



Department
for Education

Children's social work workforce census, year ending 30 September 2026

Guide for local authorities - version 1.0

December 2025

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Version History

Version	Comments	Date
1.0	Baseline version <ul style="list-style-type: none">Roll over of dates	November 2025

Statutory basis of return

The individual-level collection of data on the children's social work workforce is a statutory requirement on local authorities in England, through Section 83 of the Children Act 1989.

This return is mandatory and replaces the aggregated local authority-level return made prior to 2017.

Data protection and data sharing

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) mandate certain safeguards regarding the use of personal data by organisations, including DfE and local authorities. Both give rights to those (known as data subjects) about whom data is processed, such as children, parents and staff. These rights include (amongst other information that DfE is obliged to provide) the right to know:

- the types of data being held
- why it is being held
- to whom it may be communicated

As data processors and controllers in their own right, it is important that local authorities process all data (not just that collected for the purposes of the census) in accordance with the full requirements of the UK GDPR. Further information on the UK GDPR can be found in the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) overview of the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#).

Legal duties under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018: privacy notices

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how schools and local authorities will process their personal data is a key element of UK GDPR and the DPA 2018. The most common way to provide such information is through a privacy notice. See the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website for [further guidance on privacy notices](#).

DfE provides suggested wording for [privacy notices](#) that local authorities may wish to use. However, where the suggested wording is used, you must review and amend the wording to reflect local business needs and circumstances. This is especially important, as local authorities will process data that is not solely for use within census data collections.

It is recommended that the privacy notice:

- is included as part of an induction pack for staff
- features on the staff notice board or intranet

Privacy notices do not need to be issued on an annual basis, where:

- new staff are made aware of the notices
- the notices have not been amended
- they are readily available in electronic or paper format

However it is important that any changes made to the way the local authority processes personal data are highlighted to data subjects.

Legal duties under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018: data security

Local authorities have a legal duty under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 to ensure that any personal data they process is handled and stored securely. Further information on data security is available from the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

Where personal data is not properly safeguarded, it could compromise the safety of individuals and damage a local authority's reputation. Your responsibility as a data controller extends to those who have access to your data beyond your organisation where they are working on your behalf – for example, where external IT suppliers can remotely access your information.

It is vital that all staff with access to personal data understand the importance of:

- protecting personal data
- being familiar with your security policy
- putting security procedures into practice

As such, local authorities should provide appropriate initial and refresher training for their staff.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This is the 14th annual statutory census collection of data on the children's social work workforce. The census collects information from local authorities in England on the social workers and agency workers they employ within their children's services department. This year's census collects data for the period 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026.

The census opens on Thursday 1 October 2026, with census submissions by 16:00 Friday 30 October 2026.

The database closure date is 16:00 Friday 4 December 2026.

Although we strongly urge you to submit by 30 October 2026 so our service desk has time to cleanse your data and contact you if needed for amendments. This allows local authorities time to resolve any 'Same SWE, different person' instances that may occur.

The count date for this year's collection is 30 September 2026. If this date falls on a non-working day, please record the position as at the last working day of September.

1.2 Changes to the 2025 to 2026 children's social work workforce census

- There are no changes to the 2025/26 collection

1.3 Definition of a child and family social worker

For the purposes of this collection, a child and family social worker is defined as:

"A social worker who is registered with Social Work England (SWE), formerly the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), working in a local authority in a children's services department or, if working in an authority where the services are joined up, a social worker that works primarily on children and families work."

Include all child and family social workers regardless of their position in the organisation, excluding the Director of Children's Services.

Include for all areas of child and family social work, those who are:

- Maternity/Paternity leave
- Other paid absence, for example compassionate leave or annual leave
- Paid absence for public duties, for example jury duty
- Seconded into your organisation
- Sick leave

- Training
- Unauthorised absence
- Unpaid authorised absence, for example sabbatical leave

Include child and family social workers working in all aspects of child and family social work. This includes the following job roles:

- Senior Manager (for example, Area Director)
- Middle Manager (for example, Service Manager or Principal Social Worker)
- First Line Manager (for example Team Manager)
- Senior Practitioner (working in a local authority in a children's services department as a team leader, supervising social worker or senior social worker)
- Case Holder (any other social worker that manages cases; the definition of case can be found below)
- All other qualified and registered social workers, including those without cases (for example Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), Chairs of Child Protection Conferences, Youth Custody worker, Family Support) and those not currently practicing (for example, those in learning and development or quality assurance roles).

Agency workers should be included and only the fields that relate to agency workers should be completed; these are specified in section 1.8.

Include social workers in Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) and Youth Offender Services workers. Where the RAA is hosted by a local authority and staff have been transferred, including on secondment, the social workers working within the RAA should be included by the host local authority.

