



Department
for Education

Research Brief

DFE-RBX-10-13a

June 2012

Social work improvement fund – summary report on activity 2010-12: appendices

1 LOCAL AUTHORITIES' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL'S [CWDC's] SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME [2010 -2012]

1.1 Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) project

1.1.1 Findings from fourth SWIF visit – first quarter 2012

Of 152 local authorities 146 were taking part in the NQSW project in 2011/12. Overall 99 per cent of authorities taking part reported a positive impact, with 104 of these [68 per cent] reporting 'high impact'. Only two authorities said it was too early to say if the project was having any impact.

1.1.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

The percentage of participating authorities reporting a positive impact has been very high for each of the four visits. The most significant change is the visit on visit increase in the percentage of local authorities now reporting a 'high' impact for the project. Seventy two per cent of those participating in the NQSW project [68 per cent of all local authorities] reported 'high impact' compared with 47 per cent at visit one in 2010-11, possibly reflecting the fact that the programme has now become far more embedded in practice¹ [Table 1].

¹ This will be explored in the programme evaluation which will be available in early Summer 2012.

Table 1: Impact of the NQSW project

	2010 - 11						2011 - 12					
	Visit 1			Visit 2			Visit 1			Visit 2		
	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs
Having a high impact	68	45%	47%	84	56%	58%	98	64%	68%	104	68%	71%
Having some impact	69	46%	47%	59	39%	41%	45	30%	31%	40	26%	27%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	137	91%	95%	143	95%	99%	143	94%	99%	144	95%	99%
Too early to say	8	5%	5%	2	1%	1%	2	1%	1%	2	1%	1%
No impact	1	<1%	<1%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
Not taking part	5	3%		6	4%		7	5%		6	4%	
TOTAL	151 / 100%			151 / 100%			152 / 100%			152 / 100%		

1.2 Early Professional Development (EPD) project

1.2.1 Findings from fourth SWIF visit – first quarter 2012

One hundred and thirty four authorities were involved in the EPD project in 2011-12 and 85 per cent of EPD participating authorities said the project was having an impact. The remaining participating authorities [n=20 / 15 per cent] indicated that it was ‘too early to say’ [Table 2].

1.2.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

Since the first visit in 2010-11 the number of authorities participating in the EPD has steadily increased. Following the most recent SWIF visit in early 2012 134 local authorities were now taking part in the EPD programme compared with 101 at the very first visit. The percentage of participating authorities reporting a positive impact has also increased after each visit with 85 per cent of participating authorities now reporting a positive impact, an increase of 32 per cent since the first visit in 2010-11. The percentage of local authorities reporting a high impact has also increased within the same period, from 14 to 27 per cent² [Table 2].

² The experiences of local authorities' engagement with EPD will be explored in the evaluation report – available late Summer 2012.

Table 2: The impact of the EPD project

	2010 - 11						2011 - 12					
	Visit 1			Visit 2			Visit 1			Visit 2		
	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs
Having a high impact	14	9%	14%	19	13%	17%	35	23%	27%	36	24%	27%
Having some impact	40	26%	40%	53	35%	46%	63	41%	48%	78	51%	58%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	54	36%	53%	72	48%	63%	98	64%	75%	114	75%	85%
Too early to say	46	30%	46%	40	26%	35%	31	20%	24%	20	13%	15%
No impact	1	<1%	1%	2	1%	1%	1	<1%	<1%	0	-	-
Not taking part	50	33%		37	25%		22	14%		18	12%	
TOTAL	151 / 100%			151 / 100%			152 / 100%			152 / 100%		

1.3 Support to Frontline Managers project

1.3.1 Findings from fourth SWIF visit – first quarter 2012

By 2011-12 122 local authorities were involved in the Support to Frontline Managers project with over three quarters saying it was having an impact, with the remaining authorities [n = 26 / 17 per cent] saying that it was ‘too early to say’ [Table 3].

1.3.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

The number of authorities participating in the Support to Front Line Managers project increased from 83 to 122 between the first and final visits. The percentage of these reporting a positive impact also increased from 58 per cent to 79 per cent [Table 3].

