

Learning Strategy 2021-2024



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1. Introduction

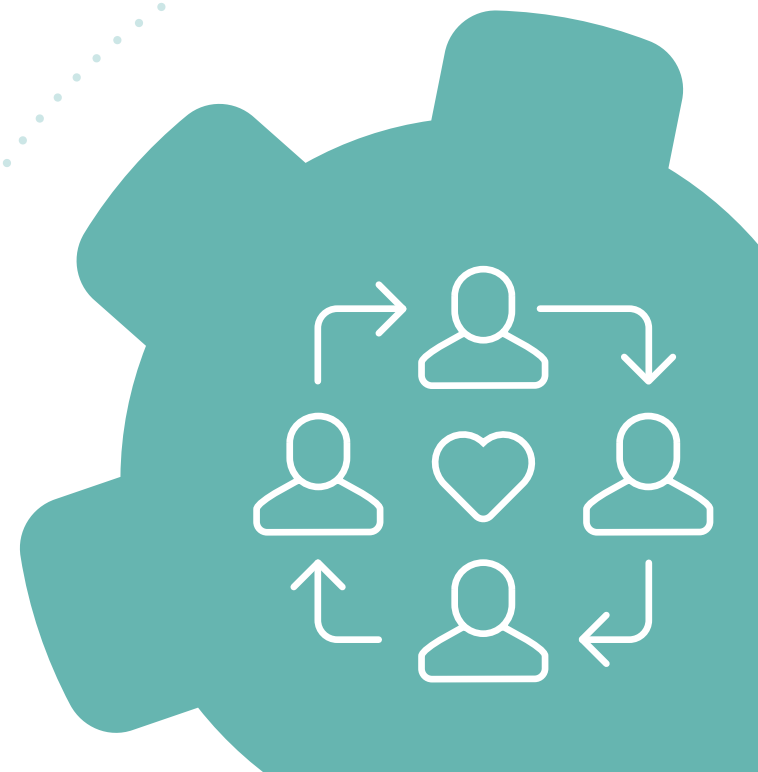
The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has a key role in helping the social service sector see the connections in different learning activities and the resources available to support workers and others. To do this, we must engage effectively with the workforce to help workers understand how important their learning is to improving outcomes for people who use services. We must support the social work, social care and early years workforce to become self-directing and self-managing learners and a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

We also have a role in supporting formal leaders and employers to develop supportive organisational learning cultures and supporting them to recognise how staff learning can contribute to the development of organisational culture and positive learning environments.

This learning strategy outlines the SSSC's approach to providing workers, employers and others with learning support.

As the social service workforce regulator and the national lead for workforce development in Scotland we support the development of the social service workforce. We research, design and develop products and engage with the workforce in order to improve the skills and knowledge of workers, helping them to meet the needs of the services they work in and the people who use those services.

We are future focused and work in collaboration with partners to identify and support the workforce to develop emerging new skills needed to deliver changing models of care delivery. We recognise the diversity and breadth of the sector in which the workforce operates and how this affects learning activity. We learn from our experience and rely on our collaboration, and often interdependence, with a range of partners in social services and other sectors to meet the different learning needs across the sector.



‘We have developed this learning strategy to bring together all our activity across our learning and development responsibilities.’

In particular, but not solely, we need to focus this collaboration on supporting those services involved in the integration of health and social care, those delivering services to care experienced children and young people and the expansion of the early years workforce in Scotland.

Our products and services are diverse and include:

