

Plan 24-30 (January 2024)**1. What progress has been made to date with your organisation's work to keep the promise?**

Our [Future Proofing Programme](#) is a key part of our drive to keep the promise. The programme follows the Independent Care Review's call on regulators to 'declutter and streamline professional codes, procedures and processes.' We want registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to be simple, easy to understand and for people to know about the benefits and value of being registered. We also want people to know about the standards, skills and qualifications needed to deliver high quality care.

Revised Codes of Practice

In May 2024 we will publish the revised [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#). The review of the Codes of Practice to uphold a rights and relationship-based approach is a key action in The Promise's Change Programme ONE. The work to revise the Codes reflects many of the priorities and ambitions set out by the Promise. The revised Codes:

- have a focus on trauma informed practice and relationship-based practice
- are aligned to the [Health and Social Care Standards](#)
- address many of the points identified during the consultation process such as a need for the language to be clearer, more engaging and easier to relate to for encouraging good practice.

We are working with The Promise Scotland to develop a resource that will help children and young people to understand and engage with the Codes.

Reviewing the Common Core for the Children's Workforce

Change Programme ONE identifies the need for a national values-based recruitment and workforce development framework which will be adhered to by all organisations and people involved in supporting children and families. As part of that commitment we are leading work to refresh and embed the [Common Core of skills, knowledge and understanding and values for the Children's workforce in Scotland](#). Further information is set out in our response to question two.

Review of qualifications and skills

We want registrants to have the right skills at the right time in their careers.

- We are setting new requirements for registrants' continuous professional learning (CPL). Our proposals will identify the essential skills and knowledge for each register group. The approach will set out proposed pathways for registrants and specialist pathways. It also has seven core learning elements and suggested learning topics. Trauma informed care and distressed behaviour training are included in our list of learning topics. Child protection, adult protection and trauma informed practice will be mandatory requirements for all register groups.
- We are introducing Return to Practice (RTP) requirements for social workers who have been out of practice and who have not registered for over two years. We want to make sure that social workers can update their knowledge, skills and competence while building their confidence to practice. Social workers would demonstrate learning across four themes as part of their registration application. One theme is on adult and child protection.
- The new CPL and RTP models will come into effect from June 2024 subject to legislative approval.

Promoting a Trauma Informed Practice approach

We support the Scottish Government and our partners to develop a trauma informed and trauma responsive workforce and services. We continue to promote the [National Trauma Training Programme](#) resources. We are working with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and other partners to promote the National Trauma Transformation Programme's learning resources. We want to embed trauma informed practice in qualifications, CPL requirements and programme delivery. We want our learning resources to be accessible to all and to make sure the workforce has increased access to wellbeing support.

- We have an endorsement process which recognises the NES national trauma training and learning resources that support the social work, social care and children and young people workforce to gain the specialist skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role. We monitor and review the resources to ensure they remain up to date for current practice. We signpost to these resources in the suggested learning to meet the mandatory CPL requirements and specify the required level of training for different roles.
- Trauma informed practice is now referenced on our Newly Qualified [Social Work website](#).
- We have embedded QR codes into the national trauma training modules so that learners can record their learning via our [My Learning App](#) and the NES Turas platform.

- We are supporting the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser's work on the development of reflective practice resources to support social workers.

We want to be a trauma informed organisation. We want to use language that is inclusive, welcoming and follows trauma informed practice.

- Fitness to Practise staff have had trauma informed training and a session on the Trauma Informed Justice Framework.
- We have established a Trauma Informed Champions Group. The Group uses a trauma informed lens to consider implications for the SSSC. The group are reviewing our policies and are considering training for our wider workforce.
- Panel members have been receiving training and awareness sessions on trauma informed practice since 2021. Members have recently had training on the Trauma Informed Justice Framework and trauma informed questioning.
- We have renovated our office and hearing rooms, using a trauma informed lens to provide calm, suitable spaces.

2. What has worked well, and what hasn't?

Putting the promise at the centre

We continue to put the promise at the heart of what we do. Our commitment to keeping the promise is set out in our [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#).

Reviewing the Common Core for the Children's Workforce

The work to revise the Common Core for the Children's Workforce has been slower than anticipated. There are several reasons for this such as pressures on the sector impacting key stakeholder ability to engage and support this work. The original timescale was to develop the revised Core by end of March 2024. Our expectation is that we will have a revised framework which will be ready by the end of the first quarter of 2024/25. The revised Common Core will require an implementation plan and support to make sure that it is meaningful and helps to drive values-based recruitment and workforce development. We are exploring how the framework could be embedded into children's planning partnership reporting requirements. The revised framework will be agreed with the National Children and Families Leadership Group to ensure multidisciplinary buy in and support and will be taken forward by the Children's Services Reform Unit in Scottish Government. There are plans for a Ministerial launch of the revised framework.

Supporting workers to learn, develop and feel supported

We want the social work, social care and children and young people workforce to feel supported by the SSSC, employers and others to learn and develop throughout their career and to deliver high quality services by taking responsibility for their learning practice. We provide extensive learning support for workers, employers and others. For example, in recent years our learning activity has supported the development of:

- the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland
- Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019
- Staying together and connected: getting it right for sisters and brothers national practice guidance.