We recognise that the introduction of RAA will have different implications for the count of social workers and total caseload reported per local authority involved in an RAA, depending on how the RAA has been established.

1.3.1 Definition of an Agency Social Worker

Any social worker not directly paid by the local authority. This may be social workers who are paid by an agency rather than the local authority or who are self-employed.

You should include all Agency Social Workers however procured. This should include any Agency Social Workers procured through Contracted Providers, off-contract procurement and those procured as part of a Project Team or other method.

1.4 Definition of a case

For the purposes of this collection, a case is defined as:

Any person allocated to a named social worker, where the work involves child and family social work.

This may include:

- an individual child allocated to a social worker (for example, a family of three siblings would be three individual cases) including those in early help, on a child protection plan, children in need, fostering and adoption cases and care leavers.
- a carer or carers (where they are classified as a single unit) allocated to a social worker for the purposes of fostering or adoption.

Do not include:

- cases where the IRO or Child Protection chair has a supervisory role – these will already be counted as a case held by the social worker holding the case.
- care leavers not allocated to a registered social worker.

Include all cases held by your local authority, including those allocated to agency workers. Only count the case against the allocated lead social worker as at 30 September 2025. We recognise that there will be some local variation in how cases are allocated.

1.5 Returning data

Please send your completed return to the Department for Education via the COLLECT system. The census opens on Thursday 1 October 2026, with census submissions by 16:00 Friday 30 October 2026 to 5 December 2026.

The database closure date is 16:00 Friday 4 December 2026.

The COLLECT (collections online for learning, education, children and teachers) portal is used by schools, local authorities and the DfE for processing data collection returns. As well as being a secure portal for data transfer, the COLLECT system offers a number of other benefits, including: real time data collection monitoring and progress reporting; the facility for local authorities to view exactly the same information as the DfE; and there is no requirement to upload new software.

Information on how to use COLLECT is published in the COLLECT [guides](#) for local authorities.

For this collection, data can be entered directly into the COLLECT system on a case by case basis or via a data upload in XML format. For local authorities that do not have the option to save their data as an XML file, there is the option to use an XML generator. This

enables local authority users to enter data into an Excel template and generate an XML file to load into the COLLECT system.

The XML generator and guidance document will be made available on [Slack](#). If you are not registered for Slack, the XML generator and guidance document can be requested via a [data collections service request form](#).

Once your data is loaded into COLLECT you will be able to view it and make any necessary updates and amendments within the system.

You **must review the COLLECT summary report** for your local authority before submitting your return, as this contains information on the headline statistics that DfE will publish for your local authority. We may be unable to amend any errors in these statistics that are not picked up by our automated or manual validation checks prior to publication.

You must also review the following COLLECT reports and address any continuity errors and resolve any duplicates that are across multiple LA's before submitting your return:

- Continuity report & Continuity Staff Names report
- Same SWE, different person report

Errors in the statistics will not be amended after data collection closure, therefore please check your COLLECT reports and clean any validation errors as soon as possible.

To note – where same SWE numbers occur across local authorities, where the characteristics don't match, i.e. differing DOB/ethnicity/sex, local authorities are expected to contact one another to resolve these instances.

As per the School Census duplicate contact list, we will write to approvers at local authorities prior to going live to collect contact details. This list will be made available on S2S upon request.

There may also be circumstances where you have checked and cleared your own 'duplicate social workers' and submitted your return, but as other local authorities load their data into COLLECT, more 'duplicate social workers' may appear that you may be contacted about.

Along with using the XML generator, you have the option to enter your data directly into the COLLECT system. Within the collection there is a header section which is automatically populated when using the XML generator; however, should you decide to enter data directly you will need to complete these details manually. The details that should be entered are listed below:

Field	Value
Collection:	CSWW
Year:	2026
Reference Date:	2026-09-30

Field	Value
Source level:	L
LEA:	Enter your own LA 3-digit code here
Software Code:	CSWW template v1.0
Date Time:	Enter the date and time that you are entering data in the format CCYY-MM-DD hh:mm:ss

All other fields can remain empty.

1.6 Validation checks

Validation checks are applied to your data once it has been loaded into COLLECT. These checks will identify missing and invalid data, and other anomalies. The validation checks are published in the accompanying validation rules document for this collection.

Validation checks are classified as either errors or queries. A query can be distinguished from an error by the validation rule number. Queries have a 'Q' suffix (for example, '10Q'), and the wording of the associated message begins "Please check...".

DfE classifies validation rules as errors where a correction is required. However, for queries, although we would expect a correction to be made in most cases, there may be circumstances under which the data is correct and the query can remain. The COLLECT system permits users to annotate their return with an explanation of any errors or queries that may remain at submission. This must be undertaken to assist with data cleaning.

