcestershire Children First
- Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO)



Department
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