

SDS Improvement Plan 2023-2027, SSSC response (February 2023)

We welcome the Self-Directed Support (SDS) Improvement plan and the continuing focus on the four outcome areas. This approach supports a consistent and longer term measurement of the impact. We welcome references to wider national policies and strategies and the recognition of the pressures on the system, faced by everyone including employers, workers and families accessing SDS. There may be a case for providing further information in the plan around the impact of capacity pressures in some areas, particularly in remote and rural parts of the country.

We play a key part in promoting and delivering SDS and we continue collaborating with key stakeholders to implement this plan. This response highlights examples of the links with our activities.

We appreciate that there is a short timescale for this consultation. Our response focuses on the impact of actions on the workforce and briefly explores some of the implications for social work training and continuous professional learning. We are happy to provide further information if helpful.

Outcome 1 – Leadership

- a. Please enter your comments on this draft outcome area [max 3000 characters]
- b. Do you have any suggestions for how the impact of these actions could be measured?
- c. Do you think any of these actions should be prioritised in the first year of the Improvement Plan?
- d. If you represent a group or organisation, would your group/organisation be interested in being involved in these actions if they are included in the final Improvement Plan (pending detail around funding)?

We welcome and support the focus on leadership within the plan. It is critical that staff feel equipped and supported in their role. Our leadership activity has a focus on person-centred and relationship based approaches. It also promotes the importance of citizen leadership and developing leadership at all levels. Further information is available from our resources, such as the Step into Leadership Website and the 23 Things Leadership resource. The plan should also make connections with Leading to Change. We are happy to provide further information if helpful and welcome the opportunity to continue supporting these outcomes.

We agree with the proposal of a learning / improvement approach and would welcome the opportunity to share our experiences from our wider work to support Improvement Learning. The plan could also make a connection with the [Care Experience Improvement model](#).

Outcome 2 – Systems and culture

- a. Please enter your comments on this draft outcome area [max 3000 characters]
- b. Do you have any suggestions for how the impact of these actions could be measured?
- c. Do you think any of these actions should be prioritised in the first year of the Improvement Plan?
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We support the proposed actions under outcome 2, and welcome opportunities to share learning from related areas of workforce activity. Involving people with lived experience and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies is essential in making sure those policies meet the needs of those who use them. This approach is also in keeping with the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#).

We support the proposed action that social workers have the authority, and are enabled to exercise professional autonomy, to plan support and set personal budgets within agreed parameters. This approach aligns with the proposed principles of professional autonomy in the advanced practice framework for social workers.

We agree that it is important for SDS principles to be embedded widely across relevant policy, legislation and systems. We participate in a range of strategic and policy forums and promote values based and person centred approaches as embedded in our [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#) and the Health and Care standards. We are currently [reviewing the Codes](#) and are due to launch the new version in 2024. The revised Codes will reinforce the importance of ensuring that people are aware of their rights and choices.

We support the importance of continuing to develop best practice models and promoting the SDS resource library both within our [Newly Qualified Social Work \(NQSW\) website](#) and the [National Induction Framework](#).

Outcome 3 - Worker autonomy, skills and practice model

- a. Please enter your comments on this draft outcome area [max 3000 characters]
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We agree that it is helpful to bring together relevant partners to consider and progress options to improve SDS education within pre-qualifying programmes. These partners may include the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP), HEIs and ourselves. This approach must consider the autonomy of individual programmes and how the knowledge and skills for SDS aligns with other national priorities such as the focus on a trauma-informed workforce. Our [Future Proofing Programme](#) has a focus on a new model of Continuous Professional Learning. We welcome opportunities to engage with the SDS Collaborative to ensure the model best supports the knowledge and skills needs and wider social services workforce around SDS. We are supporting the development of the advanced practice framework and welcome the inclusion of SDS as a skills area.

We agree that a person-centred approach to care provision and resource planning is the best way of delivering the right outcomes for users of services. We support an asset-based approach to assessment and review.

Outcome 4 - Supported person and carers' choice and control over their support

- a. Please enter your comments on this draft outcome area [max 3000 characters]
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- d. If you represent a group or organisation, would your group/organisation be interested in being involved in these actions if they are included in the final Improvement Plan (pending detail around funding)?

We support all actions under this outcome, in particular action 4D, that personal assistants (PA) are further recognised and supported within the social care workforce. We are working with colleagues at Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and others to develop a better understanding of the size and scope of the PA workforce in Scotland. This work supports workforce planning and will enable the needs of PAs to be better understood and represented in national policy making.

We contribute to the work of the PA Programme Board and Training sub-group and are working to enable PAs to have access to career opportunities across wider social work, social care and children and young people services, as well as induction and learning resources that support them in their role.

We recognise that there are several complexities around the potential workforce regulation of personal assistants. The [Scottish Government's National Care Service: statement of benefits paper](#) commits to further work to understand the impact on the PVG and broader sensitivities and considerations. We support this approach.

**Scottish Social Services Council
February 2023**