To do this, use the CSWW Acceptable Notepad Entries, paying attention to the three entries that if used as written, will auto ok.

Also run the COLLECT Continuity Report to review the four quality control checks.

1.7 Adding notes to the collection

Local authorities must provide a record of any issues they have identified in their data return and provide explanations for errors and queries in the return-level notes section.

1.8 Statutory Status of Data Items

Although the individual-level return as a whole is mandatory, some fields within the return are voluntary.

The table below indicates which data items are mandatory and therefore have to be returned for the following three categories:

- Child and family social workers at 30 September 2026;
- Leavers during the year ending 30 September 2026; and
- Agency social workers at 30 September 2026.

Note: data items marked as "mandatory" must be returned, all other data items are either voluntary or not applicable.

Data item	Child and family social workers at 30 September 2026	Leavers during the year ending 30 September 2026	Agency social workers at 30 September 2026
SWE registration number	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
FTE as at 30 September 2026	Mandatory	Not applicable	Mandatory
Date of Birth	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Sex	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Ethnic origin	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Qualification level	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Step Up graduate	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Frontline graduate	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Role within organisation	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Starting date	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Origin when started	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Leaving date	Not applicable	Mandatory	Not applicable
Reason for leaving	Not applicable	Mandatory	Not applicable
Destination of leaver	Not applicable	Mandatory	Not applicable
FTE as at 30 September 2025	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Number of cases held at 30 September 2026	Mandatory	Not applicable	Mandatory

Data item	Child and family social workers at 30 September 2026	Leavers during the year ending 30 September 2026	Agency social workers at 30 September 2026
Number of days of work missed due to sickness absence	Mandatory	Mandatory	Voluntary
Absent on 30 September (*)	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary
Reason for absence (*)	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary
Whether the social worker is an agency worker	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Length of current post/assignment (weeks) (*)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Voluntary
Base salary	Mandatory	Voluntary	Not applicable
Recruitment and retention payments (*)	Voluntary	Voluntary	Not applicable
Other additional payments (*)	Voluntary	Voluntary	Not applicable

Data items marked with (*) are voluntary for the year ending 30 September 2026.

FTE: full-time equivalent.

1.9 General notes

1.9.1 Social worker identifier

The child and family social worker's Social Work England (SWE) registration number. SWE is the registering body for social workers in England.

1.9.2 Caseload calculation in the Summary report

Reported average caseloads in the summary report are the average number of cases held when compared to the total number of social workers holding cases. The caseload

is calculated as the total number of cases held by full-time equivalent (FTE) social workers in post at the 30 September (including agency workers) divided by the number of FTE social workers at 30 September (including agency workers) that hold one or more case.

1.9.3 How to record counts of zero

Where a data item (for example, cases or working days lost) has a count of zero, record the count as “0” rather than leaving it blank.

1.9.4 Starters who leave within the year

For employees that started within the year (on or after 1 October 2025), but left before the end of the year (30 September 2026), ensure that their FTE is recorded as “0” at both points.

1.9.5 Leavers who return within the year

If members of your staff left within the year but later re-joined your staff, they should be entered as two separate records; one treating their original post as a leaver and another treating their new post as a starter.

1.9.6 Staff leaving on 30 September 2026

If you have members of staff who are due to end their post on 30 September 2026, record them as you would any other leavers, but include the number of cases they have on that date unless their cases have already been redistributed amongst other staff.

1.9.7 Staff who hold two or more roles

For staff who work part-time in two or more different roles, enter each role as an individual record (using a separate row for each role) and ensure the combined FTE of their roles is not greater than 1.

1.9.8 Casual staff and those on zero hours contracts

Members of staff who are employed on a casual basis or zero hours contract on 30 September 2026 should be counted in the same way as other employed social workers. We are aware of the difficulties in recording these staff accurately. We will continue to monitor the data and if required update the collection.

2. Aggregated Data Items at Local Authority Level

The data items in this section relate to the position at 30 September 2026. Within COLLECT they are located under the 'LA level data' section.

The number of vacancies and agency workers covering vacancies are an aggregate count.

From the 2024 to 2025 data collection, additional data items were added to this section to collect information on local authority allowances and additional payments. Details on total value of payments or total numbers of social workers receiving payments do not need to be provided.

The local authority allowances and additional payments data items are multiple choice options:

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible
- 2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible

For all social workers to be eligible, this allowance must be available to all social workers employed in children's services, regardless of start date, contracted hours, team, role, or grade. Eligibility does not need to extend to agency social workers.

For some social workers to be eligible, this can be conditional on start date, contracted hours, team, role, grade, or other factors.

The 'Other allowances and additional payments' data item is a free text field where any allowances or additional payments not covered elsewhere should be recorded.