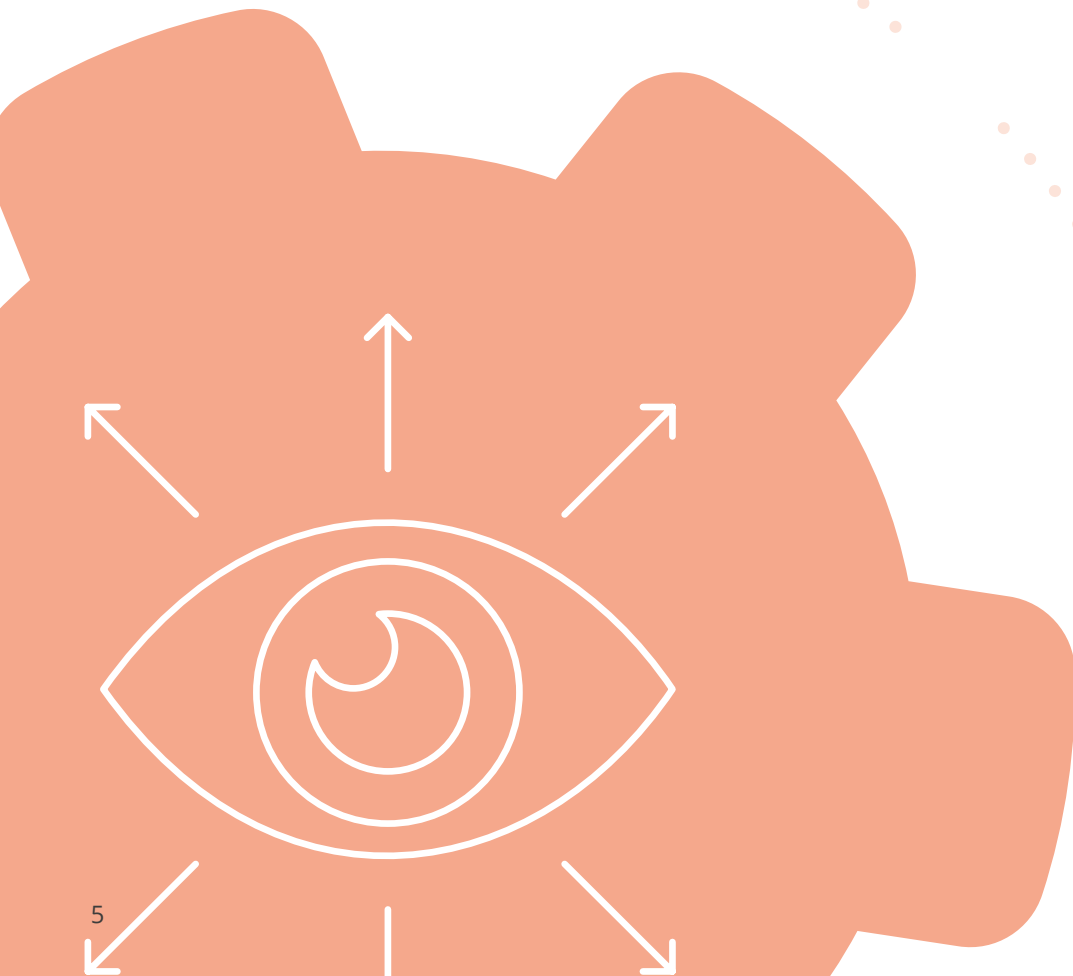
- designing, developing, and maintaining standards and qualifications
- designing and developing skills and learning resources
- improving ways to support learning and development, for example, through digital learning.

We have developed this learning strategy to bring together all our activity across our learning and development responsibilities. This is a strategy for the SSSC and sets out our organisational approach to delivering our learning and development activity in line with the **SSSC Strategic Plan 2020-2023**.

It will also drive learning activity to support employers and workers to learn and develop in a way that works for them and that meets the needs of people using services. It sets the context for learning in social services in Scotland, identifies learning priorities for the sector and establishes the main areas for us to focus our activity. This will help us consider what we should do more of, less of, and differently, and it provides a platform to help us identify our learning activities to 2023.

2. Vision

The strategy's vision is that social service workers feel supported by the SSSC, their employers and others to learn and develop throughout their career and deliver high quality services by taking responsibility for their learning and practice.