Table 3: The impact of the Support to Front Line Managers project

	2010 - 11						2011 - 12					
	Visit 1			Visit 2			Visit 1			Visit 2		
	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs
Having a high impact	23	15%	28%	23	15%	28%	35	23%	33%	41	27%	34%
Having some impact	25	17%	30%	38	25%	47%	46	30%	43%	55	36%	45%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	48	32%	58%	61	40%	75%	81	53%	76%	96	63%	79%
Too early to say	34	23%	41%	20	13%	25%	24	16%	23%	26	17%	21%
No impact	1	<1%	1%	0	-	-	1	<1%	<1%	0	-	-
Not taking part	68	45%		70	46%		46	30%		30	20%	
TOTAL	151 / 100%			151 / 100%			152 / 100%			152 / 100%		

1.4 Step Up to Social Work

1.4.1 Findings from fourth SWIF visit – first quarter 2012

The Step Up to Social Work project started in September 2010 and the first cohort of students will complete their training in March 2012, a second cohort of students started in February 2012. Eight regional partnerships made up of 42 local authorities were involved with the first cohort. Ten regional partnerships comprising a total of 55 local authorities are involved in the second cohort. Of these, 33 local authorities were involved in both cohort 1 and 2 while 22 local authorities were involved in cohort two only. At the time of the second SWIF visit in 2011-2012 a total of 64 local authorities were participating in the Step Up to Social Work project [Table 4a]. Over half [n=34] of participating authorities said Step Up to Social Work was having an impact. Of the remaining participating authorities, 23 thought it was 'too early to say' and one reported no impact. A response to the question on impact was not provided by six local authorities [Table 4b].

Table 4a: Participation in Step Up to Social Work by cohort

Cohort	Number of LAs
Cohort 1 only	9
Cohort 1 and 2	33
Cohort 1 Total	42
Cohort 2 only	22
Cohort 2 Total	55
Total LAs participating	64

1.4.2 Key changes between visits – 2010-12

The number of local authorities participating in the Step Up to Social Work project has increased since the first visit in 2011-12 with 64 local authorities now involved compared with 42. When viewing the figures on impact it is important to note that for a small number of authorities at each visit the impact question was not completed, even though they were engaged with the project. While the percentage of all local authorities reporting a positive impact has increased by 7 per cent from the very first visit, the percentage of those taking part in the programme and reporting a positive impact has fallen from a high of 69 per cent at visit two in 2010-11 to 53 per cent at visit 4. There has also been a subsequent increase from the second visit in 201-11 in the percentage of authorities reporting that it is 'too early to say' if the programme is having an impact, although this figure has remained consistent in 2011-12 [Table 4b].

Table 4b: Impact of the Step Up to Social Work Project

	2010 - 11						2011 - 12					
	Visit 1			Visit 2			Visit 1			Visit 2		
	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs	N	% of all LAs	% of engaged LAs
Having a high impact	6	4%	14%	6	4%	14%	10	7%	16%	16	11%	25%
Having some impact	16	11%	38%	23	15%	55%	21	14%	33%	18	12%	28%
Subtotal of those reporting a positive impact	22	15%	52%	29	19%	69%	31	20%	48%	34	22%	53%
Too early to say	16	11%	38%	9	6%	14%	23	15%	36%	23	15%	36%
No impact	2	1%	5%	2	1%	5%	2	1%	3%	1	<1%	2%
No response to question on impact	2	1%	5%	2	1%	5%	8	5%	13%	6	4%	9%
Not taking part	109	72%		109	72%		88	58%		88	58%	
TOTAL	151 / 100%			151 / 100%			152 / 100%			152 / 100%		

2 LOCAL AUTHORITIES' PROGRESS IN USING THE HEALTH CHECK OR SIMILAR TOOL

Following the publication of the final report of the Social Work Task Force in November 2009³ employers of social workers were encouraged to use the 'health check', or a similar tool, which was designed to help assess vacancy rates and caseloads.

The five key areas of the 'health check' are effective workload management; pro-active workflow management; having the right tools to do the job; a healthy work place; and effective service delivery. During the SWIF advisor visits local authorities were invited to assess on a defined scale the progress they had made towards each key area. The scale provided the following three options: 'on top of', 'making progress with' and 'no progress'.

2.1 Local authority use

2.1.2 Findings from visit two 2011-12 -first quarter 2012

Nearly all local authorities [n=136 / 89 per cent] were using the health check or similar tool with the overwhelming majority finding it useful.