Data item	Notes on data item
Number of vacancies (including those covered by agency workers)	Provide information on all vacancies (permanent or temporary) within your organisational structure as FTEs, including vacancies that are not being actively filled at census date. Record the number of child and family social worker vacancies in your local authority, including those covered by agency workers.
Number of agency workers covering vacancies – FTE	Record the FTE number of agency workers in your local authority's children social care working as a social worker and covering a vacancy.

Data item	Notes on data item
Number of agency workers covering vacancies – Headcount	Record the headcount number of agency workers in your local authority's children social care working as a social worker and covering a vacancy.
Recruitment bonus	<p>Record whether the LA pays financial incentives for social workers to join the LA's children's social work workforce.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Retention bonus	<p>Record whether the LA pays financial incentives for social workers to remain employed in the LA's children's social work workforce.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Performance reward	<p>Record whether the LA have a system to award bonuses or rewards to social workers based on their performance.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Car user allowance	<p>Record whether the LA make payments to social workers who use their car for work. This should be a payment made without requiring social workers to claim expenses for specific trips, journeys or miles driven.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>

Data item	Notes on data item
Relocation package	<p>Record whether the LA pay all or partial relocation costs to any social worker relocating as part of starting a social worker role at the LA.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Regional weighting	<p>Record whether the LA makes any payments that are not already included in the base salary that relate to the social workers' geographic location.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Cost of Social Work England (SWE) registration	<p>Record whether the LA pays the cost (partial or in full) of SWE registration, either directly or by reimbursing social workers for the expense.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Cost of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks	<p>Record whether the LA pays the cost (partial or in full) of DBS checks, either directly or by reimbursing social workers for the expense.</p> <p>Select from the following options:</p> <p>0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes, all LA-employed social workers are eligible</p> <p>2 = Yes, some LA-employed social workers are eligible</p>
Other allowances and additional payments	<p>This is a free text field to include information on any other types of additional payments or allowances. Please indicate whether they are for some or all LA-employed social workers in children's services. Work expenses such as (but not limited to) mileage, subsistence etc should be excluded.</p>

3. Social Worker Data Items

Include this information for:

- all child and family social workers in your local authority at 30 September 2026;
- all agency workers in your local authority who were in post at 30 September 2026;
- child and family social workers who have left their role during the year ending 30 September 2026.

Data item	Notes on data item
Social Work England (SWE) registration number (formerly HCPC identifier)	Record the child and family social worker Social Work England (SWE) registration number. This will start with SW, followed by several digits.
Agency worker	Record whether the child and family social worker is an agency worker: 1 for Yes (agency worker) 0 for No (not an agency worker) Note: for child and family social workers employed directly by your local authority, record "0" - No.
FTE as at 30 September 2026	Record the child and family social worker work pattern in full-time equivalents (FTEs) as at 30 September 2026. For staff on zero hours contracts, please record their typical FTE or their FTE during the last week of September. For leavers, record a value of 0.
Date of birth	Record the date of birth of the child and family social worker in the format CCYY-MM-DD.
Sex	Select the sex of the child and family social worker from one of the following categories: F for female M for male

Data item	Notes on data item
Ethnic origin	<p>Select the ethnic origin of the child and family social worker from the following code set:</p> <p>WBRI for White - British</p> <p>WIRI for White - Irish</p> <p>WOTH for Any Other White Background</p> <p>MWBC for White and Black Caribbean</p> <p>MWBA for White and Black African</p> <p>MWAS for White and Asian</p> <p>MOTH for Any Other Mixed background</p> <p>AIND for Indian</p> <p>APKN for Pakistani</p> <p>ABAN for Bangladeshi</p> <p>AOTH for Any Other Asian Background</p> <p>BCRB for Black Caribbean</p> <p>BAFR for Black African</p> <p>BOTH for Any Other Black Background</p> <p>CHNE for Chinese</p> <p>OOTH for Any Other Ethnic Group</p> <p>REFU for Declared not stated or Refused</p> <p>NOBT for Information Not Yet Obtained</p> <p>The following two codes should not be used for this collection:</p> <p>WIRT for Traveller of Irish Heritage</p> <p>WROM for Gypsy / Roma</p> <p>WOTH should be used instead of these two codes.</p> <p>If your authority uses a different ethnicity classification, please contact DfE via CSWW.Stats@education.gov.uk to agree the format in which you should provide the data.</p>