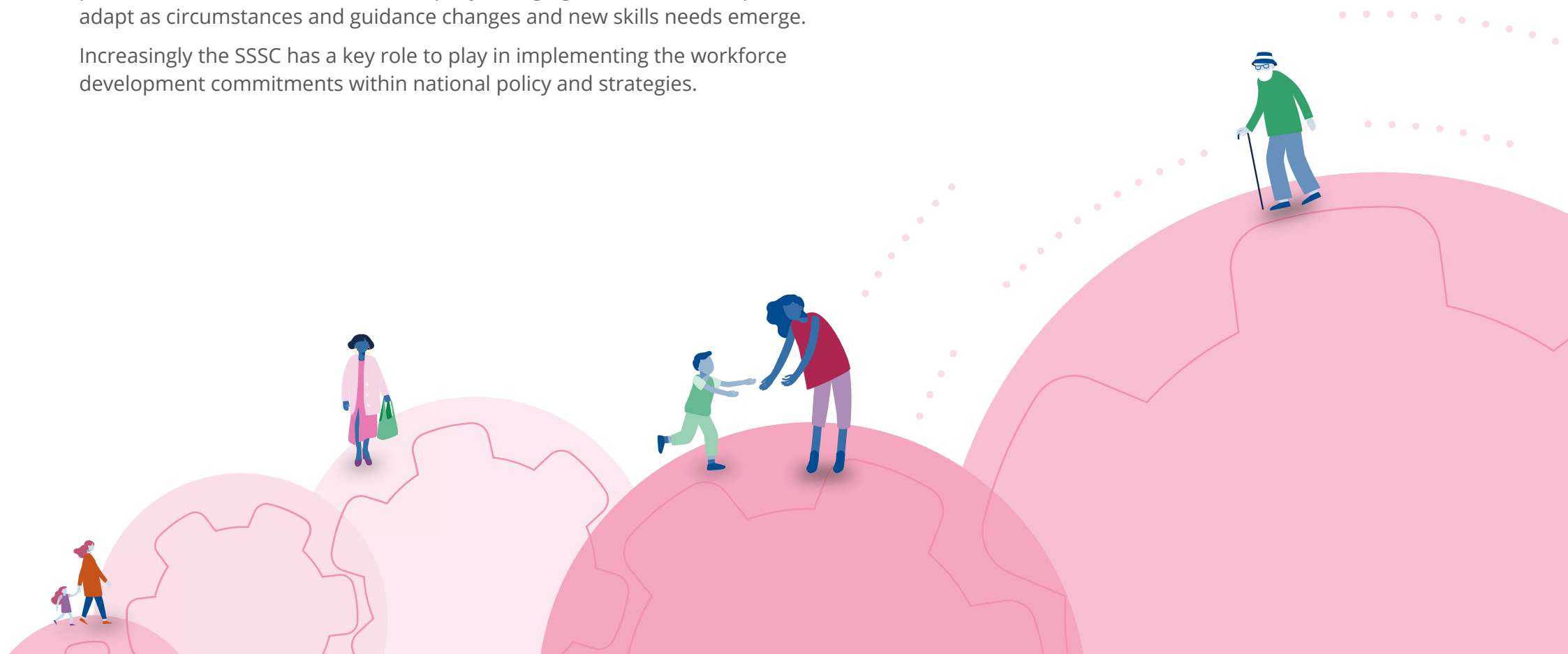


3. Context and policy landscape

Our learning and development activity contributes to many of Scotland's National Outcomes within the National Performance Framework particularly those relating to children and young people and their families, tackling inequalities, building strong communities, living healthier lives and delivering high quality public services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required us to respond at pace to develop learning resources to support the workforce, contribute to the development of national guidance and to find solutions to the delivery of programmes and practice placements. This continues to be a rapidly changing context which requires us to adapt as circumstances and guidance changes and new skills needs emerge.

Increasingly the SSSC has a key role to play in implementing the workforce development commitments within national policy and strategies.



This strategy and our learning and development activity is supporting:

- the implementation of the revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019, Keeping Sisters and Brothers Together siblings' national guidance to support the workforce to meet their responsibilities
- implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 which includes a duty on providers to ensure they have qualified and competent staff in social care services
- development and delivery of the National Leadership Development Programme for health and social care
- delivery of the Programme for Government commitment to develop a national induction framework for individuals taking up roles within adult social care
- delivery of the digitally enabled workforce programme to increase the digital capability and capacity of the workforce in support of the Digital Health and Care Strategy
- delivery of The Promise change programme commitments
- the National Health and Social Care Integrated Workforce Plan focus on improving entry routes and pathways for careers into the sector and developing initiatives for sustainable foundation, modern and graduate apprenticeships
- the Review of Social Work Education and implementation of a supported first year in practice for newly qualified social workers (NQSW)
- the expansion of the early years workforce and delivery of wrap around care for school aged children.



