

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 20th February 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Adult Services

PORTFOLIO: Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Employer Standards Health Check Survey 2022

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Health PPB members with information on Halton's results from the Employer Standards Health Check Survey that was conducted at a national level between October 2022 and January 2023.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The [Health Check survey](#) is co-ordinated nationally by the Local Government Association (LGA). It is part of [The Standards for Employers of Social Workers](#), which were refreshed in Autumn 2020. This is the third time that Halton has taken part in the survey; reports have been brought to PPB regarding the results from previous years.

3.2 According to the LGA, the Standards for Employers of Social Workers "*set out the shared core expectations of employers which will enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively and safely. These expectations can be used within self-regulation and improvement frameworks for public services and by service regulators. All employers providing a social work service should establish a monitoring system by which they can assess their organisation's performance against this framework, set a process for review and, where necessary, outline their plans for improvement.*"

3.3 There are eight standards, as listed below (further details regarding the expectations of employers under each standard can be found on the LGA's website using the link at 3.1):

1. Strong and clear social work framework

2. Effective workforce planning systems
3. Safe workloads and case allocation
4. Wellbeing
5. Supervision
6. Continuing professional development
7. Professional registration
8. Strategic partnerships

- 3.4 Standard 1 specifies that employers should “*ensure that mechanisms are in place to listen to and respond to the views of practitioners on a regular basis, including undertaking an annual health check to ensure the organisation remains a place where the right environment and conditions exist to support best social work practice*”.
- 3.5 The last health check survey was open for responses between 17th October 2022 and 20th January 2023. A unique survey link was shared with Halton Social Workers within the Adults Directorate inviting them to take part in the survey. The link is unique to each organisation so that individual results can be shared by the LGA. In order to protect anonymity, results are only made available when there are at least 10 respondents in each staff group.
- 3.6 A total of 20 registered Social Workers took part in the survey from Halton (15 adults registered social workers and 5 mental health registered social workers). The Social Work Matters Forum distribution list was used as a means to invite Social Workers to take part in the survey; this list indicated that there were 59 Social Workers at the time of the survey. Therefore, there was an estimated 33% response rate to the survey.
- 3.7 There was the option to invite Occupational Therapists (OTs) and non-registered social care professionals to take part in the 2022 survey. This followed the publication of specific [Standards for Employers of Occupational Therapists](#) which were published in 2022. Halton OTs were therefore invited to take part, however, as the rule of 10 was not met (there were only four responses), the results from the OT staff group could not be shared. Locally, the decision was taken not to extend the survey to non-registered social care professionals as the survey questions are most relevant to registered professionals and link specifically to the standards.
- 3.8 The survey asked about the eight standards with responses being translated into a mean score, which was then categorised as red (poor), amber (moderate) or green (good). A summary of the results from the 2022 survey can be found at appendix 1. There are two groups of results:
1. All 20 respondents – Adults and Mental Health Social Workers.

2. Adults Social Workers only (15 respondents).

- 3.9 Below are some key headlines from the health check survey results:
- All standards scored in the green zone for Halton, apart from Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which is in the amber zone. This is the same as the national picture.
 - CPD also scored in the amber zone in the 2021 survey for Halton (and nationally), so it continues to be a key area to focus on for improvement.
 - When looking at just adults' social workers (excluding mental health), a further two standards fall in the amber zone – Safe Workloads & Case Allocation and Supervision.
 - Safe Workloads & Case Allocation and Supervision scored in the green zone for adults' social workers in 2021.
 - The highest scoring standard was Strategic Partnerships, both overall and when looking at adults' social workers only. Nationally, the highest scoring standard was Effective Workforce Planning Systems.
- 3.10 Upon receipt of the results in summer 2023, immediate action was taken by the Divisional Manager for Care Management to address the main areas of concern. This included developing clear guidance for managers to reinforce their responsibilities around supervision, employee development and review (EDR) procedures, recruitment and induction and many other mandatory tasks. This has helped to ensure staff feel supported in their roles.
- 3.11 In addition, there is a dedicated Practice Manager for Adult Social Care Training & Social Work Professional Development, and this role has a key focus on many areas of work relating to the standards. For example, reviewing the approaches to CPD and EDR to ensure that staff feel that their professional development is supported within a culture of continuous learning and practice improvement.
- 3.12 Finally, the range of opportunities for social workers to come together for networking, sharing information and development continue to be offered – e.g. Social Work Matters Forum, Action Learning Sets and Journal Clubs.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 PPB should be aware that the Adults Directorate has opted into the Employer Standards Health Check for 2023/24, which is due to launch in late January / early February 2024 (exact date TBC). Further reports will be presented to PPB to share the results in due course.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

See point 6.3 below.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

As stated by the LGA:

“Good social work can transform people’s lives and protect them from harm. In order to achieve consistently high-quality outcomes for service users and their carers, social workers must have and maintain the skills and knowledge to establish effective relationships with children, adults, families, and professionals in a range of agencies and settings, and be the key connectors in communities.

Employers should implement a whole systems approach to supporting the social work profession. These Standards set out the key components of whole systems approaches, and employers can use them to enhance their reputation as a service provider and employer by helping to develop a working environment where social work practice and social workers can flourish, in turn supporting recruitment and retention.”

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton’s Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The responses to this survey represent the views of only 20 members of staff so we should be careful when drawing conclusions from these findings as they may not be representative of the entire staff group. Consideration needs to be given to how we can increase the level of responses to the next survey.