Data item	Notes on data item
Qualification level	<p>Record whether your worker is an undergraduate (for example Bachelor's degree or equivalent), a postgraduate (for example Master's degree, PhD) or other (is qualified through another route).</p> <p>Record the qualification level, as follows:</p> <p>1 for Undergraduate</p> <p>2 for Postgraduate</p> <p>3 for Other (for example any other qualification)</p> <p>The qualification recorded should be the one that is relevant to the social worker profession and where a social worker holds more than one the highest should be recorded.</p> <p>Diplomas in Social Work can be undergraduate or postgraduate. If LAs are unsure of the level, the qualification should be recorded as 'Other.'</p>
Step Up graduate	<p>Record whether or not the social worker is a Step Up graduate:</p> <p>1 for Yes</p> <p>0 for No</p> <p>A Step Up graduate is a graduate from the Department for Education initiative 'Step Up to Social Work', a 14 month intensive training programme.</p>
Role within the organisation	<p>Record the role the social worker has within the organisation as one of the following six categories:</p> <p>1 for Senior Manager</p> <p>2 for Middle Manager</p> <p>3 for First Line Manager</p> <p>4 for Senior Practitioner</p> <p>5 for Case Holder</p> <p>6 for Qualified without cases</p>

Data item	Notes on data item
Starting date	<p>For all child and family social workers and agency workers, record the date the child and family social worker joined a vacant child and family social worker post in your local authority in the format CCYY-MM-DD.</p> <p>Include social workers who have previously worked in your authority, but in a non-child and family social worker role. If a social worker had previously worked at your local authority in a non-child and family social worker role, provide the date when they became a child and family social worker.</p> <p>Where a social worker took a career break or moved to a non-child and family social worker role within or outside of your authority (and then returned), provide the date when they returned.</p> <p>A move or promotion from one child and family social work position to another child and family social work position within your local authority should not be counted as a starter and so a start date should not be provided.</p> <p>For staff seconded into your organisation, record their start date as the date their secondment began. However, if staff have returned to your organisation from secondment, record the date they originally began working for you.</p> <p>Do not include child and family social workers returning from maternity or sick leave.</p>

<p>Origin when started</p>	<p>Record the child and family social worker's situation prior to commencing employment in a social worker post in your local authority.</p> <p>If you have information on some but not all of the child and family social workers, please provide the information for those for whom you do have information and select "Not known" for the remaining.</p> <p>For staff seconded into your organisation, their "origin of starter" should be recorded as "Social worker role in different LA in England".</p> <p>If you do not collect this information, please select "not yet collected" for all your social workers.</p> <p>Record 'Origin when started' from one of the following categories:</p> <p>1 for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs)</p> <p>2 for Social worker role in different LA in England: for example from a previous role as a child and family social worker in another LA in England</p> <p>3 for Social worker role outside England: for example, from a previous role as child and family social worker outside England</p> <p>4 for Agency or consultancy social work in England: for example, from a previous role as a children's agency worker or consultant in England</p> <p>5 for Other social work role non LA in England: for example, employment as a social worker in a charity</p> <p>6 for Other social care role LA/non LA in England) for example, from a previous social care role in England (either LA or non-LA) but not a child and family social worker</p> <p>7 for Non-social care role / any role outside England / no employment / career break</p> <p>8 for Other: any starters with an origin which is not defined in the above categories</p> <p>9 for Not known</p> <p>10 for Not yet collected</p>
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Data item	Notes on data item
Leaving date	<p>Record the leaving date for child and family social workers who left their post at your local authority between 1 October 2025 and 30 September 2026. Record the date the child and family social worker left the local authority in the format CCYY-MM-DD.</p> <p>The social worker's leaving date should be recorded as the last day the leaver was in employment and paid by your local authority, and not the first day the social worker was not there.</p> <p>Include social workers who are staying in your authority but moving to a non-child and family role, for example moving to adult social care.</p> <p>Include social workers who have begun a career break and those seconded out of your organisation.</p> <p>Do not include social workers who have started maternity or sick leave.</p> <p>A move or promotion from one children's social work position to another children's social work position should not be counted as a leaver unless the social worker also left your employment in between these roles.</p>
Reason for leaving	<p>Record this information for social workers who left their social worker role at your local authority during the year ending 30 September 2026. Record the child and family social worker's reason for leaving your local authority.</p> <p>If you have information on some but not all of the child and family social workers, please provide the information for those you do have information for and select "Not known" for the remaining. However, if you do not have a field in your HR system to record this, select "Not yet collected".</p> <p>Select the Reason for leaving from one of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 for Resignation 2 for Voluntary redundancy 3 for Compulsory redundancy 4 for Dismissed 5 for Retired 6 for Deceased 7 for Moved to a non-child and family social work role within LA 8 for Other 9 for Not Known 10 for Not yet collected