2.1.3 Key changes between visits - 2010 to 2012

Data from the final visit show that the percentage of authorities using the health check or similar has increased from 78 per cent to 89 per cent over the 18 months between the first and fourth visits. At each visit nearly all local authorities have reported finding the

³ <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-01114-2009>

health check or similar tool helpful. [Table 5]. As with previous visits strategic and operational managers were most likely to be using the health check [Table 6].

Table 5: Use of the health check or similar tool

	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not helpful	Not using	Total
Visit 1 2010-11	56 LAs / 37%	59 LAs / 39%	3 LAs / 2%	33 LAs / 22%	151 LAs / 100%
Visit 2 2010-11	58 LAs / 38%	65 LAs / 43%	2 LAs / 1%	26 LAs / 17%	151 LAs / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	51 LAs / 34%	82 LAs / 54%	3 LAs / 2%	16 LAs / 11%	152 LAs / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	61 LAs / 40%	70 LAs / 46%	5 LAs / 3%	16 LAs / 11%	152 LAs / 100%

Table 6: Roles using the health check or similar tool

	DCS	Operational managers	Strategic managers	Senior practitioners	HR teams	Frontline teams
Visit 1 2010-11	In 36 LAs	In 57 LAs	In 102 LAs	In 27 LAs	In 35 LAs	In 29 LAs
Visit 2 2010-11	In 38 LAs	In 59 LAs	In 113 LAs	In 31 LAs	In 40 LAs	In 34 LAs
Visit 1 2011-12	In 44 LAs	In 67 LAs	In 106 LAs	In 32 LAs	In 35 LAs	In 34 LAs
Visit 2 2011-12	In 46 LAs	In 64 LAs	In 113 LAs	In 32 LAs	In 33 LAs	In 31 LAs

2.2 Workload management

2.2.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

The local authorities were asked to assess on a defined three point scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress on workload management. The majority [n=100 / 66 per cent] stated that they were 'making some progress' and 50 [33 per cent] reported that they were 'on top of it' [Table 7]. Two thirds of all authorities [n=103] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences

2.2.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

Overall, the figures for reporting progress towards workload management have remained relatively consistent across the four SWIF advisor visits. However, there has been an eight per cent increase in the percentage of local authorities now considered 'on top of' workload management between the first and final visits – 25 per cent to 33 per cent [Table 7]. Two authorities reported having made no progress towards improved workload management and thought that any of the suggested resources – case materials, mentoring or web-based tool – would help with this.

2.2.3 What had helped to support progress

In response to a request to identify the factors that had supported progress in workload management mentoring emerged as the most significant [Table 8].

Table 7: Progress with workload management

	On top of workload management	Making progress with workload management	No progress with workload management	TOTAL
Visit 1 2010-11	37 LAs / 25%	110 LAs / 73%	4 LAs / 3%	151 / 100%
Visit 2 2010-11	40 LAs / 26%	109 LAs / 72 %	2 LAs / 1%	151 / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	42 LAs / 28%	109 LAs / 72%	1 LA / <1 %	152 / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	50 LAs / 33%	100 LAs / 66%	2 LAs / 1%	152 / 100%

Table 8: Factors supporting progress with workload management

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
In 34 LAs	In 51 LAs	In 25 LAs

2.3 Workflow management

2.3.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

The local authorities were asked to assess on a defined three point scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress on workflow management. The majority [n = 108 / 71 per cent] stated that they were making progress and remaining 44 authorities [29 per cent] reported that they were 'on top of it'. Just under two thirds of local authorities thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences

2.3.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

There was very little change in relation to workflow management responses with nearly all local authorities either ‘on top of’ or ‘making progress’. However it is worth noting that the number of local authorities reporting ‘no progress’ has fallen from five at the first visit in 2010-11 to zero at the final visit in early 2012 [Table 9].

2.3.3 What had helped to support progress

Mentoring emerged as the most significant factor in supporting progress in managing workflow – mentioned by a quarter of respondents, but case materials were mentioned by nearly as many [Table 10].

Table 9: Progress with workflow management

	On top of workflow management	Making progress with workflow	No progress with workflow management	TOTAL
Visit 1 2010-11	41 LAs / 27%	104 LAs / 69%	5 LAs / 3%	150 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	43 LAs / 28%	102 LAs / 68%	6 LAs / 4%	151 / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	40 LAs / 26%	111 LAs / 73%	1 LA / 1%	152 / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	44 LAs / 29%	108 LAs / 71%	0	152 / 100%

*Figures sum 150 as one non-respondent.