7.2 Due to the rule of 10 imposed by the LGA researchers (to protect participant anonymity), we were unable to receive information on the responses from the OTs that completed the survey. This needs to be considered when taking part in the next survey in terms of the numbers of staff in each group and whether there will be a sufficient number of responses to warrant taking part.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Appendix 1: Summary of Employer Standards Health Check Survey Results 2022

Performance across all standards

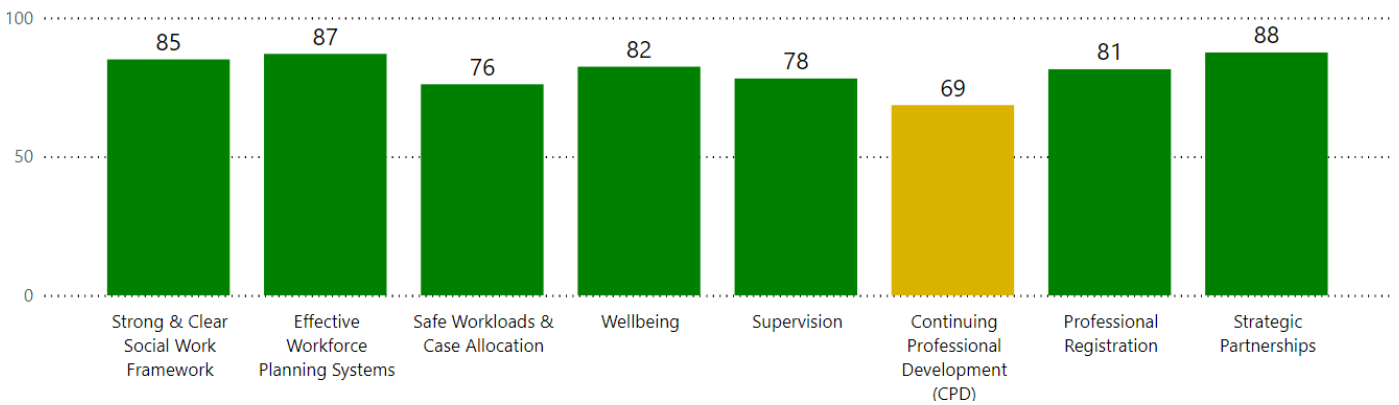
Total respondents = 20

- Adults Registered Social Worker = 15
- Mental Health Registered Social Worker = 5

According to information from the Social Work Matters Forum distribution list, there are a total of 59 social workers (including managers) with 12 being mental health social workers. This represents a response rate of 33% overall (41% for mental health social workers and 32% for adults' social workers).

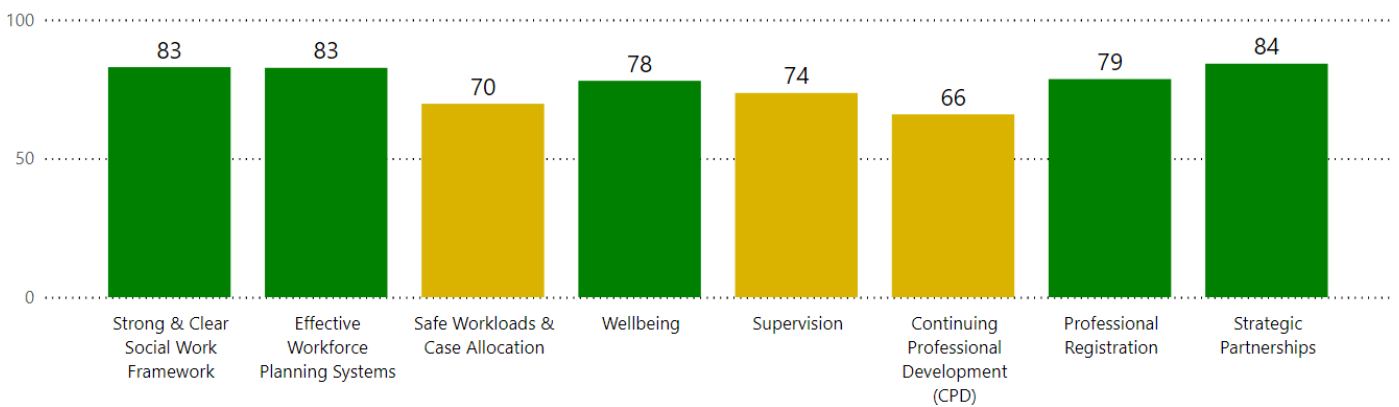
All respondents (Adults and Mental Health Social Workers):

Performance across each Standard



Adults Social Workers only:

Performance across each Standard



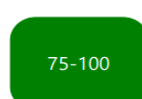
Performance key:



0-50



51-74



75-100

Relatively poor outcome - a clear sign to take steps to improve

Moderate outcome - room for improvement

Good outcome - to be celebrated

The **national** mean scores for each of the eight standards were as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
80	82	77	79	77	74	80	77

The national summary report of the employer standards survey for registered social workers can be found on the LGA's website: [National summary report of the employer standards survey for registered social workers 2022/23 | Local Government Association](#)

Halton comparison between 2022 and 2021 results

Total respondents in 2021 = 17

- Adults Registered Social Worker = 12
- Mental Health Registered Social Worker = 5

Standard	All Social Workers (Adults and Mental Health)		Adults Social Workers only	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
1. Strong and clear social work framework	85 ↓	89	83 ↓	86
2. Effective workforce planning systems	87 ↓	88	83 ↓	91
3. Safe workloads and case allocation	76 ↓	82	70 ↓	82
4. Wellbeing	82 ↑	81	78 ↓	81
5. Supervision	78 ↓	82	74 ↓	80
6. CPD	69 =	69	66 ↓	74
7. Professional registration	81 ↓	83	79 ↓	83
8. Strategic partnerships	88 ↑	82	84 ↑	80