Data item	Notes on data item
Destination of leaver	<p>Record this information for social workers who left their social worker role at your local authority during the year ending 30 September 2026. Record the child and family social worker's destination after leaving your local authority.</p> <p>Exclude those who retired or died during the year ending 30 September 2026.</p> <p>Record the intended destination of the leaver as gained through exit interviews or leavers forms.</p> <p>For staff seconded into or out of your organisation, their destination of leaver" should be recorded as "Social worker role in different LA in England".</p> <p>If you have information on some but not all of the child and family social workers, please provide the information for those you do have information and select "Not known" for the remaining. However, if you do not have a field in your HR system to record this, select "Not yet collected".</p> <p>If you do not collect this information, please select "Not yet collected" for all your social workers.</p> <p>Select the destination of leaver from one of the following categories:</p> <p>1 for a social worker role in different LA in England, for example leavers who moved to a role as a child and family social worker in another LA in England</p> <p>2 for a social worker role outside England, for example leavers who moved to a role as a child and family social worker outside England</p> <p>3 for Agency or consultancy social work (in England), for example leavers who moved to a role as a children's agency worker or consultant in England</p> <p>4 for Other social work role non LA (in England) for example leavers who moved to a non-LA social work role other than agency or consultancy work, for example, employment as a social worker in a charity</p> <p>5 for Other social care role LA/non LA (in England), for example leavers who moved to a social care role in England (either LA or non-LA) but not as a child and family social worker</p> <p>6 for Non-social care role / no employment / career break / any other role outside England / left England</p> <p>7 for Other, any leavers with a destination not defined here</p> <p>8 for Not known</p> <p>9 for Not yet collected</p>

Data item	Notes on data item
FTE as at 30 September 2025	<p>Record the child and family social worker's FTE work pattern at 30 September 2025.</p> <p>For those workers who started on or after 1 October 2025, record a value of "0".</p>
Number of cases held as at 30 September 2026	<p>Record the number of cases held by the child and family social worker.</p> <p>For the purposes of this collection, a case is defined as:</p> <p>Any case allocated to a named social worker, where the work involves child and family social work.</p> <p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an individual child allocated to a social worker (for example a family of three siblings would be three individual cases) including those on a child protection plan, children in need, fostering and adoption cases and care leavers a carer or carers (where they are allocated as a single case) allocated to a social worker for the purposes of fostering or adoption. an adult(s) allocated to a social worker for the purpose of children and families work. <p>Where more than one social worker is assigned to a case, only count the case against the allocated social worker as at 30 September 2026.</p> <p>Where Family Support Workers hold Child in Need cases, they (and the cases they hold) should not be included in the return because they are not registered social workers under the social worker definition on page 9 of our guidance.</p>
Number of days of work missed due to sickness absence during the year ending 30 September 2026	<p>Record the number of days of work missed due to sickness.</p> <p>For example: if a social worker normally works 0.8 FTE comprising full days from Monday to Wednesday and half days on Thursday and Friday and is absent on Thursday, this should be recorded as 0.5 days; while if the absence was on a Monday this should be recorded as 1 day.</p> <p>If a social worker normally works 0.8 days on Monday to Wednesday and 0.6 days on Thursday and Friday and is absent on a Tuesday, this should be recorded as 0.8 days; while if the absence was on a Friday this should be recorded as 0.6 days.</p>

Data item	Notes on data item
Approach Social Work (Frontline) graduate	<p>Record whether or not the social worker is a Frontline graduate</p> <p>A Frontline graduate refers to a graduate of the government funded fast-track 'Approach Social Work' programme, delivered by Frontline, which began in 2014. If the social worker did not qualify through the 'Frontline' programme they are not a Frontline graduate.</p> <p>Enter:</p> <p>1 for Yes</p> <p>0 for No</p>

Base salary	<p>Record the base salary for the child and family social worker. Base salary must reflect annual salary.</p> <p>For LA employed social workers who are in post on 30 September 2026, this is the base salary as at 30 September 2026.</p> <p>For LA employed social workers who left during the collection year, this is the base salary on their role end date. If this is not available, record the latest base salary available.</p> <p>The base salary of part-time or term time only staff must <u>not</u> be adjusted upwards to the base salary of a full-time equivalent member of staff.</p> <p>Base salary must also <u>not</u> be adjusted downwards for a member of staff that started working part way through the year. This must be the annual salary for all social workers. For example, for a social worker who started on 1 September 2026, record their annual salary, not the amount they were paid during the reporting year.</p> <p>For social workers who hold two or more roles where two or more records are returned in the data collection, provide the base salary for each role separately where possible. If there is not a separate salary linked to each role, apportion their overall salary between them to correspond with their FTE for each role.</p> <p>The base salary of LA employed social workers on a casual or zero hours contract should be recorded as zero. A notepad entry should be recorded on COLLECT to state the social worker is on a casual or zero hours contract for the associated validation errors to be OK'd.</p> <p>For social workers who are absent from work on 30 September 2026 (e.g. sick leave, parental leave etc) record their contracted annual salary. If a social worker is on reduced pay due to long term absence, the contracted base salary should be returned.</p> <p>Do <u>not</u> include any additional payments or allowances. These should be recorded in 'Recruitment and retention payments' or 'Other additional payments' as specified below.</p> <p>Some examples of how base salary should be recorded are given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1: a social worker works full-time throughout the year and earns a salary of £30,000 plus additional payments of £2,000. Base salary should be recorded as £30,000. • Example 2: two social workers job share the post described in Example 1, each working 0.5 FTE throughout the year and share the additional payments of £2,000 between them. The base salary for each of the job-sharing social workers should be recorded as £15,000. • Example 3: a social worker takes up the post described in Example 1 in June 2025 on a full-time basis. Base salary should be recorded as £30,000.
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Data item	Notes on data item
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example 4: an employee's FTE annual salary is £40,000 but they work at 0.5 FTE. The LA should record their base salary as £20,000.