Table 10: Factors supporting progress with workflow management

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
37 LAs	39 LAs	29 LAs

2.4 Making progress with right tools to do the job

2.4.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

The local authorities were asked to assess on a defined three point scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress on having the right tools to do the job. The majority [n=108 / 72 per cent] stated that they were making progress and 41 authorities [27 per cent] reported that they were 'on top of it' [Table 11]. Just over three fifths of local authorities [93 out of 149] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences. Only one authority said it had not made any progress and thought that case materials and mentoring would help.

2.4.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

As with workload and workflow management the vast majority of local authorities in 2010-11 report they are 'making progress' towards having the right tools to do the job and the figures are broadly consistent across the visits. Overall, between the first and final visits there has been a slight increase - four per cent - in the proportion of authorities claiming to be 'on top of' having the right tools to do the job, although at the first visit in 2011-12 the percentage dipped to 21 per cent but then increased to 27 per cent by the start of 2012 [Table 11].

2.4.3 What had helped to support progress

When asked what had supported those authorities which had made progress to do so case materials were the most frequently identified factor [Table 12].

Table 11: Progress with right tools to do the job

	On top of having the right tools to do the job	Making progress with having the right tools to do the job	No progress with having the right tools to do the job	TOTAL*
Visit 1 2010-11	34 LAs / 23%	113 LAs / 75%	3 LAs / 2%	150 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	40 LAs / 26%	107 LAs / 71%	3 LAs / 2%	150 / 100%*
Visit 1 2011-12	32 LAs / 21%	118 LAs / 78%	1 LA / <1%	151 / 100%*
Visit 2 2011-12	41 LAs / 27%	108 LAs / 72%	1 LA / <1%	150 / 100%*

*Figures sum to <151 and <152 due to non-respondents.

Table 12: Factors supporting progress with applying right tools

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
38 LAs	33 LAs	33 LAs

2.5 Making progress with a healthy workplace

2.5.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

The local authorities were asked to assess on a defined three point scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress with creating a healthy workplace. The majority [n = 106 / 70 per cent] stated that they were making progress and 45 authorities [30 per cent] reported that they were 'on top of' it. Two thirds of local authorities thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences. One authority said they had not made any progress but did not comment on the support needed to help them to do so.

2.5.2 Key changes between visits - 2010 to 2012

There was also little overall change in responses to progress towards achieving a healthy workplace, although by the final visit there had been a seven per cent increase in authorities 'on top of' this issue from 23 per cent to 30 per cent of authorities.

2.5.3 What had helped to support progress

Mentoring was most frequently identified as the factor that had supported progress towards achieving a healthy workplace [Table 14].

Table 13: Progress towards achievement of a healthy workplace

	On top of a healthy workplace	Making progress with a healthy workplace	No progress with a healthy workplace	TOTAL
Visit 1 2010-11	35 LAs / 23%	110 LAs / 74%	4 LAs / 3%	149 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	42 LAs / 28%	107 LAs / 71%	2 LAs / 1%	151 / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	40 LAs / 26%	110 LAs / 72%	2 LAs / 2%	152 / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	45 LAs / 30%	106 LAs / 70%	1 LA / <1%	152 / 100%

*Figures sum to <151 due to non-respondents.

Table 14: Factors supporting progress towards achievement of a healthy workplace

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
33 LAs	52 LAs	27 LAs

2.6 Making progress with effective service delivery

2.6.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

The local authorities were asked to assess on a defined three point scale the extent to which they considered they were making progress with effective service delivery. Three quarters [n = 114 / 75 per cent] stated that they were making progress and the remaining 38 [25 per cent] reported that they were 'on top of it'. Two thirds of all local authorities [n=101] thought that others would be able to learn from their experiences.

2.6.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

The figures in relation to effective service delivery remained relatively constant between visits. By the time of the final visit, all authorities reported that were either 'on top of' or 'making progress' with effective service delivery.

2.6.3 What had helped to support progress

Case materials and mentoring were said to have provided the most support in improving service delivery.

