

Consultation on the Scottish Social Services Council registration fees

This consultation sets out proposals for an increase to the fees paid by registrants of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). These fees represent the contributions paid by registrants to support the aims of regulation of social service workers, which is to:

- increase public protection
- improve the skills, qualification levels and professionalism of the workforce
- improve the experience and outcomes of people who use social services
- promote confidence in the sector.
- The importance of a registered social service workforce

Until 2003, social workers were the only professional group of workers not registered with a professional regulator. The establishment of the SSSC and registration and regulation of social workers came following a Government consultation in 1998, **Modernising Social Work Services, a Consultation Paper on Workforce Regulation and Education**, which received strong support.

In response to the consultation, the Scottish Government and the wider social service workforce also recognised that if the SSSC was to achieve the policy objectives of protecting people who use services and increasing the professional standing of social service workers then the scope of registration had to be expanded to a wider set of workers.

Delivery of these policy objectives remains important to make sure that the social service workforce is professional, qualified, valued and regulated, with the skills and experience to improve the lives of people they support. More information is available in our March 2016 report – [A trusted skilled and valued social service workforce](#).

Registered social service workers bring professional skills, values and knowledge. They work alongside other professionals like nurses and teachers, focused on our most vulnerable citizens. Registration brings an assurance to those citizens that the people working with them are properly qualified and follow the Codes of Practice. For registrants, it brings increased credibility and we have seen the positive impact on practice and confidence.

We have not reviewed the fees since they were first introduced in 2003. When the Scottish Government established the SSSC in 2001 the intention was that over time the registration fees would fund the costs of the SSSC registration function. Different fee levels were set to reflect the different groups of workers we would register, as individual registrants are responsible for paying their registration fee.

Currently our fees range from £10 to £30 a year. [Please click here for the proposed fees and a comparison to our current fees and those of other regulators](#). When we were first established, the registration fee for social workers was set at £30 across the UK. In recent years this has increased in England and Northern Ireland to better reflect the cost of registration and the fees paid by other professional groups.

From 2017, support workers in care at home and housing support services are required to register. This is likely to increase the registered workforce by a further 60,000 registrants.

The growth of the Register increases the workload not only of the registration function, but also of the fitness to practise functions and qualifications functions. This means that the activity costs of the SSSC have increased every year since 2001 and will continue to increase until the planned roll-out of registration is complete in 2021/2022.

As with all public organisations we regularly review our operations to make sure that we are as efficient as possible and that we make use of digital and other means to ensure we operate cost-effectively. In 2015/16, 87% of our funding came from the Scottish Government and 13% from registration fees.

	Current fee level	Fees in 2017/18	Increase - £	After tax relief*
Social work student	£10	£15	£5	£12
Support worker	£15	£25	£10	£20
Supervisor/practitioner	£20	£35	£15	£28
Manager/social worker	£30	£80	£50	£64

*The annual fee payable to the SSSC is tax deductible for UK tax payers. This means that for registrants paying tax at the standard rate of 20%, the proposed annual fee for social workers effectively costs £64 after £16 tax relief. This can be backdated up to six years.

[Please click here for the full list of proposed fees broken down by parts of the register.](#)

The SSSC is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

We protect the public by registering the workforce, making sure they meet the standards set out in the SSSC Code of Practice. We are also responsible for standards of training and development for the workforce. We work with the other UK social service workforce regulators to develop and maintain these standards. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We:

- publish the national Codes of Practice for people working in social services and their employers
- register people working in social services and make sure they adhere to our Codes of Practice
- promote and regulate the learning and development of the social service workforce
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for social services in Scotland.

The SSSC is a Scottish Government non-departmental public body set up under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. The SSSC is sponsored and financially supported through the Directorate for Children and Families, which is part of the Scottish Government. Through workforce registration and regulation we are helping to improve standards in social services and strengthen public protection.

There are over 199,000 people working in social services across Scotland. This workforce includes social care workers, social workers, social work students and early years workers. They work across a range of care services, in residential and day centres, community facilities and in people's homes.

This consultation is relevant to all registrants, social service employers, learning providers, people who use services and carers, trade unions and other professional bodies. We will ensure that we circulate it widely to all these groups.

This is a short consultation with three sections we want you to comment on. Section 1 covers the proposed increase to registration fees. Section 2 asks for some information about you, to help us learn more about who has responded. Section 3 asks two questions as to whether our proposals will have an impact on groups with protected characteristics.

The SSSC and Scottish Government agreed a number of principles in relation to these questions.

- Scottish Government remains committed to rolling out registration to support workers in care at home and housing support services from 2017.
- Increasing fees is not expected to cover our full operating costs. The Scottish Government does expect to continue to provide funding for the SSSC's regulatory and workforce development functions.
- Increasing fees means that we will move towards full cost recovery of our registration function, as set out in the original policy intention - this area represents approximately 30% of our total operating costs. In increasing fees, we will work to minimise further increases in financial support we require from Scottish Government.
- In increasing fees, the SSSC will minimise the impact on the lowest paid parts of the workforce.
- The fee structure should be in line with similar professions and should be on a sliding scale to reflect the different groups of workers.
- Registration fees may be reviewed again in future to make sure that we continue to cover the cost of our registration function.
- As we shift the balance between our income from Scottish Government and income from registrants to reduce dependence on government we will increase professional ownership of regulation.
- We must continue to deliver efficiencies such as improving our internal processes and explore opportunities for greater alignment or sharing of services with other public sector organisations.

Timescales:

- consultation will open on 10 August 2016
- consultation will close on 2 November 2016
- announcement of decision in early 2017
- implementation of decision on 1 April 2017*

* if the decision is to increase the fees it will apply to fees paid on or after the 1 April 2017.