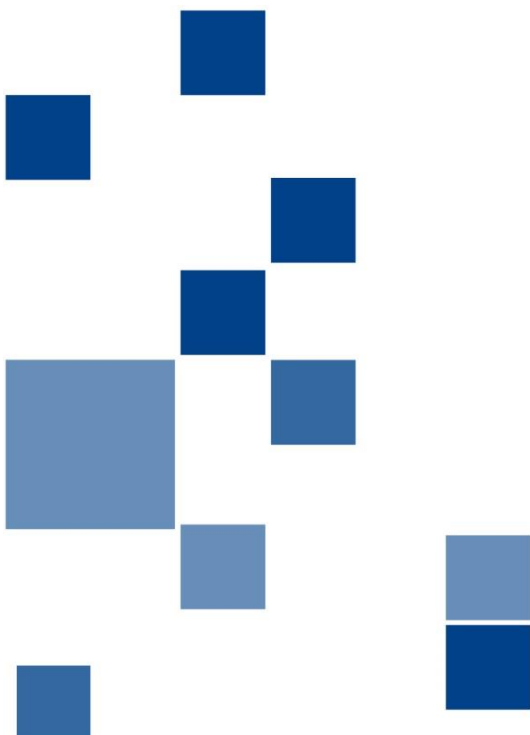




# **Future Proofing Programme Registration, qualifications and skills consultation analysis**

May 2022



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## Background

1. The consultation ran for 12 weeks from December 2021 to March 2022 featuring questions framed around several key areas. We experienced a high level of engagement and 6533 total survey responses were received.
2. Respondents generally agreed with most of our proposals but some concerns were expressed including the possibility of expanding the information available on the public facing Register and potential changes to qualifications.
3. We recognise that each group of respondents presents their own distinct profile and our forthcoming decisions on registration, qualifications and skills will be made after careful consideration of all submissions.

## Profile of respondents

4. Once blank responses were discounted, the remaining submissions were broken down into the following groups:
  - 3558<sup>1</sup> individuals (includes registrants)
  - 777 employers
  - 243 people who care for a person who uses social services
  - 223 on behalf of an organisation which represents people who use social services/carers
  - 142 on behalf of other organisations
  - 39 people who use social services
5. 3700 respondents identified as registrants and just over 3000 of those told us what part of the register they were on. The total number of responses from each register category is detailed at table 1<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents to the survey were asked to select from a list in what capacity they were responding i.e. individual, employer/service provider etc before being asked if they were a registrant. 84% of 'Individual' respondents went on to select that they were also 'Registrants'.

<sup>2</sup> Where there are less than 10 respondents from a register category, the actual number of respondents has been withheld to protect anonymity.

**Table 1**

<b>Register Part</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
<b>Managers of a day care of children service</b>	233
<b>Practitioners in a day care of children service</b>	657
<b>Support workers in a day care of children service</b>	141
<b>Manager of a residential school care accommodation service</b>	<10
<b>Supervisor in a residential school care accommodation service</b>	<10
<b>Worker in a residential school care accommodation service</b>	<10
<b>Manager of a residential childcare service</b>	22
<b>Residential childcare worker with supervisory responsibilities</b>	34
<b>Residential childcare worker</b>	90
<b>SCSWIS authorised officer</b>	19
<b>Manager of an adult day care service</b>	23
<b>Manager in a care home service for adults</b>	28
<b>Supervisor in a care home service for adults</b>	86
<b>Practitioner in a care home service for adults</b>	71
<b>Support worker in a care home service for adults</b>	322
<b>Social Worker</b>	359
<b>Student</b>	36
<b>Manager of a housing support service</b>	45
<b>Supervisor in a housing support service</b>	46
<b>Support worker in a housing support service</b>	240
<b>Manager of a care at home service</b>	61
<b>Supervisor in a care at home service</b>	79
<b>Support worker in a care at home service</b>	437

## Registration

### Reduce the number of Register parts

#### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

6. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:
- Q7: Will reducing the number of Register parts be an improvement to the current structure?  
  