In 2023 we launched the [National Directory of Continuous Professional Learning \(CPL\) for the Early Learning and Childcare Workforce](#). The directory has modules on topics such as supporting parents to engage in child development and building confidence in identifying and responding to additional support needs.

Providing authoritative data to identify trends and inform workforce planning

As the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce we are in the unique position of holding reliable information on the registered workforce. [We recently published a report on the 168,000 people on our Register](#). The data helps Scottish Government, employers and others to identify trends and supports workforce planning.

We continue to publish data on vacancies and key policy priorities. For example, in 2022 and 2023 we published a [report examining ten years of residential childcare workforce data](#) and a report on the [movement of day care of children workforce](#). These reports provide critical information on the profile of the workforce and inform the expansion of funded early learning and childcare.

Supporting people to access their rights

We must do more to support children, young people and adults to access their rights. We are looking at how we can do more to make our resources accessible as we prepare for the commencement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

3. What will be the focus in the coming year, and what are the challenges in doing so?

Refreshing the Common Core

We are leading work with children and young people and key stakeholders to refresh and embed the [Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Understanding and Values for the Children's Workforce in Scotland](#). We will work with key partners to support ongoing implementation of the framework.

Implementing the new Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers

We will work with The Promise Scotland to develop a resource to help children and young people to access and engage with the Codes.

Review of the National Occupational Standards

We are working with our UK sector skills partners to undertake a review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS). The NOS describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that a worker needs to be competent at their job. All qualifications accepted by the SSSC to meet qualification requirements are underpinned by the NOS. The review will identify current skills gaps such as trauma informed practice. The review will revise the language and strengthen elements of the current qualifications to meet ambitions in the Promise such as upholding and promoting rights and compassionate care. We will consider children's views as part of the review. The review will be complete by December 2025.

Supporting trauma informed practice

We will continue to drive and support trauma informed practice. We are developing a survey for social workers to develop a better understanding of professional supervision and how it supports trauma informed practice. We are particularly focused on the reflective practice element of supervision. We will continue our work with HEIs to identify how trauma informed learning is incorporated into social work degree programmes.

Improving our regulatory processes

The next steps for the implementation of the Future Proofing Programme are a key priority. As part of this programme we plan to make changes to the register. One of the key changes will revise the timescales that registrants have to complete relevant qualifications from five years to three years. These changes would apply to new people joining the register. Workers who need two qualifications – such as residential childcare workers – would continue to have five years to get them.

Before we can make any changes our legislation will have to be updated. The Scottish Government recently held a consultation on our proposals. If our legislation is updated we would start making changes to registration processes in early 2024 ahead of the go live date in summer 2024.

Supporting people to work in social work, social care and children and young people

We work with Scottish Government and others to promote career pathways. We continue to scope graduate apprenticeship routes and new pathways for senior phase pupils. We are also consulting on a new integrated qualification which would allow individuals to work across different roles and settings. The consultation closes on 31 January.

In September 2023 the SSSC and Care Inspectorate published [Safer recruitment through better recruitment](#). The new guidance has sections on promoting care experience throughout. The guidance also has links to support and advice.

Supporting vulnerable Fitness to Practice witnesses

Care experienced children and young people may be asked to attend a hearing as a witness, although this is rare. We support all vulnerable witnesses – including care experienced children and young people – to attend hearings. We assign a hearings officer to support a witness before, during and after a hearing. Special measures can be put in place to protect vulnerable witnesses when giving evidence in hearings. These can include using a video link, using pre-recorded evidence, or using a screen. We are securing an advocacy and intermediary service for witnesses and members of the public complainants. We are also considering further improvements as part of the Open University's Witness to Harm project examining witnesses' experiences of Fitness to Practice hearings.

Reporting on progress and identifying our priorities

We are finalising our next care experience (corporate parenting) and children's rights reports. These reports set out further information on our recent progress and our planned activities over the next three years. We continue to raise awareness of the promise and why it is critical to the SSSC. We use impact assessments (IAs) to develop activities which are fair and do not disadvantage anyone. We are revising the IA process to maintain a focus on keeping the promise, promoting children's rights and embedding trauma informed practice.

We will continue working in partnership with key stakeholders. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on corporate parents to collaborate. We work with partners such as the Care Inspectorate and Disclosure Scotland. For example, we worked with Disclosure Scotland to create a podcast offering advice to people who are concerned about past convictions. The podcast encourages employers to view lived experience as an asset. We want to share best practice and learn from others and we take part in Who Care's Scotland Corporate parenting network.

4. What is needed to make sure your organisation can make the contribution it needs to keep the promise?

We need continued support to deliver the priorities in this paper and our wider work to keep the Promise. For example, we need the continued support and commitment of partners to deliver and implement the revised Codes of Practice, the new Common Core and to embed trauma informed practice. We also need ongoing support and partnership to make sure that these resources can deliver the key changes that are required to keep the promise.

**Scottish Social Services Council
January 2024**