

<b>Title of Report</b>	Chief Executive's Report
<b>Public/Confidential</b>	Public
<b>Summary/purpose of report</b>	To provide Council Members with an update from the Chief Executive.
<b>Recommendations</b>	The Council is asked to note the information contained in the report.
<b>Author</b>	Maree Allison, Chief Executive
<b>Link to Strategic Plan</b>	<p>The information in this report links to:</p> <p>Outcome 1: <b>Trusted</b> People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise.</p> <p>Outcome 2: <b>Skilled</b> Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice.</p> <p>Outcome 3: <b>Confident</b> Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce.</p> <p>Outcome 4: <b>Valued</b> The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people's lives.</p>
<b>Link to Risk Register</b>	<p>Risk 1: We fail to ensure that our system of regulation meets the needs of people who use services and workers.</p> <p>Risk 2: We fail to ensure that our workforce development function supports the workforce and employers to achieve the rights standards and qualifications to gain and maintain registration.</p> <p>Risk 3: We fail to meet corporate governance, external scrutiny and legal obligations.</p> <p>Risk 4: We fail to provide value to stakeholders and demonstrate our impact.</p>

	<p>Risk 5: We fail to develop and support SSSC staff appropriately to ensure we have a motivated and skilled workforce.</p> <p>Risk 6: The SSSC fails to secure sufficient budget resources to fulfil the financial plans required to deliver the strategic plan.</p> <p>Risk 7: Closed.</p> <p>Risk 8: We fail to have the appropriate measures in place to protect against cyber security attacks.</p> <p>Risk 9: Closed.</p>
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	An Impact Assessment (IA) was not required.
<b>Documents attached</b>	None
<b>Background papers</b>	None

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. As set out in the Executive Framework Document agreed by Scottish Government and the SSSC, the Chief Executive is accountable for the operational performance of the SSSC and responsible for organisational governance. This report provides an assessment of performance, highlights important information that has happened since the last full Council meeting on 21 November 2024, and look forward to emerging issues.

## **KEY POINTS**

2. Our Minister Natalie Don-Innes MSP visited in January and met with Council Members to discuss issues, as highlighted in the Convener's report. She then attended a workshop with staff who were looking at feedback on the successful Future Proofing Programme and some key improvement areas identified in the Registrant Survey. This was a positive meeting and it was helpful for the Minister to understand some of the issues the SSSC is trying to support across the sector.
3. Whilst Scottish Government announced in January that they would not proceed with the structural reforms and creation of a new public body as part of the National Care Service, on 17 February they presented their Stage 2 amendments including the creation of a National Social Work Agency as an agency of Scottish Government and the Chief Social Work Adviser as a statutory role. This is welcome news for the profession and we will work closely with colleagues in the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, clarifying the interface with our functions. Along with other stakeholders, I met with the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd on 5 February to discuss progress on the aims of the National Care Service after the decision not to proceed with the structural reforms.
4. On 17 February, the Minister for Public Finance, Ivan McKee, held a Public Service Reform Summit which I attended. The summit brought together leaders across the public sector to discuss challenges and focus for reform.
5. We have received the outcome of our triennial Investors in People assessment and I am very pleased to report that we retained Investors in People Gold award. The assessment has highlighted improvements across almost all measures and particular strengths are the positive culture within the organisation, our focus on staff wellbeing and an improvement in how we manage performance. Members have received a copy of the report and we will share it with staff this month.

6. Our consultation on registration fees has concluded and the outcome of that consultation is reported to Members elsewhere on today's agenda.

**OUTCOME 1: Trusted** People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise.

7. Our consultation on the registration of new groups is now live. We are consulting on the potential registration of workers in adult day care services, workers in offender accommodation services and social work assistants. We are consulting on whether they should be registered and if they are, the proposed qualification, Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) and fee requirements for each role. Any decision on bringing new groups onto the Register sits with Ministers and this consultation will inform their decision.
8. We carried out an internal review of fitness to practise hearings and processes to enhance our person-centred approach. The review concluded with recommendations for improving the experience for all parties, which we will implement in the new financial year.
9. We are carrying out initial scoping work for a replacement case management system to support our fitness to practise work. Our existing system is coming to the end of its life with the supplier intending to move it to open source and sunset support.