3411 total responses  
88% responded 'Yes'
  - Q8: How much would this change make the registration information we publish on our website more easy or difficult to understand?  
  
3391 total responses  
70% responded 'Somewhat or very easy'
  - Q9: Will the proposed new structure help to provide a more flexible approach to how care is delivered?  
  
3301 total responses  
71% responded 'Yes'
  - Q10: Do the proposed five new Register parts accurately describe these workers?  
  
3270 total responses  
86% responded 'Yes'

### Summary of key stakeholder responses

7. Most stakeholders indicated agreement with the above questions. There were some exceptions and comments added requesting that other details be considered.

8. Representative bodies expressed that a reduction in the number of Register parts would make the information published on our website somewhat difficult to understand. One commented that to grow the school age childcare workforce, a wide range of new staff need to be attracted and that many in the sector do not find it helpful to be classified the same as staff in early learning and childcare.
9. A trade union submitted that a smaller list of broad groupings has advantages including helping employers and workers in services that are larger to deploy staff flexibly across a more diverse range of integrated activities.
10. They stated that children's residential care should be separated from early education and childcare as these staff are engaged in social care roles rather than education. They also seek clarification that social workers who work in residential childcare should register under the social worker register part and not under the part in which children's residential care eventually sits.
11. Other regulators expressed that the reduction in Register parts enhances an integrated approach. One commented that new categories will make transition between roles easier but that the broader categories will need clear definitions to make sure they are easily understood.

## **Getting registered: Make registration processes quicker and easier**

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

12. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:
  - Q14: Will changing the regulations make it easier for employers to comply with the requirements?  
  
2998 total responses  
75% responded 'Yes'
  - Q15: Is three months after starting their role an appropriate timescale to require workers to apply for registration  
  
3018 responses  
78% responded 'Yes'
13. Employers and service provider respondents were not as strongly in agreement with these questions when compared to service users and carers. 69% of employers and service providers agreed with question 14

and 70% with question 15 whereas 80% of service user respondents agreed with question 14 and 91% with question 15.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

14. One representative body and a trade union did not agree that changing regulations will make it easier for employers to comply with requirements.
15. A different representative body along with the same trade union did not agree that three months after starting a role would be an appropriate timescale to require workers to apply for registration.
16. A trade union questioned the proportionality of reducing the period to three months. They state that their understanding of the reasoning is that this proposal is to address the administrative logjam as the current six-month deadline approaches. They consider that the likely outcome will be to shift the logjam to the earlier deadline.
17. The trade union is concerned about the impact on low paid workers as in their experience, the main reason people don't register immediately is because they cannot afford it. Their preferred solution to this is for employers to pay the annual registration fee. They cite the outcome of the Scottish Government's decision to cover the cost of registration fees for new starts having an immediate impact in speeding up applications for registration. An alternative they suggest would be to allow applicants to pay the fee at the end of the registration process which we state takes an average of 27 days.

## Information on the public Register

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

18. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:

- Q19: Should the public Register on our website show the level of role someone is carrying out, such as manager, supervisor, practitioner, support worker?

2921 total responses  
75% responded 'Yes'

- Q20: Should the public Register online show whether someone has the qualification for their role or not?

2911 total responses  
64% responded 'Yes'

- Q21: Should the public Register online show fitness to practise warnings and conditions, that are currently on a separate area of the website?

2902 total responses  
55% responded 'Yes'

- Q22: We are considering publicising information about additional practice qualifications registrants may hold, for example mental health officer awards and practice teaching awards. Should the public Register show if a registrant holds an additional qualification?