The strategy contributes to all the SSSC's strategic outcomes but in particular Outcome 2: The SSSC supports and enhances the development of the regulated workforce to deliver high standards of practice and drive improvement.

The strategy is underpinned by our strategic objectives to:

- increase the percentage of the workforce who have the qualifications required for their registration
- increase the percentage of the workforce using our learning resources to achieve continuous professional learning
- increase the percentage of those reporting positively that our development activity is delivering the support required by the workforce.

To deliver our learning strategy we will:

- work closely with Scottish Government policy makers to ensure that support for workforce development reflects current and developing policy
- work with the sector and our partners to ensure qualification standards and the SSSC Codes of Practice continue to meet the current and future needs of employers, the workforce and public sector reform
- continue to develop innovative learning resources that support registration and continuous professional development of the workforce
- work collaboratively with partners to improve the digital capability and capacity of the workforce
- through our partnerships that drive quality assurance, support the social service workforce to drive improvement across the sector.

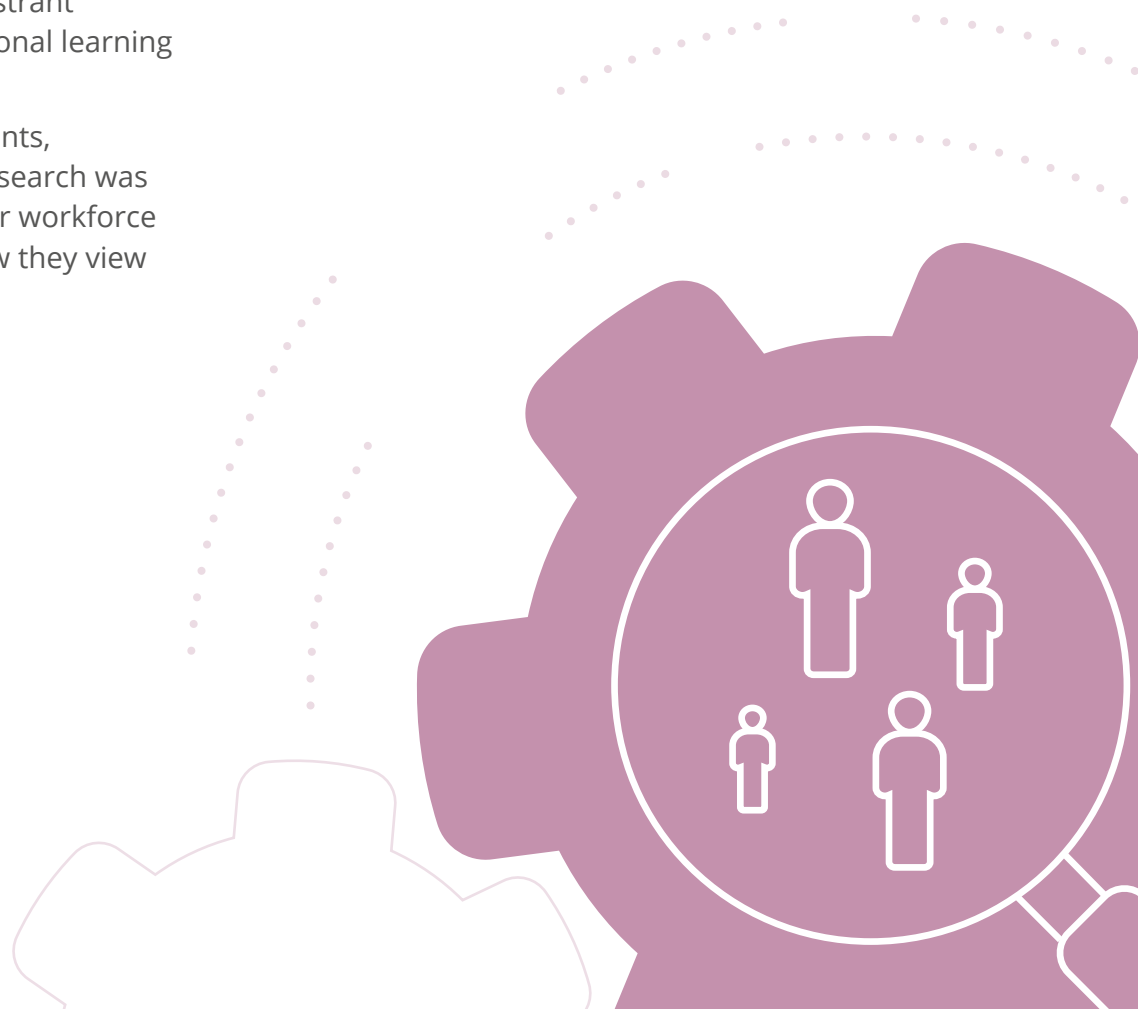


4. Research with people using our services

The strategy is informed by feedback from a range of stakeholders gathered in the course of our learning and engagement activity, through user insights research, analysis of the usage of our learning resources and feedback from registrant surveys.

All our learning resources have embedded feedback surveys and we ask registrants for feedback on our learning resources at several key stages of their registrant journey, including at the point of renewal and in our continuous professional learning records, as well as part of our annual registrant survey.