**OUTCOME 2: Skilled** Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice.

10. We collaborated with NES and the TURAS team to create technology that links the SSSC MyLearning CPL app with the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) TURAS Learn platform. This integration lets learners track progress on National Induction modules and share it via the MyLearning app. It represents a significant step towards reducing duplication for learners, aligning with the Once for Scotland approach to continuous professional learning (CPL).
11. The MyLearning (v5) app launched on Google Play and Apple App Stores in January. It now aligns with the new CPL model, and its QR code functionality allows users to scan codes with their device camera without opening the app first.
12. In partnership with the Leading to Change team at NES, we held events, both in person and online, to support adult social care supervisors. These events target newly recruited supervisors or those working towards a supervisory qualification required for registration. They aim to connect

supervisors, discuss various aspects of their role, and cover supporting and supervising colleagues. Two more online events and one in-person event are scheduled for March.

13. We held two sessions (November and January) for employers to enhance their understanding our process for the assessment of qualifications of social workers who are internationally qualified and applying for registration with the SSSC. The learning from the sessions will help employers who recruit internationally to understand what is required and how to support their workers through the process.

**OUTCOME 3: Confident** Our work enhances the confidence, competence, and wellbeing of the workforce.

14. Our first 'Have Your Say' workforce wellbeing survey is now live. We aim to gather vital data from the workforce to help us and agencies like the Scottish Government understand their experiences and views on key issues. We will use this information to shape our work, offerings, and address important concerns for social work, social care, and children and young people's workers in Scotland. The survey covers topics such as well-being, pay, conditions, support, training access, and job experiences. We will conduct the survey annually to track changes and improvements. We will publish the results at the end of March 2025.
15. We have established the Dementia Network liaison group with NES, the Care Inspectorate, and Scottish Care to enhance a cooperative approach and support workers engaged in dementia learning and practice. We conduct quarterly online dementia network webinars for dementia ambassadors and other staff interested in dementia education. Additionally, we partner with NES and the Scottish Government to facilitate and develop the objectives of the Dementia Workforce Short Life Working Group (SLWG) to guide the implementation of the recent Dementia Strategy delivery plan.
16. In partnership with Social Work Scotland and the University of Strathclyde we have co-designed a series of relationship-based practice webinars for Social Workers. The webinars will take place during April and May 2025.
17. In collaboration with the Care Inspectorate, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Care, and the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland, we have published guidance for employing 16 and 17-year-olds in social care. This guide dispels myths about regulatory barriers, includes case studies and testimonials from employers, and provides practical advice on recruitment and onboarding, covering application processes, interviews, pre-employment communication, mentoring, and legal considerations.

18. As part of Cyber Scotland week 2025 we are hosting a free online event on 27 February 2025 to help improve cyber resilience across Scotland. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from senior leaders about what support and advice is available for organisations and their workforce. The event will also explore how we can help those using services to stay safe online.