2904 total responses  
62% responded 'Yes'

19. Despite the responses being more positive than negative for each of these questions, the margins were narrow for some groups. These are detailed below:

- Q20: Employers/service providers – 57% 'Yes' and 43% 'No'
- Q21: Employers/service providers – 51% 'Yes' and 49% 'No'
- Individuals – 54% 'Yes' and 46% 'No'
- Q22: Employers/service providers – 58% 'Yes' and 42% 'No'
- Individuals – 62% 'Yes' and 38% 'No'



20. Service user respondents to question 21 were in stronger agreement with our proposals including warnings and conditions:
- Q19: 75% 'Yes' and 25% 'No'
  - Q20: 70% 'Yes' and 30% 'No'
  - Q21: 63% 'Yes' and 37% 'No'
21. Most of the respondents to these questions did not agree that any other information we had not identified should be shown on the public Register.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

22. An emerging theme were concerns around the registrant privacy. Several representative bodies for both the sector and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) do not agree that the level of role should appear on the public register. These organisations, in addition to a trade union and a regulator, also do not agree that the public Register should show whether someone has a qualification or not.
23. Two representative bodies agree that the public Register should show if a registrant holds a qualification for their role and an additional qualification such as mental health officer and practice teaching awards.
24. An emerging theme were concerns around the registrant privacy. One representative body commented that the proposed changes to the public Register were seen as an invasion of registrant's privacy.
25. A trade union has serious concerns about the efficacy and legality of the proposal to publish more information. They are particularly opposed to proposed changes regarding fitness to practice and/or conditions placed on practice. The change to include this type of information is in their view punitive, unnecessary and unjustified.
26. Another representative body stated that the inclusion of additional information is out of kilter with the goal of reducing and simplifying the Register.
27. One regulator suggested that the public Register could show information on current employer/service provider registrants work for.

## Ongoing registration period

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

28. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:

- Q27: Will removing the need to renew registration be an improvement over the current requirements?

2811 total responses  
90% responded 'Yes'

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

29. Most stakeholders except for one representative body agreed that removing the need to renew would be an improvement.
30. In terms of transitioning the workforce to this proposal should it be implemented, a trade union commented that the completion of an annual declaration represents a significant change for registrants and that a reduction to two years at least for an interim period might work better. They also propose that there be some agreement on a 'no fault' missing of the date in the first year of any regime to implement this change while awareness beds in.

## Qualifications and skills

### **Flexibility of qualifications**

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

31. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:

- Q31: Should the SSSC be more flexible and accept SVQ units gained in adult or childcare settings for registration in other roles?

2648 total responses  
89% responded 'Yes'

- Q32: Should the SSSC develop a new SVQ qualification that would support individuals to work across different roles and settings.

2639 total responses

79% responded 'Yes'

- Q33: How much more or less would qualifications that are accepted for different roles support new models of care?

2605 total responses

76% responded either 'a little more support' or 'much more support'

- Q34: How helpful would qualifications that are accepted for different roles be to address recruitment and retention pressures in the sector, especially in remote and rural areas?

2599 total responses

84% responded either 'a little helpful' or 'very helpful'.

- Q35: How much more or less attractive would a career in the sector be if qualifications were accepted for different roles?

2606 total responses

81% responded either 'a little more attractive' or 'much more attractive'

- Q36: Taking into consideration our key principles and criteria that underpin all our qualification standards, are there any other qualifications we should consider for any of the Register parts?

- Free text responses highlighted below at paragraph 34.

32. Respondents from employers/service provider and individual groups both overwhelmingly agreed with questions 31 and 32. Most employers/service provider respondents also felt that the proposal in question 34 would be either a little or very helpful.
33. For question 35, the majority of employer/service provider and individual respondents felt that qualifications being accepted for different roles would make a career in the sector either a little or much more attractive.
34. Question 36 prompted a range of suggestions. Although not exhaustive, a sample of other qualifications for consideration are as follows:
  - Housing qualification for housing support service workers
  - Play-work for early years practitioners
  - Management qualifications for social work managers.