Table 15: Progress towards effective service delivery

	On top of effective service delivery	Making progress with effective service delivery	No progress with effective service delivery	TOTAL
Visit 1 2010-11	35 LAs / 23%	112 LAs / 75%	2 LA / 1%	149 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	41 LAs / 27%	108 LAs / 72%	1 LA / <1%	150 / 100%*
Visit 1 2011-12	40 LAs / 26%	110 LAs / 72%	2 LAs / 1%	152 / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	38 LAs / 25%	114 LAs / 75%	0	152 / 100%

*Figures sum to <151 due to non-respondents.

Table 16: Factors supporting effective service delivery

Case materials	Mentoring	Web resources
47	46	26

3 LOCAL AUTHORITIES PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING A STABLE SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE

3.1 Agency staff

3.1.1 Findings from visit two 2010-11 - first quarter 2012

Local authorities were asked to estimate the percentage of their social workers who were agency staff and these estimates are recorded in Table 17. As there are 27 responses missing from visit two 2011-12 some caution is needed when viewing these latest findings. Of the 125 respondents, the majority [n=99] estimated the percentage of agency staff as between 0-10 per cent.

3.1.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

Overall there has been very little change in the estimated percentage of agency social workers reported by local authorities. In each of the four visits the majority of contributing local authorities, approximately three quarters, have reported between 0-10 per cent agency staff. Over the four visits there has also been a slight reduction in the percentage of authorities reporting 21-30 per cent agency staff. In each of the years, the number of authorities reporting over 50 per cent agency social workers has fallen from four at visit one to one at visit two.

Table 17: Proportion of agency social work staff

	0-10 per cent	11-20 per cent	21-30 per cent	31-40 per cent	41-50 per cent	50+	Total responses
Visit 1 2010-11	106 LAs / 74%	22 LAs / 15%	10 LAs / 7%	1 LA / <1%	0	4 LAs / 3%	143 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	111 LAs / 76%	24 LAs / 16%	9 LAs / 6%	1 LA / <1%	0	1 LA / <1%	146 / 100%*
Visit 1 2011-12	92 LAs / 72%	25 LAs / 20%	6 LAs / 5%	1 LA / <1%	0	4 LAs / 3%	128 / 100%*
Visit 2 2011-12	99 LAs / 79%	21 LAs / 17%	2 LAs / 2%	2 LAs / 2%	0	1 LA / <1%	125 / 100%*

*Figures sum to <151 or <152 due to non-respondents.

3.2 Unfilled frontline social work posts

3.2.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

Authorities were asked to provide details of the percentage of unfilled frontline social work posts and these estimates are recorded in Table 18. As with the data on agency staff, the high proportion of missing responses from visits in 2011-12 mean that these findings should be viewed with caution. Of the 108 respondents, 97 local authorities estimated that there were 0-10 per cent unfilled frontline social work posts.

3.2.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

There has been very little change in the estimated percentage of unfilled frontline social work posts reported by local authorities. In each of the four visits the majority of contributing local authorities reported between 0-10 per cent unfilled frontline posts. This figure

increased slightly from 85 per cent to 90 per cent of responding authorities between the first and last visits, but the lower response rates in 2011-12 would make it unwise to rely on any comparisons unwise.

Table 18: Unfilled social worker posts

	0-10 per cent	11-20 per cent	21-30 per cent	31-40 per cent	41-50 per cent	50+	Total responses
Visit 1 2010-11	122 LAs / 85%	20 LAs / 14%	1 LA / <1%	0	1 LA / <1%	0	144 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	126 LAs / 85%	20 LAs / 14%	1 LA / <1%	0	1 LA / <1%	0	148 / 100%*
Visit 1 2011-12	94 LAs / 88%	11 LAs / 10%	2 LAs / 2%	0	0	0	107 / 100%*
Visit 2 2011-12	97 LAs / 90%	9 LAs / 8%	1 LA / <1%	0	1 LA / <1%	0	108 / 100%*

*Figures sum to <151 or <152 due to non-respondents.

3.3 Caseloads of social workers

3.3.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

Local authorities were asked to provide details of the average number of cases held by a social worker who had been qualified for two to three years and these details are recorded in Table 19. Just over three fifths [n = 94 / 62 per cent] of responding authorities said that the average number of cases held by a social worker was between 11-20 cases with about a third [n = 51 / 34 per cent] of

authorities selecting between 21-30 cases. Seven authorities said the number of cases held was between 0-10, while, one authority reported the number to be 31-40 cases, but no authorities reported that social workers were holding over 40 cases⁴.

