

Partnership Agreement

(An agreement between the SSSC and UNISON)



Our values

- **Integrity**
- **Commitment**
- **Accountability**
- **Pride in what we do**
- **Listening and engaging**
- **Creativity and learning**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is committed to improving the standards of social work and social care services and recognises that this will be achieved through services being delivered by a competent, confident workforce and through listening to the views of stakeholders, in particular the people who use services and their carers.

We recognise that our employees are key to the organisation's success and we are committed to working in partnership with UNISON, our recognised trade union, to support constructive and productive employee relations.

The Partnership Forum provides the opportunity for UNISON representatives to discuss and contribute towards strategic decisions which affect the direction and operation of the organisation and to be involved in how we operate as an employer.

This document has been developed and agreed in partnership with our Trade Union colleagues and is in line with the Fair Work Framework which values are effective voice, security, fulfilment and respect.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF HOW WE WILL WORK TOGETHER

This Agreement sets out the Partnership Forum's aim to work in a spirit of co-operation based on mutual trust and respect to maintain a harmonious, productive and fulfilling workplace that proactively engages employees.

The SSSC acknowledges and believes that UNISON and all SSSC staff are partners in the process of change and organisational development and this Agreement supports the need for continuous improvement to support change through:

- Managing staff in an inclusive, fair and equitable way
- Supporting staff to meet the SSSC's strategic and operational objectives
- Supporting staff to accept, embrace and adapt to organisational change

The Forum aims to work collaboratively to contribute towards practices and skilled, knowledgeable, flexible and engaged employees.

Consultation through the Forum will be aimed at developing a shared understanding around changes to working practices, terms and conditions, and operates through an approach which is flexible and demonstrates an understanding of each other's position.

To support this, both the SSSC and UNISON are committed to the following principles during the consultative process:

- Building trust and mutual respect
- Being open, honest and transparent – ensuring a 'no surprises' culture
- Demonstrating top level commitment

- Having a positive and constructive approach, always aiming for agreements as an outcome of consultation and negotiation processes
- Demonstrating a genuine commitment to work with and learn from each other
- Having early discussions of emerging issues
- Being committed to ensuring high quality outcomes
- Respecting confidentiality and agreed external positions demonstrating a commitment to promoting equality and diversity throughout the SSSC

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Partnership creates a joint responsibility for the long-term success of the SSSC and the Forum is committed to demonstrating the SSSC's organisational values and to contributing to the strategic development of the organisation through innovative and creative collaborative working. The Forum plays a key role in the review and development of terms and conditions of service and human resources policies and practices. Therefore, to support the collective bargaining process being as representative of the SSSC's workforce as possible, membership of UNISON is encouraged through the SSSC's corporate induction process.

The SSSC will:-

- Encourage employees to become members of UNISON allowing new employees access to information about joining UNISON at corporate induction events
- Accept the legitimacy and the right of UNISON to represent, promote and protect the interests of their members
- Agree facility time and facilities arrangements for UNISON stewards to be able to represent members both individually and collectively in negotiations with managers
- Support reasonable time off for training of UNISON stewards to ensure the maximum benefit from partnership working
- Agree formal processes and procedures to ensure proper consultation/negotiations and good employee relations
- Encourage the role of UNISON to work jointly in as many areas of the SSSC's work as possible

UNISON will:-

- Agree formal processes and procedures to ensure proper consultation/negotiations and good employee relations
- Respect that the SSSC must work within the framework and policies set by the Scottish Government including confidentiality, financial and other resources requirements
- Represent individual and collective concerns within the principles of partnership working
- Work positively with line managers to resolve issues as quickly as possible at departmental level to avoid escalating these to Partnership Forum level
- Support, consult and train UNISON representatives

- Individual representation of employees through the SSSC's formal human resources policies e.g. grievance and disciplinary matters, absence management etc.
- Collective representation, including consultation and negotiation, of staff on all matters affecting welfare, working lives or conditions of employment within the SSSC

4. HOW THE PARTNERSHIP FORUM WILL OPERATE

Core membership of the Partnership Forum will be no more than four on each side:

- SSSC Chief Executive
- Head of Human Resources/HR representative
- A maximum of two other executive or operational staff as relevant
- UNISON Branch Secretary
- UNISON Regional Organiser
- UNISON Vice-Branch Secretary
- An SSSC UNISON steward

The Forum will be chaired alternately between the management and trade union side. The Forum will meet 4 times a year with additional meetings as required. An agenda and draft minutes from the previous meeting will be circulated one week in advance of each meeting. Health and Safety and Organisation Development will be standing items on all meeting agendas.

The Forum may co-opt persons with special interest or particular expertise to attend the Forum or serve on working groups. Meetings of working groups will be scheduled as necessary.

5. UNISON REPRESENTATION

UNISON will inform the SSSC in writing of any changes of UNISON stewards and representation within SSSC. UNISON will ensure that all time and facilities provided to UNISON representatives will be used appropriately and cost effectively and ensure that all representatives are familiar with the terms of this Agreement.

6. FACILITY TIME

The SSSC will provide reasonable time off and facilities to enable UNISON to work in partnership with the SSSC in accordance with Appendix 1 and 1A of this Agreement.

7. RESOLVING FORMAL DISPUTES

The SSSC and UNISON will endeavour to first resolve any dispute between them through the Partnership Forum. However, both parties recognise that agreement will not always be possible despite the best endeavours of all involved.

In the event that there is a formal failure to agree between the SSSC and UNISON and this is acknowledged at the Partnership Forum then the matter will be dealt with through engaging an external body e.g. ACAS to assist in seeking resolution and avoiding potential industrial action. Both the SSSC and UNISON reserve the right to seek assistance from an external body in order to settle any dispute.

Either party may seek such assistance, however the basic principle is that it will be agreed, before seeking the assistance of an external body, discussion will take place between the Chief Executive, HR Manager and UNISON Branch secretary.

In the event of a formal dispute being declared by the SSSC or UNISON, the conditions which existed before the circumstances causing the dispute will continue to apply until the matter is resolved. Similarly, no action will be taken by the SSSC against UNISON or any employees involved. During a period of dispute both the SSSC and UNISON will where possible reach agreement on interim arrangements to allow work to continue while attempts are being made to resolve the dispute.

Agreements reached, with the assistance of the external organisation will be recorded in writing, signed and dated by the Chief Executive/Official of all parties, with a copy for each side. Where agreement has been reached between the parties all sides agree to be bound by those agreements. Resolutions reached at this stage will incorporate an undertaking that should either the SSSC or UNISON subsequently determine that the agreement is unsatisfactory they will seek to resolve this without recourse to unilateral action or industrial disruption and will agree an independent assessor to review the agreement as required and have the right to seek a review before taking action.

Final resolution will be the acceptance by all parties of the outcome of the review and recommendations made by the assessor.

8. REVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The terms of this Agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Agreement as adopted by the SSSC and UNISON

(Signed) Lianne Gray
Chief Executive, SSSC

Date 19 December 2018

(Signed) aw Pagan
UNISON

Date 19th December 2018