## **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

35. Most stakeholders who gave a response agreed with and support all our proposals regarding qualification flexibility. Most responses also indicated that flexibility to accept qualifications for different roles would not make a career in the sector less attractive.
36. Two representative bodies, one for the sector and the other for HEIs, do not agree that a new SVQ qualification would support individuals to work across different roles and settings.
37. A HEI representative body considers that there are sufficient crossover qualifications that could be used rather than a new one created.
38. A representative body commented that the current SVQ landscape is already confusing and cluttered and that it was difficult for them to make comment without additional information about what the new SVQ qualification would look like.
39. One regulator was supportive of the proposals but stated that current workforce challenges could be addressed through increased flexibility within professional roles and boundaries rather than through changes to qualifications. They also state that whilst they would wish to see a strong, qualified workforce at appointment rather than qualifying staff post appointment, they suggest that appropriate roles and responsibilities are based on experience, knowledge and skills identified pre-qualification if applicants are appointed without a qualification.
40. A trade union stated that they understand the rationale for having a new SVQ qualification for registration acceptable for different roles and settings. They state that this would not address other outstanding barriers to labour supply related to qualifications. These include lack of access to placements and a shortage of assessors.
41. Local authority respondent's views indicated that the proposal to develop wider acceptance of SVQ units appears positive and supports the intention of increased flexibility across a wide range of care roles, a more flexible Register and new and emerging roles. They consider that developing qualifications must be seen alongside other issues and challenges in the sector such as improving the narrative and understanding of social care as a profession.
42. In response to question 35, one representative body highlighted that to address the recruitment crisis the expansion of school age childcare will create over the next 4-5 years, the SSSC should be open to looking at a wide and diverse range of qualifications already held by candidates. They

state that those who are qualified in sports, arts and drama, outdoor ranges, management, HR and business skills are also badly needed, especially in the mainly third and private sector services.

43. In terms of question 36, key stakeholder respondents indicated issues with the current qualification framework becoming overcomplicated but did have suggestions around what other qualifications might be. A representative body referred to recent workforce surveys and events where the school age childcare sector wants to see a much wider range of qualifications, the priority being play-work followed by youth work and a range of qualifications for supporting children with additional support needs and disabilities. Another stated that we should consider Care Practice Licences.

### **Level of qualification for support worker level in adult social care**

#### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

44. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:
- Q40: Should the qualification requirement for support workers in housing support be at SCQF level 7?  
  
2268 total responses  
59% responded 'Yes'
  - Q41: Should the qualification requirement for support workers in care at home be at SCQF level 7?  
  
2255 total responses  
59% responded 'Yes'
  - Q42: Should we introduce an additional Register part for practitioners at SCQF level 7 to allow employers to decide what level is most appropriate?  
  
2233 total responses  
66% responded 'Yes'

45. Respondents from these categories gave a mixed response to the following questions:
- Q43: How much easier or more difficult would recruiting to these roles be, if the qualification level was changed?
  - Q44: How much more or less likely would individuals be to join the workforce if the qualification level was changed?
46. Although the majority of respondents did agree with the proposals, questions the responses were more marginal. At question 40, 54% of employers/service provider respondents agreed with there being a requirement at SCQF level 7 however 46% did not. The results at question 41 were similar with 55% agreeing and 45% not.
47. Individuals' responses were not hugely dissimilar. At question 40, 61% agreed and 39% did not and for question 41, 61% agreed and 39% did not. Service users and carer respondents also did not significantly agree with the proposals set out in these questions.
48. Considering question 43, 33% of employers/service provider respondents considered that recruitment would be a little or much easier but 42% expressed that it would make it either a little or much more difficult. Question 44 results for this group also indicated marginal support with 38% responding that individuals would be a little or much more likely to join the workforce and 33% stating it would be a little or much less likely.
49. Question 43 and 44 responses from individuals also indicated limited support for our proposals. At question 43, 37% of respondents stated that if the qualification was change it would make it either a little or much easier to recruit to these roles and 36% responded that it would make it a little or much more difficult. For question 44, 38% of individual respondents felt that the qualification change would make individuals a little or much more likely to join the workforce and 32% responded that it would make individuals either a little or much less likely to join.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

50. Most key stakeholder respondents did not agree with our proposals at questions 40 and 41 but one regulator did agree. At question 42, a representative body and a trade union agreed with the introduction of an additional register part at level 7 to allow employers to decide what level is most appropriate.
51. For question 43, respondents felt that recruitment would be either a little or much more difficult and for question 44, that individuals would either be a little or much less likely to join the workforce.