In 2020-21 we carried out three main pieces of research with our registrants, employers and our stakeholders that have informed this strategy. The research was extensive and provided valuable insights into how people understand our workforce development role, how aware they are of our learning resources and how they view our learning resources.



What the research told us

- There are issues with digital literacy that need to be overcome.
- There is a very cluttered learning and development landscape in the sector.
- Stakeholders want a single hub that presents access to all learning and development resources.
- Two thirds of registrants are aware of our learning resources and our role in promoting learning resources and opportunities.
- Those in management roles are most aware of our learning resources.
- Those who use our resources rate them very highly and would, or already have, recommended them to others.
- Our learning resources support the professional development of the workforce.
- The biggest barrier, other than time, to not using our resources is not knowing what is on offer.
- The majority of individuals want to access resources using a mobile device.

5. Key principles

The learning strategy needs to support social service workers to develop as self-directing and self-managing learners to collectively become a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. It also needs to support employers and training providers to develop learning cultures that support this.

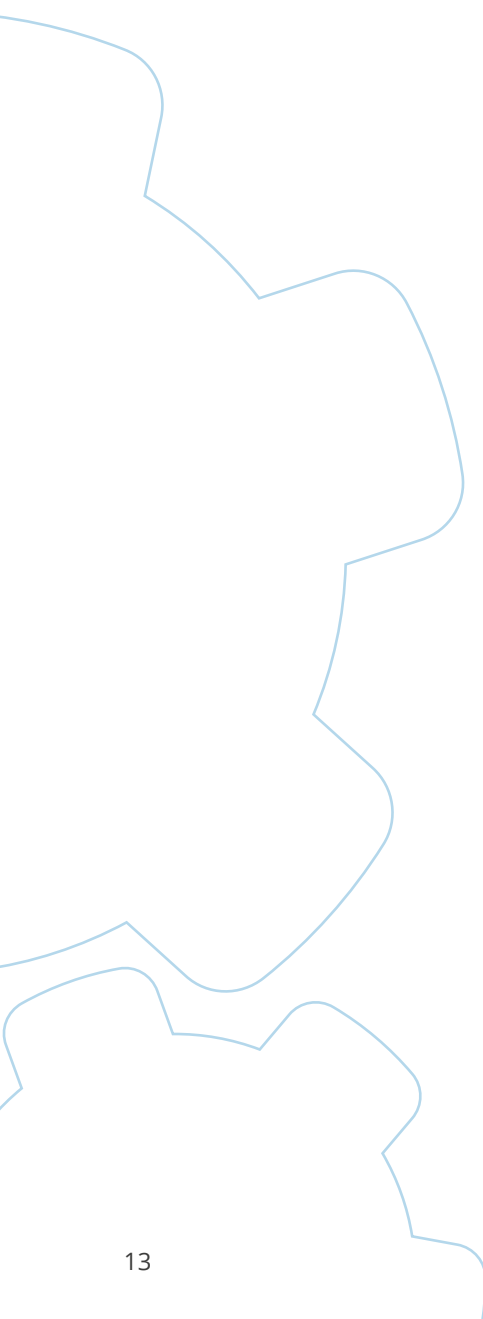
In addressing this, it is important to recognise there is a spectrum of learning capability in the workforce. While supporting more traditional and face-to-face learning where relevant, we will support learners to move from structured and prescribed approaches to learning to more self-directed learning and online remote learning. We are committed to working with employers to explore the impact of this move to learning that is more work based.

