

A National Conversation on a New Dementia Strategy: Discussion Paper

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social work, social care and early years 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 social workers, social care and early years workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. 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 work, social care and early years services and their employers
- register people working in social work, social care and early years and make sure they adhere to our codes of practice
- promote and regulate their learning and development
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for the social work, social care and early years workforce in Scotland.

Consultation questions

1. What does dementia mean to you and those around you?

In the SSSC's view, dementia is an umbrella term for a range of conditions which include Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and others. Dementia is a condition which affects the brain and the way people behave, act and think. For the SSSC, dementia and dementia care is not only about clinical diagnoses, but also about being a driver to enable and equip those working in health and social care to have the skills to support people with dementia. This includes supporting their families and carers and to maximise their rights, choices and health and wellbeing at all stages of their dementia journey.

The SSSC works collaboratively with organisations across Scotland to provide training and support for the social work, social care and early years sectors. We worked in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and other partners to support the development and implementation

of the Promoting Excellence (PE) framework across the integrated workforce. Governance for the framework comes from the Promoting Excellence Programme Board, chaired by Alzheimer Scotland with membership including Scottish Government, people living with dementia, the Scottish Dementia working group (SDWG), Carers, Care Inspectorate, Health Improvement Scotland and others.

Promoting Excellence sets four levels of knowledge and skills that workers need based on their role. These are:

- Dementia informed practice
- Dementia skilled practice
- Enhanced dementia practice
- Expertise in dementia practice

To ensure there is a holistic approach to supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers, we developed the Dementia Ambassador role. Dementia Ambassadors (DAs) support the social services workforce to improve their dementia knowledge and skills and to access and use the Promoting Excellence framework and suite of resources. DAs work in a variety of social care and public service settings and seek to improve the lives of people with dementia and their families. DAs work closely with colleagues and the wider workforce to support the development of knowledge and skills, increasing awareness and promoting learning opportunities. DAs are expected to be working at the dementia skilled practice level.

We recently held a session with a group of DAs to gather their views on the questions contained in this consultation. Their thoughts and views will be provided along with the views of the SSSC.

We asked the DAs what dementia meant to them, a selection of their answers follows:

"It's a journey and not all is what it seems."

"Dementia is a term used to describe a journey experienced by people with a disease of the brain, supporting people to live well with dementia is the key."

"Dementia is complex and has many different facets affecting individuals in their own unique way. For many people with sight loss there is a lack of understanding of how to support these individuals, leading to exclusion and isolation."

"Dementia is a challenging journey for many people, it is something we can all make less difficult."

2. What supports work well for you?

The SSSC offers a wide range of resources for workers supporting people living with dementia. For example our online dementia guide [SSSC Learn Dementia](#)

To support the DAs in their role and develop a sustainable community of practice, information is shared through sessions and webinars hosted by NES, Alzheimer Scotland as well as the SSSC.

Our dementia ambassadors highlighted that they found the following aspects of the current supports useful:

- That there is effective partnership, open engagement and information sharing across agencies and communities to ensure there is a holistic approach to supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers
- There is a range of education, training and accessible resources for the workforce which help to enhance individuals' lives and increase their participation and inclusion in activities
- The current learning resources can be uploaded to organisations' learning management systems which is convenient.

3. What challenges need to be addressed?

The SSSC believes that the social work, social care and early years sectors in Scotland are a committed and compassionate workforce. It is our experience, which is supported by the views of the DAs, that individuals working with people living with dementia, are dedicated to making sure they, their families and carers access and participate in the best possible care and support. However, the sector faces serious challenges due to reduced staffing levels.

Difficulty in attracting and retaining workers puts pressure on the existing workforce and limits their ability to engage meaningfully with learning and development opportunities. Making sure that the social work, social care and early years sector is seen as an attractive and rewarding career choice would help to alleviate the pressure on the existing workforce and allow individuals with dementia to continue to be offered and to participate in the best care possible, now and in the future.

