

Sector Skills Agreement for the Scottish social services sector (May 2008)

Introduction

Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in partnership with:

- Employers
- Training providers
- Funders of training.

Sector Skills Agreements aim to ensure that public training resources and funding are directed at the priority skills needs of all sectors. SSAs outline how the SSC and employers will work with providers and funders to secure the necessary supply of training and outline how this goal will be achieved. Agreements aim to be forward looking, evidence based, driven by employers, action focussed and comprehensive.

The Scottish Social Services Council (as part of Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Council for the social services sector) has developed a Sector Skills Agreement for the sector. The Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) has been developed in collaboration with employers, partners and key stakeholders in the social services sector.

How was the Sector Skills Agreement developed?

Each Sector Skills Agreement has five stages:

Stage 1: A sophisticated assessment is made of each sector to determine short-term, medium-term and long-term skills needs, and to map out the factors for change in the sector.

Stage 2: Current training provision across all levels is reviewed to measure its range, nature and employer relevance.

Stage 3: The main gaps and weaknesses in workforce development are analysed and priorities are agreed.

Stage 4: A review is conducted into the scope for collaborative action – engaging employers to invest in skills development to support improved business performance – and an assessment is made into what employers are likely to sign up to.

Stage 5: The final outcome is an agreement of how the SSC and employer will work with key funding partners to secure the necessary supply of training.

Written reports were prepared as part of stages 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the SSA. These reports can be accessed from the SSSC website: www.sssc.uk.com

Key findings from stages 1 and 2

Key findings from stages 1 and 2 of the Sector Skills Agreement are listed below. The full list of key findings can be found in the stage 2 report.

Size and shape of the sector

- The number of people working in the Scottish social services sector increased from 97,000 in to 139,000 between 1995 and 2004. This represents a 43% growth rate compared to a Scottish industry-wide growth rate of 7%. (Source: Labour Force Survey)
- Changes in the social services workforce from 1995 – 2004:
 - the voluntary sector more than doubled (from 17,000 to 35,000),
 - the private sector increased by over 75% (from 26,000 to 43,000)
 - the local authority workforce increased by approximately 7%. Local authorities employed approximately 40% of the workforce in 2004, compared to a 60% share of the workforce in 1995.

Training and Qualifications Available

The sector was found to be well provided for in terms of the broad range of vocational qualifications which exist and are relevant to it. These include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) at levels 2, 3 and 4, plus a suite of Professional Development Awards (PDAs) and Scottish progression awards. Other key qualifications include Higher National Certificates (one in Social Care, another in Early Education and Child Care) and professional awards in Social Work for undergraduates and postgraduates.

Training Expenditure and Funding

Good quality information on employers' expenditure was difficult to obtain, although information on the range of funding streams targeted at the sector was already available. Some of the funding streams such as Modern Apprenticeships and the European Social Fund are relevant to all sectors of the economy. There a number of funding streams that are specific to the sector and most, if not all of them, come from parts of the Scottish Government with some responsibility for the sector. In the case of children's day care services there appears to be a reasonably level playing field between local authorities, private and voluntary providers in terms of the funding they have access to. However, in the case of social care providers the situation is very different, with local authorities having access to far greater sums of money for training than voluntary or private sector providers.

In April 2008 (shortly after the completion of the SSA) the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland announced that Adult Modern Apprenticeships would be refocused to only support Construction and Engineering related sectors.

Key issues and solutions from the SSA Process

Fourteen key issues were identified during the Sector Skills Agreement process. A series of solutions, action for employers and actions for partners was also developed. A selection of the issues and solutions / actions is highlighted below. The full list of issues and solutions can be found in the stage 5 report.

Key Issue	Solutions and actions include:
Compliance with registration requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and approval of the Level 9 award for managers of children's day care services. - SVQ Assessment Centres to be encouraged to consider offering the HNC in Social Care to increase the sector's training capacity. - Encourage training providers to register with the National Database of Learning Opportunities.
'Soft Skills'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of the Continuous Learning Framework across Scotland. - Dissemination and Implementation of the Recognising Prior Informal Learning Guidance. - Encourage Learning Networks and Adult Literacy Partnerships (ALPs) to work together on support for the sector.
Service design and effective use of workforce skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss with SQA the launch of the new Leadership and Management awards. - Discuss with the NHS and Skills for Health the ways of building possible collaboration on the recent proposal for developing the workforce planning capacity of NHS staff. - Explore with LearnDirect Scotland how their business support service can assist smaller employers to link their employee development plans to their business plans.
Client Specific skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and approval of the Mental Health Officers' Award. - Promotion of the SSSC's 'Skills Sets'. - Promotion and use of client specific National Occupational Standards. - Increased promotion of resources developed by the Centres for Excellence.

Implementation of the SSA

Regular updates on the implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement will be available via the SSSC's ebulletin, newsletter and website.

Skills for Care and Development

Skills for Care and Development was licensed in February 2005 and is the Sector Skills Council for social care, early years, children and young people's workforce. It is a UK partnership of five bodies comprising the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Council for Wales (CCW), Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISSCC) Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

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For more information about the Sector Skills Agreement visit:

<http://www.sssc.uk.com/Social+Service+Workforce+Planning/Skills+for+Care+and+Development.htm>

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