We acknowledge the need to work with learners and employers to recognise the interface between self-directed learning, recognition tools such as Open Badges, the prescribed requirements for qualifications (for example, SVQs) for registration and continuing professional learning (CPL).



The following key principles underpin the SSSC's work in standards and qualifications development and the creation of workforce learning and development activity and resources.

- 1.** Qualifications and learning resources are designed to maximise learning that takes place directly in the practice context (situated learning).
- 2.** Where it is not possible to deliver learning in the practice context, learning programmes and resources focus on complex problems and their solutions, and deliver learning in environments which simulate real world practice contexts as closely as possible (authentic learning).
- 3.** The development and use of digital capabilities is embedded in all qualification structures, programmes and learning resources as appropriate (digital and information literacy).
- 4.** Digital learning resources developed by the SSSC are mobile first to support accessibility.
- 5.** Learning activity is outcomes-focused.
- 6.** Reflection on learning and how it can be used in practice is actively encouraged in all learning activity.
- 7.** Recognition, recording and use of prior and current learning is supported and promoted, including the certification of informal learning.

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- 8.** As well as being structured to meet National Occupational Standards (NOS), learning activity is underpinned by frameworks and structures that contribute to personal and professional development, for example, the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, National Health and Social Care Standards, Continuous Learning Framework personal and organisational capabilities and leadership capabilities.
 - 9.** The SSSC works in collaboration with partners across the UK to develop learning activities and resources, seeks to minimise repetition of effort in learning and development activity and makes connections between different types of learning.
 - 10.** The SSSC models the learning it promotes to the sector and the six leadership capabilities in the way it leads the implementation of the learning strategy. The SSSC works collaboratively and creatively, motivates and inspires, promotes learning for everyone and works with others to ensure the SSSC's vision for learning is recognised and realised.
 - 11.** All learning activity has a strong evidence base. We explore and analyse sources of internal and external workforce data and intelligence, including sector skills reports, fitness to practise intelligence and Care Inspectorate inspection reports to inform learning and development activity.
 - 12.** The experience of people who use services, their families and carers and those working in the sector inform the design and development of our learning activity.
 - 13.** Career long learning is supported and workforce mobility, talent management and succession planning are encouraged.
 - 14.** We evaluate all learning activity.

6. Learning priorities

Our **Qualified Status of the Registered Workforce** (December 2020) and **Workforce Skills Report** (October 2021) have provided valuable data and intelligence about the skills requirements of the social work, social care and early years workforce. The Workforce Skills Report identified emerging skills needs and current skills gaps that need to be prioritised in our learning and development activity. We have identified the following priority areas which will be the focus of our learning activity until the end of the current strategic plan (31 March 2023).





Qualified status of the workforce

To increase the percentage of the workforce who hold the correct qualification required for registration we will:

- work with key partners including Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, the College Development Network and the Scottish Funding Council to develop an action plan to address the supply and demand gap analysis identified within the Workforce Skills Report
- promote funding opportunities
- consult the sector on potential changes to the qualification requirements for registration, including broader acceptability and portability of qualifications and the timescale given to achieve the correct qualification for registration
- support the sector to develop social care academies.



Career pathways

To enhance career pathways within social work, social care and early years we will:

- develop an integrated SVQ qualification to support individuals to work across health and social care settings
- develop and pilot an extended modern apprenticeship which supports individuals to work across both adult and childcare settings
- develop and pilot a graduate apprenticeship route for social work
- consult the sector on potential changes to the qualification requirements for registration, including broader acceptability and portability of qualifications
- promote our online careers toolkit
- support national recruitment campaigns.