3.3.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

At each of the SWIF visits between 2010 and 2012 the majority of authorities reported social worker caseloads as being between 21-30 cases, although over the same period there has been a seven per cent decrease in the number of authorities reporting that a social worker would carry an average number of 21-30 cases [Table 19].

Table 19: Reported caseloads of social workers

	0-10 cases	11-20 cases	21-30 cases	31-40 cases	40+ cases	Total responses
Visit 1 2010-11	5 LAs / 3%	76 LAs / 53%	57 LAs / 40%	5 LAs / 3%	1 LA / <1%	144 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	14 LAs / 9%	80 LAs / 53%	54 LAs / 36%	3 LAs / 2%	0	151 / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	6 LAs / 4%	88 LAs / 58%	57 LAs / 38%	1 LA / <1%	0	152 / 100%
Visit 2 2011-12	7 LAs / 5%	94 LAs / 62%	50 LAs / 33%	1 LA / <1%	0	152 / 100%

*Figures <151 due to non-respondents.

⁴ It is important to treat these figures with caution as there is no information on the definition of what constituted a ‘case’

3.4 Caseloads of social worker managers

3.4.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

Local authorities were asked to provide details of the average number of cases held by managers [see Table 20]. Nearly all responding authorities, 146 out of 151, reported that managers were holding between 0-10 cases. Of the remaining five, four selected between 11-20 cases and one between 31-40 cases.

3.4.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

At each of the four visits the vast majority of authorities said that managers were holding between 0-10 cases, with 97 per cent of authorities selecting this option at the final visit. Between visits one and two in 2010-11 there was a small increase, from four to six local authorities, reporting an average of over 40 cases being held by managers, but during the two 2011-12 visits no local authorities reported managers holding over 40 cases.

Table 20: Reported caseloads of social worker managers

	0-10 cases	11-20 cases	21-30 cases	31-40 cases	40+ cases	Total responses
Visit 1 2010-11	132 LAs / 91%	7 LAs / 5%	1 LA / 1%	1 LA / 3%	4 LA s / 3%	145 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	139 LAs / 93%	3 LAs / 2%	0	1 LA / 2%	6 LAs / 4%	149 / 100%*
Visit 1 2011-12	149LAs / 99%	2 LAs / 1%	0	0	0	151 / 100%*
Visit 2 2011-12	146 LAs / 97%	4 LAs / 3%	0	1 LA / <1%	0	151 / 100%*

*Figures <151 or <152 due to non-respondents.

3.5 Unallocated cases⁵

3.5.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 - first quarter 2012

Local authorities were asked to provide details of number of unallocated cases in the past month and these details are recorded in Table 21. The majority [86 per cent] of local authorities reported that there had been between 0-10 unallocated cases in the past month. Eight per cent of responding local authorities [n=12] reported between 11-20 unallocated cases and three per cent [n=5] said that over 50 cases were unallocated.

3.5.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

In each of the four visits the percentage of responding local authorities reporting 0-10 unallocated cases has remained largely consistent. The number of authorities reporting between 31-50 unallocated cases has remained at zero from the second visit in 2010-11 onwards. However, at each of the four visits five local authorities have reported over 50 unallocated cases. [Table 21]

⁵ These data seem very low – possibly reflecting higher thresholds so again need for caution.

Table 21: Unallocated cases

	0-10 cases	11-20 cases	21-30 cases	31-40 cases	41-50 cases	50+ cases	Total
Visit 1 2010-11	124 LAs / 84%	8 LAs / 5%	5 LAs / 3%	2 LAs / 1%	3 LAs / 2%	5 LAs / 3%	147 / 100%*
Visit 2 2010-11	128 LAs / 85%	14 LAs / 9%	4 LAs / 3%	0	0	5 LAs / 3%	151 / 100%
Visit 1 2011-12	125 LAs / 86%	12 LAs / 8%	3 LAs / 2%	0	0	5 LAs / 3%	145 / 100%*
Visit 2 2011-12	127 LAs / 86%	12 LAs / 8%	3 LAs / 2%	0	0	5 LAs / 3%	147 / 100%*

*Figures <151 or <152 due to non-respondents.

4 CHALLENGES FACING LOCAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 Challenges

At each of the four visits local authorities were asked to identify - from the list below - the three most challenging issues which they considered faced the social work workforce in their authorities.

