

Future Proofing Programme – achievements

November 2024

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Introduction

1. We introduced the revised Codes of Practice for workers and employers on 1 May 2024. We followed this with the launch of the following changes on 3 June 2024.
2. We launched:
 - a revised Register structure, including new levels and types
 - a new annual declaration process
 - new qualifications requirements and timescales
 - a new model for CPL and for social workers returning to practice, and a new website for CPL
 - new information on the Public Facing Register.
3. We expect that a range of benefits will be realised as a result of this work over the next year and beyond. We will monitor progress of these over the coming months. Detail of these benefits, including those realised to date, is included in the programme closure report.
4. This report presents a summary of achievements and successes identified through delivery of the programme.

Changes to the structure of the register

Reduced number of register parts

5. We successfully moved 178,000 workers on the previous 23 register parts onto the new four-part structure. This makes it easier for workers to move roles as they no longer have to be removed from one part and apply to re-register on another. We can see some of the effects of this already, with 1,711 workers removed due to ineligibility in October 2024 compared to 2,603 in October 2023 - a reduction of 34.2%.
6. This has also resulted in improved clarity for workers and employers as there are fewer workers now on multiple parts of the register. At the end of November 2023 there were 55,910 workers on multiple parts. As of 7 November 2024, this has reduced to 3,325 workers on multiple parts.

Timescales to apply for registration

7. We amended legislation to introduce a new requirement for workers to apply for registration within three months of starting a new role, and to be registered within six months. Encouraging workers to apply for registration sooner has a positive impact on public protection as well as on outcomes for service users.
8. The proportion of applications received and processed through green channel (without requiring manual intervention by registration staff) increased from 27% between June and October 2023, to 40% between June and October 2024.

Public Facing Register (PFR)

9. We started to publish additional information on the PFR including information on specialist qualifications and on fitness to practice.
10. We previously published fitness to practice information on a separate area of our website from the PFR. This is now available on the PFR, anyone searching for information on a worker now only needs to visit one area of our site.
11. Having this information in one place makes it easier to find and brings us into line with other equivalent regulators and the information they publish.

Continuous registration

12. We introduced continuous registration which involves an annual declaration process, replacing the previous 3/5 yearly renewal process. This means that the information we hold on workers is more up to date, which in turn should lead to improved confidence amongst people who use services and the wider public that those on the register are fit to practise.
13. We have linked the new CPL process to annual declaration and therefore we have an opportunity each year to remind workers of their responsibilities as a registered professional.
14. As of 7 November 2024, we have generated almost 83,000 annual declarations since launch on 3 June 2024, and over 63,000 workers have submitted or completed their declaration.

15. We had anticipated around 70%-75% of annual declarations going through the green channel process (without requiring manual intervention by registration staff) but we are consistently seeing over 90%. Between June 2024 and October 2024, we have completed 58,329 annual declarations, with 56,965 going through green channel.

Reviewing qualifications and standards

Flexibility of qualifications

16. Where a worker has an existing qualification for their role working in a service for adults, we now accept that qualification if the worker moves to a comparable role within a children's service - providing the role they are moving to has the same SCQF level requirement. The same applies if a worker looks to move to a comparable role from a children's service to an adult's service. This improves the flexibility of the workforce and allows workers to move more easily between adult and children's roles.
17. In practice this means that, for example, a worker in a children's service with an appropriate SVQ in childcare can use this to move into a role with adults, without needing to gain a further qualification.
18. Where there are any gaps in knowledge, we will require workers to undertake additional continuous professional learning.
19. This also has positive impacts on supporting new models of care, for example in rural and remote areas, while improving career pathways for workers.
20. Flexibility of qualifications will also reduce the demand on training providers as fewer registrants will have a qualification condition.

Timescales for qualification

21. We reduced the timescale for most new registrants in a function-based register part to gain a required qualification from five years to three years. This will lead to increased public protection and provide reassurance to people who use services and the wider public that workers have the required skills to carry out their roles.
22. For workers in adult services, this will come into effect from June 2025. This delay was introduced in response to address issues specific to part of the sector relating to significant ongoing staffing and retention pressures.

Continuous professional learning (CPL)

23. We designed and introduced a new model of continuous professional learning in collaboration with workers and employers. The new CPL model is linked to the annual declaration.
24. By moving away from the previous model of recording hours/days, we focus more on key skills and knowledge needed at specific career stages, for example during induction or when moving roles.
25. To support the new process, we developed a website (<https://learn.sssc.uk.com/cpl/>) which helps workers to identify appropriate training and learning from a range of sources, based on their role. Since we



launched the site in June 2024, we have had almost 75,000 visitors, with around 75% of those (53,000) actively using the site to look for results to their query. Some of the most popular pages include 'Introduction to CPL' (10,637 visits) and 'What counts as CPL (9,710 visits).

Return to practice (RTP)

- 26. We designed and introduced a new process for social workers returning to practice, with tiered requirements depending on how long the individual had been away from the profession. As with the CPL model, this was developed in collaboration with workers and employers.
- 27. The requirements mean that the public can be assured that social workers choosing to return to practice have the competence, skills and knowledge required to carry out their roles.
- 28. Between 3 June 2024 and 7 November 2024, twelve social workers have rejoined the register under the return to practice process. We had estimated that 40 people would be subject to return to practice requirements per year, and we will review this work from July 2025.