52. A HEI representative body commented that an uplift in the SCQF level required for registration would have a detrimental impact on worker 'pipeline' supply and would diminish attraction of the sector through an extended learner journey.
53. They state that it would be extremely challenging for a care at home or housing support worker to generate the evidence to meet the requirements of an SVQ3 (SCQF level 7+) and a subsequent level increase for registration. The tasks and responsibilities associated with these roles are more suited to the level 2 award.
54. Concerning economic reality, they add that organisations' pay scales are typically linked to qualifications. From the perspective of affordability, they question how the sector would finance an anticipated increase in salaries for those who move from SCQF level 6 to SCQF level 7.
55. In conclusion, they state that any imposition of a registration requirement to achieve a higher qualification may result in workers leaving the sector due to a number of reasons including inability (or unwillingness) to undertake further studies, pursuit of a career elsewhere with better or equal pay, with a prospect of no requirement to achieve a SCQF qualification. They ask that this recommendation be rethought.
56. A third sector representative body submitted that the increase from SCQF level 6 to 7 comes with an increased cost. They state that voluntary sector providers are not funded for the cost of financial training and other than the voluntary sector development fund there is no other financial support available to workers. This means that workers who do struggle financially will face a further burden to pay for a more expensive qualification in addition to registration and PVG fees.
57. In a local authority response, a Council stated they are keen to support staff who wish to progress their careers and achieve the SVQ level three but express concerns. Amongst these are apprehensions that qualification costs would substantially increase for all support workers to become SVQ 3 qualified and this could result in an increase in recruitment costs due to staff turnover as a result of them leaving due to not wishing or feeling able to undertake the qualification.
58. A trade union stated that increasing the formal requirement for registration from SCQF 6 to SCQF 7 is fraught with difficulty if it is not adopted within a wider range of measures. They comment that in any other profession, raised qualifications are linked to grading, pay and reward. They add that if there is an intensification of the training obligation on workers with no increase in pay, this undermines sector recruitment, drives turnover and reduces both the capacity and quality of care as whole.

59. They state they anticipate that the proposal to change the qualification level will create significant salary issues and have a substantial equal pay impact.
60. Other local authorities believe that there is a need to support ongoing professional development in social care but believe that a universal move in this direction would be likely to have a number of unintended consequences, not least that it could impact negatively on recruitment and retention and would have wider financial implications.
61. A representative body stated that the proposal to change this qualification is of concern from the sector due to the current situation regarding lack of staff and difficulty in recruiting social care workers. They commented that if such a qualification was properly funded and paid for appropriately, social care staff could obtain a level 7 qualification in accordance with their skill level.

## **Length of time to complete qualifications**

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

62. Most respondents from these groupings who answered the question posed did not consider that changing the time to gain a qualification would ensure individuals complete the required qualification on time.
63. Question 48 asked 'How much easier or difficult will this change make to ensuring individuals complete the required qualification on time?' 61% of employer/service provider respondents felt it would make it either a little or much more difficult contrasting with 23% who responded a little or much easier. For individual respondents, 50% stated that the change would make it a little or much more difficult with 26% responding that it would make it a little or much easier.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

64. Most key stakeholder respondents to question 48 stated that the proposed change would make it either a little or much more difficult for individuals to complete the required qualification on time. One representative body for the sector and another for HEIs responded that it would make it neither easier nor more difficult.