4. Voluntary data items

Please include this information for:

- all child and family social workers in your local authority at 30 September 2026.
- all agency workers in your local authority who were in post at 30 September 2026;
- child and family social workers who have left their role during the year ending 30 September 2026.

Data item	Notes on data item
Absent on 30 September 2026 VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Record whether the social worker was absent from work on 30 September 2026. If this date falls on a weekend or non-working day, record whether the social worker was absent on the last working day of September. 1 for Yes 0 for No
Reason for Absence on 30 September 2026 VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	For those cases where absent from work on 30 September 2026 was marked as “Yes” please select the reason from the following list: MAT for Maternity/Paternity leave OTH for Other paid authorised absence, for example compassionate leave, annual leave PUB for Paid absence for public duties. For example, jury duty SIC for Sick leave TRN for Training. For example, assessment accreditation UNA for Unauthorised absence UNP for Unpaid authorised absence
Agency worker length of current post/assignment (weeks) VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	If the child and family social worker is an agency worker, record the length in the current post/assignment in weeks. This should be the length of the whole planned contract not the number of weeks between the start of the contract and the data collection date.

Data item	Notes on data item
<p>Recruitment and retention payments</p> <p>VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM</p>	<p>Record any recruitment and/or retention payments paid to the social worker during the reporting year.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention payments are payments made to the social worker as an incentive to join the LA or to retain the social worker at the LA.</p> <p>For social workers in post on 30 September 2026, with a start date on or before 1 October 2025, this should cover all payments made between 1 October 2025 and 30 September 2026.</p> <p>For social workers in post on 30 September 2026, with start date after 1 October 2025, this should cover all payments made between their start date and 30 September 2026.</p> <p>For social workers with a leave date on or before 30 September 2026, this should cover payments between 1 October 2025 (or their start date if later than 1 October 2025) and 30 September 2026 (to account for any payments made to the social workers in arrears after their leave date).</p> <p>The value recorded should be the value paid to the social worker. For part-time workers, these should reflect actual payments and should only be adjusted for FTE if the payments are pro rata.</p>
<p>Other additional payments</p> <p>VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM</p>	<p>Record the sum of any other payments that the social worker received in the reporting year that were not part of their base salary.</p> <p>These will include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance related pay. <p>For the “other payments” that are performance related, this should be bonuses, and not about pay progression, which will affect base pay. LAs should report the relevant salary for 30 September (or for leavers, the day the social worker left).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional payment based on role e.g. child protection roles. • Car user allowance – this should be a payment made without requiring social workers to claim expenses. • Relocation payment – payment made to cover full or partial costs of relocating as part taking up employment with the LA. • Regional weighting – payments not already included in the base salary that relate to the social workers’ geographic location. <p>This should <u>not</u> include any reimbursement payments which were originally made by the social worker, such as mileage, payment for DSB checks or SWE registration.</p>

Annex A – LA Codes

Please refer to the [Common Basic Data Set \(CBDS\)](#) for a full list of LA names and codes.

Annex B - Rationale

B1. Collection

The Children's Social Work Workforce data collection aims to provide employment data on Social Work England (SWE) registered social workers who are working within local authorities in England. The collection and publication of this data means that local authorities can benchmark their workforce against their geographical and statistical neighbours, and government is able to make informed decisions on the management of the public-sector children's social work workforce.

This collection moved to an individual level return in 2017; prior to that aggregated data was collected from each local authority. The extra information obtained from the individual-level return provides valuable insights into the children's social work workforce. For example, it helps us to identify patterns in social worker migration between areas or sectors; provides insights into the careers of social workers; gives local authorities information on barriers to staff retention; and assists in estimations of the costs of absence and agency support.

For 2024-25 we collected data on social worker pay for the first time. This will work alongside the existing data items to deepen our understanding of the workforce.

The data is currently published as [official statistics](#) by the DfE, but as data quality continues to improve we will aim to publish them as [accredited official statistics](#).