Some of the key themes that came out of our session with the dementia ambassadors were:

- There is a need for early/earlier diagnosis
- There is a lack of knowledge about Self Directed Support and how it can be used to enhance lives, including end of life for people living with dementia, their families and their carers

- Making sure workers have time and capacity to undertake learning and development is difficult
- There is a need for learning resources which can be accessed and completed quickly to allow workers to incorporate learning into their busy schedules
- There is a need for more multi-disciplinary training and learning about how dementia interacts with other medical conditions such as sight and hearing loss.

4. How would addressing these challenges change lives?

The SSSC believes that working towards making the social work, social care and early years sector a more attractive and respected sector would change lives in two ways. Firstly, increasing the profile of the sector would help to attract more talented workers into the sector, which would help to alleviate workforce shortages in the sector and would mean that individuals supported by social work, social care and early years services, including people with dementia, would be offered the best possible care and support. Secondly, raising the profile of the sector would mean that those currently working in it would feel valued and respected for the work they do. This would mean that it may be easier to retain workers than it is at present. Attracting more people into the sector would also increase the overall employment level in Scotland as the demand for workers in the sector is growing as Scotland's population ages.

Some of the key themes that came out of our session with the dementia ambassadors were:

- Better quality of life, better quality of support available for those living with dementia in communities, in their own homes and in care home
- Improve confidence and reduce frustration in workforce, empowered workers would result in better experiences and support, individuals would feel comfortable, settled, empowered to express choice and feelings
- Reduction of stigma for people living with dementia, strengthen support for individuals receiving diagnosis, help to come to terms with changes, as well as benefits for and from families and carers
- Greater emphasis on prevention, improve support for families before crisis arises

5. What do we need to build on/learn from what has been done before?

The SSSC believes that strengthening workforce capacity and promoting dementia learning should remain as priorities. The commitment to

support the implementation of Scotland's Promoting Excellence framework should also continue. To extend the reach of the Promoting Excellence framework, the SSSC will continue to collaborate with NES, as Promoting Excellence partners, and wider stakeholders to explore options including the possible development of a new Modern Apprenticeship framework in dementia based on the Dementia Skilled level and resources.

Our dementia ambassadors highlighted that, going forward we should:

- Continue strategic support for social work, social care and early years sector organisations to develop training and learning with consistent, individualised, meaningful outcomes
- Explore how we create meaningful, empathy-based activities
- Build on the Promoting Excellence framework, for example through a review of the Dementia Skilled improving practice resource, to cover a wider section on sight, hearing loss and sensory impairment
- Promote good dementia care which attracts younger age groups to work in the sector
- Work in partnership across the SSSC and other stakeholders to promote the social work, social care and early years sectors as a career of choice
- Through the use of self-directed support, offer a compassionate system that doesn't gatekeep support
- Develop, adopt and ensure support throughout a person's dementia journey
- Introduce accessible meeting centres across communities.

6. What else would you like to tell us?

We would like to take this opportunity to reflect some additional views from our DAs. Our DAs wished to highlight:

- The sector needs to be future focussed and develop and roll out learning resources in media, apps and digital formats that people can access, including on mobile phones.
- There is a need to strengthen links between the SVQs required for SSSC registration with the Promoting Excellence framework and the updated guidance on using learning from Dementia Skilled resource (2016).
- Support for workers should be extended for workers supporting people who are blind or partially sighted to improve enablement. This would increase involvement in activities, avoid individuals feeling isolated and being unable to access safe spaces.

- There is a need to ensure opportunity for voices of people living with dementia to be heard.
- Staff working with people with dementia want change and improvement resources, they are passionate in their roles, 'they care and want to be knowledgeable'.
- There is a desire for greater access to good quality training and continuous professional development. There is a lot of demand for a recognised certification or qualification in relation to dementia care.

Scottish Social Services Council

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