- Effective workload management
- Proactive workflow management
- Having the right tools
- Achieving a healthy work place
- Effective service delivery

The most frequently selected challenge has been effective workload management at all four visits, but over the four visits the percentage selecting this option has fallen. At the time of the first visit in 2010-11 66 per cent of responding local authorities identified workload management as the most challenging issue but the findings from the most recent visit show that this has fallen to 53 per cent. In the same period there has been an increase in authorities selecting pro-active workflow management as the most challenging issue, rising from 15 per cent to 24 per cent at the final visit.

4.2 Ways of addressing challenges

Local authorities were then asked to identify one factor from a list that would help to address these challenges. Far fewer responses were received in reply to this request but the most frequent of these are recorded in Table 22.

Table 22: Ways of addressing challenges

Challenge	Addressed by:	No of LAs
Effective workload management	Improving supervision sessions for all social work staff	13
	Reducing the numbers of cases held by each full time equivalent	10
	Managing the average hours worked by staff on a weekly basis	8
	Improving opportunities for attendance at CPD	8
	Developing additional responsibilities for staff e.g. student on placement, acting as mentor to other team members, undertaking action research	8
	Improving vacancy rates – agency	7
	Reducing turnover rates	5
	Covering posts which are filled but where staff are absent- e.g. long term sick, maternity leave	4
	Improving vacancy rates-current unfilled posts	3
	Reducing current levels of TOIL and/or leave to be taken by team members	3
Proactive workflow management	Making best use of skills within teams and wider service	31
	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	15

	Managing changes in work flow over time (peaks and troughs)	11
	Reducing the number of unallocated cases	9
	Reducing re-referral rates	8
	Reducing delays in transfer of cases between teams	7
	Reducing the need for social workers to cancel meetings with people who use services/other professionals in an average week	3
	Ensuring quality of risk assessment for unallocated cases	1
	Improving escalation process for unallocated cases and alerts to senior managers	1
Having the right tools	Improving access to resources	20
	Improving access to equipment	13
	Improving access to professional services	5
A healthy workforce	Establishing a system to ensure quality of supervision	18
	Improving 360 degree appraisal	6
	Ensuring quality of team meetings	2
	Developing a system for managing stress levels	2
	Developing a staff welfare process	1
	Addressing sickness levels and patterns and trends	1
	Embedding a whistle blowing process	1
	Improving visibility of senior managers	1
Effective service delivery	Establishing a system to respond to feedback from service users, stakeholders/other professionals	15
	Establishing a system to respond to findings from compliments, comments and complaints	5
	Establishing a system to respond to staff survey results	4
	Establishing a system to respond to exit interview analysis	1

4.3 Use of SWIF

4.3.1 Findings from visit two 2011-12 – first quarter 2012

Local authorities were asked how they plan to use or have used the Social Work Improvement Fund allocation. Five option areas (plus 'Other') were provided and their responses are captured in Table 23. The majority of local authorities in visit two 2011-12 [n=94] stated that SWIF was being used for social work staff. Twenty eight authorities were using SWIF on 'other' activities but these have not been recorded.

Table 23

SWIF used or will be used for:	Visit 1 2010-11	Visit 2 2010-11	Visit 1 2011-12	Visit 2 2011-12
Social work staff	110 LAs / 74%	108 LAs / 72%	89 LAs / 59%	94 LAs / 62%
Other staff	14 LAs / 9%	12 LAs / 8%	11 LAs / 7%	15 LAs / 10%
Restructuring	13 LAs / 9%	15 LAs / 10%	11 LAs / 7%	5 LAs / 3%
IT solutions	10 LAs / 7%	12 LAs / 8%	8 LAs / 5%	8 LAs / 5%
Capital expenditure or equipment	2 LAs / 1%	2 LAs / 1%	0	2 LAs / 1%
Other	0	1 LA / <1%	33 LAs / 22%	28 LAs / 18%
Total responses	149 / 100%*	150 / 100%*	152 / 100%	152 / 100%

*Figures <151 due to non-respondents

4.3.2 Key changes between visits – 2010 to 2012

In each of the four visits the majority of authorities reported that they were spending SWIF on social work staff. The most notable change since the first visit in 2010-11 has been the large increase in authorities reporting 'other' in year two with twenty eight local authorities now selecting this option.

Additional Information

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/>

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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.