65. A third sector representative body commented that the proposals being based on SSSC data mean they are not sector led. They state that SSSC data shows that qualifications are gained in around three years but the changes proposed risk losing those staff who take longer and will generally have a good reason for this, such as family/caring responsibilities and working part time hours.
66. They add that most voluntary sector organisations are large and would struggle to maintain the pace of completion for the workforce especially given the current levels of turnover. The organisation hopes that changes to the health and care worker visa will allow asylum seekers to be employed and for any of these workers, English may not be their first language therefore support will be needed to allow sufficient time to gain qualifications.
67. A trade union stated that it has always been difficult for employers to release staff from duty to attend training. They consider that reducing the qualifying period from five to three years simply intensifies a pre-existing workforce development problem and releasing staff for training is only realistic if the change is matched by investment.
68. They comment that the proposed reduction in timescale may disadvantage certain groups who are more likely to need to take time out from study, for example female students with dependents or disabled students including individuals with mental health difficulties, or people doing zero hours jobs.
69. They state that it must be taken into consideration that very many social care staff are having to study for qualification unpaid in their own time. They ask that the practicality of the proposed reduction be considered within the wider context of the staffing crisis.
70. A representative body stated that consideration must be given to the current context and situation, specifically the large backlog of staff nearing the end of their qualification criteria period due to the impact of the pandemic. They state that our proposals in this area must not result in further numbers of staff leaving social care as they have not completed the required qualification on time.
71. Another representative body commented that the school age childcare sector cannot compete with offering full time jobs at the living wage and adding to this low pay and part time work, a three-year limit to complete a qualification, often within the worker's own time, will make it harder for the sector to recruit and retain staff.
72. Another further representative body commented that three years is a reasonable timescale to achieve a qualification, but the timescale should

be set at a period appropriate for all individuals to avoid excluding or disadvantaging specific groups.

## **Return to Practice**

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

73. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:

- Q53: Should there be a return to practice process for social workers?

2235 total responses  
86% responded 'Yes'

- Q54: Should there be a return to practice process for other Register groups?

2222 total responses  
79% responded 'Yes'

74. Respondents from both employer/service provider and individual groups were overwhelmingly agreed with these proposals.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

75. All key stakeholders that responded to questions 53 and 54 agreed with our proposals.

76. One representative body commented that if there was a streamlined process and a clear and easy pathway back to the sector, some workers may choose to return after a period away. Another stated that the introduction of return to practice process would align the SSSC with other professions but it should be simple and the timescale be extended to at least three years.

## **Continuous Professional Learning**

### **Summary of responses from: registrants, individuals, employers, service users, carers, organisations which represent people who use social services/carers and other organisations**

77. Most respondents to the following questions from these groupings agreed with the proposals:
- Q58: Should the SSSC be able to set mandatory training for CPL requirements?  
  
2285 total responses  
70% responded 'Yes'
  - Q59: Should there be mandatory CPL requirements for those new into role?  
  
2281 total responses  
77% responded 'Yes'
  - Q60: Should there be annual CPL requirements?  
  
2269 total responses  
63% responded 'Yes'
78. Regarding question 60, when all responses are considered together, 63% agreed and 37% did not. At employer/service provider level, agreement increased slightly to 66% and for individuals, decreased slightly to 61%.
79. Although more than half of respondents agreed with the annual CPL requirement, it is important to note that there was not a huge difference between those who did and did not agree with the proposal.

### **Summary of key stakeholder responses**

80. Key stakeholder responses to our return to practice proposals varied. Regarding question 58, responses from a regulator and three representative bodies agreed that we should be able to set mandatory training for CPL requirements, however, two other representative bodies disagreed.
81. For question 59, a regulator and two representative bodies agreed that there should be mandatory CPL requirements for those new into role. A third sector representative organisation, a HEI representative body and two sector representative bodies did not agree.

82. Under question 60, one representative body and a trade union agreed that there should be annual CPL requirements whereas other representative bodies do not agree.
83. A regulator questioned how the mandatory training for CPL requirements would work in practice and be implemented. They also state that mandatory training may also result in less flexibility for them as a regulator to respond to current and emerging for their staff, and also any changing role/expectations of them. They added that they would wish to see a retention of individual flexibility to address personal development needs for staff and that existing resources such as the national induction resource could be signposted rather than creating a separate, new mandatory training.
84. One representative body commented that if some aspects of CPL are made mandatory, there should be free online training courses to cover the mandatory elements. The school age childcare workforce being part time and low pay means that making some core requirements mandatory penalises those who can barely afford to pay for further training.
85. Another considers that mandatory CPL for registered staff is useful but this should not be onerous or complex to evidence. Additionally, they do not consider mandatory CPL for those new to a role to be the province of the SSSC. Their view is that mandatory CPL and the induction should sit with employers.

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