New practitioner level for Care at Home and Housing Support workers

- 29. We introduced a new practitioner level for workers in Care at Home and Housing Support services. This was in response to feedback from the sector to our proposals to change the qualification requirements for support workers from SCQF level 6 to SCQF level 7. Rather than change this requirement, we introduced an additional level to bring this part of the workforce in line with other register parts where practitioner levels already existed.
- 30. This change supports career pathways and progression and allows employers to decide on the most appropriate level for their staff, based on their service and the needs of service users.
- 31. As of 7 November 2024, 1,552 housing support practitioners and 1,294 care at home practitioners were on the register.

Reviewing the Codes of Practice

- 32. We revised the Codes of Practice for Employers and for Workers and launched these on 1 May 2024.
- 33. We developed the new versions in collaboration with workers and employers, and also involved a range of stakeholders and gathered views via consultation.
- 34. Between the launch of the Codes and 7 November 2024, with over 137,000 visits to our main Codes webpage, 'The SSSC Codes of Practice' and over 34,000 downloads of the Codes themselves, including accessible formats such as large text and easy-read versions.
- 35. Our concertina card summary version of the Codes is designed as a quick reference for workers and employers. We have sent over 105,600 copies of these to workers and employers between launch and 7 November 2024.
- 36. We also provide a range of supporting materials including posters and postcards for use within services. Between launch and 7 November 2024, there



were over 13,000 downloads of the posters and 7,700 downloads of the postcards.

Consultation and stakeholder engagement

37. Throughout the programme we sought to engage as widely as possible with a range of stakeholders. We did this across a series of consultation surveys and events and through the establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Group, which met each quarter.
38. The aim of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) was to increase our direct engagement with a defined group of stakeholders drawn from across the sector, including from representative bodies and Scottish Government. We held quarterly meetings and the success of these has led to the group becoming a permanent standing group which will help us to inform the creation, delivery and improvement of processes and services across the SSSC. The first formal meeting of the permanent group is scheduled for early 2025.
39. Our first consultation, on our proposals for changes to the structure of the register and to qualifications and skills, ran between December 2021 and March 2022. We recorded over 6,500 responses to this consultation, the highest number of responses we have had to any consultation. As a direct result of the feedback from respondents, we made a number of changes to our proposals, which we presented to Council in November 2022.
40. Our next consultation focused on the Codes of Practice. The consultation survey ran between April 2023 and July 2023 and received over 480 responses. Alongside this, we held six online events and ten in-person events, aimed at gathering views and suggestions from workers and employers on the structure of the proposed draft Codes. The in-person events were held across Scotland and 110 people attended in total, with a further 98 attending the online sessions.
41. Our final formal consultation activity related to our proposed models of CPL and RTP, held between September 2023 and November 2023. Our consultation survey was supported by six online focus groups for the CPL model and three focused on RTP, held in October and November 2023. We received almost 230 responses to the survey, and 315 people attended across the focus groups. Feedback from this helped us to refine the final models before launch.
42. As we approached go-live for the programme, we scheduled online information and Q&A sessions for workers and for employers. These began in late March 2024 and we continued to run them up to and beyond the go-live date, with final sessions held in mid-July 2024.
43. We held 19 sessions at varying times of the day to ensure the widest possible availability for people to attend. Across all events there were 1514 attendees (716 workers, 798 employers) who had the opportunity to ask questions directly to SSSC staff working on the programme. During these sessions we played a pre-recorded summary video, highlighting the key changes the programme would introduce. For those unable to attend a session, we also posted the video on our website alongside a set of frequently asked questions, which we regularly reviewed. We also heard from employers who were using the video within their services as part of their own work to ensure their employees were up to date with the changes.

44. Between September 2024 and October 2024, we used this format to hold 2 sessions on the new CPL model. 242 people attended these events, and we have 1 further session scheduled for 21 November 2024, with potential further sessions in Spring 2025 depending on interest.

Conclusion

45. The strong level of engagement we saw throughout the programme, from our initial consultations and related events on our early proposals through to the feedback on our draft versions of the Codes of Practice and CPL model, led us to make changes to our proposals in line with feedback from workers, employers and other key stakeholders.
46. We are actively working with the SAG to build on that engagement into 2025/26.
47. We have identified a range of benefits related to each of the projects and we have already realised some of these, in some cases immediately on launch in June 2024. We recognise that the majority of the benefits will take longer to realise and we have a structure in place to ensure that we continue to monitor and report on these regularly as we move into business as usual.
48. We also have a related process in place to make sure we take the lessons learned from this programme into consideration on future projects appropriately, to ensure that these, and lessons learned from the programme are taken into consideration for future projects.
49. As the programme closes, we have a clear plan in place to support ongoing delivery of the changes we have introduced and to build on the successes of the programme.



Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Tel: 0345 60 30 891
Email: enquiries@sssc.uk.com
Web: www.sssc.uk.com

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