To help meet this aim, DfE requires local authorities to provide the data listed in the below table.

B2. Data Items

Data item	Rationale for Data Item
Number of vacancies (including those covered by agency workers)	Allows the calculation of the rate of vacancies in the workforce and in each organisational structure.
Number of agency workers covering vacancies (FTE and Headcount)	Allows the calculation of the proportion of vacancies currently covered by agency workers.
Recruitment bonus	Allows greater understanding of LA's recruitment strategies.
Retention bonus	Allows greater understanding of LA's retention strategies

Data item	Rationale for Data Item
Performance reward	To understand which LAs have a system to award bonuses or rewards to social workers based on their performance, a key part of their retention strategy.
Car user allowance	To understand which LAs make payments to social workers who use their car for work.
Relocation package	To understand which LAs pay all or partial relocation costs to any social worker relocating as part of starting a social worker role at the LA, a key area.
Regional weighting	To understand what LAs offer weighting to their pay, providing further context on individual data provided.
Cost of Social Work England (SWE) registration	Knowing whether the LA pays the cost (partial or in full) of SWE registration allows DfE to understand the LA's full retention package.
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks	Knowing whether the LA pays the cost (partial or in full) of DBS checks allows DfE to understand the LA's full retention package.
Other allowances and additional payments	This provides an opportunity for the LA to provide any other additional payments it offers to social workers ensuring to capture the full picture on LA's retention and recruitment strategy.
LA	Allows DfE to break down social worker data by the local authority they work for.
Social Work England (SWE) registration number	As a unique identifier for a social worker this will allow DfE to validate information supplied and will, for example, help identify patterns in social worker migration between local authorities, and the local authority and non-local authority sector.
Agency worker	Allows for the calculation of the rate of positions held by agency workers, and the ability to track year on year changes in the proportions of agency workers.
FTE as at 30 September 2026	Provides a comparable yearly snapshot of working patterns and distributions of social workers.
Date of birth	Allows the demographic breakdown of the social work workforce by age and is useful for equality and diversity monitoring.
Sex	Allows the demographic breakdown of the social work workforce by sex and is useful for equality and diversity monitoring.

Data item	Rationale for Data Item
Ethnic origin	Allows the demographic breakdown of the social work workforce by ethnic origin and is useful for equality and diversity monitoring.
Qualification level	Allows DfE to monitor how many social workers working for local authorities in England have undertaken further qualification levels after their initial social work qualifications.
Step Up graduate	Allows DfE to monitor the success of the fast track 'Step Up to Social Work' programme in training social workers who then go on to work for local authorities.
Role within the organisation	Allows the breakdown of local authority children's social work workforce structures by role.
Starting date	Allows for accurate monitoring of length of service, period recruited and turnover monitoring.
Origin when started	Provides data on where new starters were before they joined a local authority. Can be used to determine the proportion of social workers new to the profession to social workers having worked in other authorities, or as agency social workers.
Leaving date	Allows for accurate monitoring of length of service and allows workforce turnover monitoring.
Destination of leaver	Provides data on where leavers intend to go after leaving a local authority. Can be used to determine the proportions of social workers leaving the profession, leaving for other authorities, or agencies. May also provide insights into barriers to staff retention.
Reason for leaving	Allows for breakdown of leavers by resignation, redundancy, retirement, disciplinary action. May also provide insights into barriers to staff retention.
FTE as at 30 September 2025	This provides a social worker's FTE in the previous year, allowing the capture of changing working patterns amongst the workforce.
Number of cases held as at 30 September 2026	Provides the number of cases each social worker holds, and is useful for benchmarking average caseloads, and contrasting caseload data by FTE.
Number of days of work missed due to sickness absence	Allows DfE to accurately calculate total and average sickness absence.

Data item	Rationale for Data Item
Agency worker length of current post/assignment (weeks) VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Allows for the calculation of average length of agency contracts and is useful in calculating costing data.
Frontline graduate	Allows DfE to monitor the success of the fast track 'Frontline' programme in training social workers who then go on to work for local authorities.
Absent on 30 September VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Provides a snapshot of social worker absence data, allowing a calculation of what influence absence has on caseload.
Reason for absence VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Provides reasons for absence to allow breakdowns of absence by type.
Base salary	The annual salary of each social worker provides DfE with cost data allowing analysis of the social worker labour market, cost benefit analysis of DfE programmes, and allows analysis to support the public sector Equality duty.
Recruitment and retention payments VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Collecting these payments at an individual level will allow effective analysis of the push and pull factors in the labour market.
Other additional payments VOLUNTARY DATA ITEM	Collecting these payments at an individual level will allow effective analysis of the push and pull factors in the labour market.



Department
for Education

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