COVID-19 pandemic recovery

To support the continued delivery of approved programmes and qualifications for registration, including student placements, that have been impacted by the pandemic we will:

- work in partnership with the College Development Network, higher education institutes (HEIs), further education (FE) colleges and the Social Work Education Partnership forum to monitor and address shortages in practice placement opportunities
- review and revise contingency arrangements to support programme delivery
- monitor and quality assure the delivery of approved programmes including any proposed material changes to ensure standards, rules and requirements are met
- evaluate the effectiveness of the Advanced Skills Module and 120 day placement contingency arrangement in supporting social work students to meet the required Standards in Social Work Education in order to qualify.



Trauma-informed practice

To support the role out of the National Trauma Training Programme and the social service workforce to become trauma informed, we will:

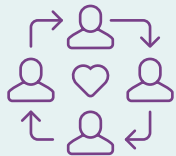
- review SSSC Codes of Practice
- promote National Trauma Training Programme resources and learning events
- support partners, including the Improvement Service and NHS Education for Scotland, to roll out the national training programme to social services
- support the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser at Scottish Government with the development and roll out of enhanced level learning resources for social workers
- endorse the national programme and host learning resources on the SSSC Learning Zone
- support HEIs to embed trauma learning in approved programmes
- deliver trauma training for all SSSC staff and fitness to practise panel members.



Digital capability and capacity of the workforce

To increase the digital capability and capacity of the workforce we will:

- support delivery of the digitally enabled workforce programme for health and social care
- lead delivery of the Technology Enabled Care Social Care Plan
- promote our 23 Things Digital resource
- support delivery of the workforce actions within the national cyber resilience action plan
- ensure the development and use of digital capabilities is embedded in all qualification structures, programmes and learning resources as appropriate, including the redesigned HNC Social Services and Health and HNC Childhood Practice as part of the SQA HN next generation project.



Review of Social Work Education NQSW supported first year in practice

To support the implementation of a supported first year in practice for NQSWs we will:

- in partnership with the sector develop proposed models for a supported first year in practice, including costings, for Scottish Government
- support the early implementation sites
- develop online learning resources to support NQSWs, employers and supervisors
- develop a new CPL process for NQSWs
- implement the agreed model.



Infection prevention and control (IPC)

To support the workforce to understand and implement best practice in IPC we will:

- contribute to the development, revision and roll out of national guidance
- update the SSSC COVID-19 IPC guide, as and when required, to reflect changes in national guidance and policy
- develop an online professional support tool
- work in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland to develop an IPC induction module
- work in partnership with Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland to develop an induction framework for adult social care to include IPC.



Quality improvement (QI) learning

To increase capability and capacity of the workforce to use the Model for Improvement we will:

- improve access to national improvement learning programmes
- maintain and expand the social services QI network and deliver QI learning forum events
- work in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland to develop social services specific resources to be included on the QI Zone
- support Scottish Improvement Leader (ScIL) trained people in social services to deliver foundation level QI learning in their own settings
- support delivery of the ScIL programme as a member of the NES QI Learning Faculty.



Leadership learning

To support leadership development at all levels we will:

- support development and delivery of the National Leadership Development Programme for Health and Social Care
- develop refreshed supervision learning resources for Step into Leadership
- develop a 23 Things ELC Leadership resource
- support development and delivery of specific Project Lift leadership learning activity
- support the roll out of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) leadership learning programme.

7. Resources

Our learning activity is funded by a combination of grant in aid funding, Workforce Development Grant funding and a variety of specific project grants from Scottish Government policy teams. The SSSC Learning and Development teams will lead activity with support from other SSSC teams and external partners.



8. Timeline

This strategy will be in place until 31 March 2023 and will remain flexible so we can respond to the rapidly changing circumstances during this time.

9. Evaluation and measuring impact

We will actively monitor the impact of the strategy and our learning activity through our monthly assurance reporting. We report on:

- the percentage of the workforce who have the qualifications required for their registration
- the percentage of the workforce using our learning resources to achieve continuous professional learning
- the percentage of those reporting positively that our development activity is delivering the support required by the workforce.

We regularly review and revise SSSC resources based on feedback from stakeholders or changes in policy.

In the longer term the impact of the strategy should be reflected in improvements in performance across the sector and the quality of services provided in Scotland and we will work with our partners to evidence this.



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