**OUTCOME 4: Valued** The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people's lives.

19. We are publishing the first set of data from our leaver survey before the end of March. The leavers survey provided valuable data and intelligence about why people are leaving the registered workforce and for those who are not retiring, where they are moving to.
20. The SSSC, as part of the UK wide Skills for Care and Development Alliance, commissioned research into the economic and social value of the UK adult social care sector. The research analyses the adult social care sector's economic and social value in the UK as a whole and in each of the four nations using data from 2022/23. It is used to inform the economic case for investment in the social care sector and its workforce in the UK as a whole (as well as having national breakdowns). It is also used to inform policy making and national spending review decisions on investment. The total direct, indirect, and induced value of the adult social care sector in Scotland was £5.2 billion. It was estimated that for every £1 spent in the sector, there was £1.98 in socioeconomic benefits. The UK and Scotland report can be found here <https://data.sssc.uk.com/8-pages/383-economic-and-social-value-of-the-uk-adult-social-care-sector-scotland>
21. We have updated our Careers in Care website to highlight new career stories sharing and promoting different experiences and pathways people working across the sector have taken and what motivated them to take up various roles in the sector. These stories are used to promote opportunities within the sector during Scottish Careers Week in November.
22. We published our latest six-monthly social work vacancy report in November 2024. Key findings from the report are:
  - There was a 5.3% increase in the whole time equivalent (WTE) number of practising social workers between December 2023 and June 2024.
  - The WTE of practising social workers had also increased by 15.1% between December 2019 and June 2024.

- There were 6,212 WTE practising social workers in June 2024. This is the highest number since records began in the 1990s.
- The data from June 2024 shows an increase in WTE vacancies compared to the December figures but a decrease in the vacancy rate from December 2023, down from 10.3% to 9.3%.
- In June 2023 the vacancy rate was 12.9% compared to 9.3% in June 2024.
- Vacancy rates varied by fieldwork team, however high rates in the children and adult fieldwork teams suggest an increasing demand for social workers.
- Vacancy rates are higher for main grade posts than senior posts.
- At the Scotland level the WTE per 100k population has increased from 99 Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in December 2019 to 113 in June 2024.
- Between December 2023 and June 2024, the WTE of generic fieldwork social workers decreased while all others increased.

## **SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION**

23. We held the first formal National Stakeholder Advisory Forum that was established post FPP. The meeting was well attended from key partners across the sector and discussion provide valuable insights into some of the work the group will help us look at and shape in the future.
24. We will publish the Registrant Survey results in March 2025. Our recent survey results show positive increase in responses across most of the questions asked. We had very positive responses to the changes brought in by Future Proofing Programme (FPP).
25. We concluded our pilot project to implement the use of Co-Pilot AI software. The pilot received good feedback and a decision will be made about full implementation shortly. The Digital Development Programme Board agreed to set up a working group of officers to further investigate the use of AI in the delivery of our services and functions. Research into the use of AI in other regulators will start in 2025/26 to inform our needs.
26. We have staffing matters to discuss with Council which I will cover under the private part of the agenda.

## **HORIZON SCANNING**

27. **National Care Service (Scotland) Bill:** In January, the Scottish Government announced plans to remove Part 1 of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill but keep Parts 2 and 3, pending Parliament's approval. The proposed NCS National Board will be replaced by an independent Advisory Board, which may advise Ministers on areas such as support for the workforce and Fair Work. A letter from the Minister for

Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport to the Convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee outlines next steps, including plans for a national approach to social work, improved complaints processes and continued implementation of Anne's Law. It also mentions good progress on plans for sectoral bargaining for social care workers. On 17 February Scottish Government announced the Stage 2 amendments which include the National Social Work Agency and the statutory Chief Social Work Adviser.

28. **Post-School Education and Skills Reform:** In January, the Scottish Government confirmed that will change the funding system for universities, colleges and apprenticeships. Responsibility for national training programmes including apprenticeships will move from Skills Development Scotland to the Scottish Funding Council. Legislation will be published shortly, and the changes are scheduled for autumn 2026.
29. **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill (Members Bill):** The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee is currently scrutinising the Bill. Some responses to the Committee have highlighted the need to consider the role of social workers. Others have highlighted the need to support and upskill the workforce if the Bill is successful. The Committee's provisional timetable of evidence is due to end on 4 February. We wrote to the Committee to highlight the impact on the registered workforce of the proposals.
30. **Adults with Incapacity Amendment Act:** In 2025 the Scottish Government has committed to bringing forward a Bill in 2025 which will amend the Adults with Incapacity legislation. In January, the Scottish Government published an analysis of responses to a consultation on the Bill and noted that most respondents supported the proposals. The consultation covers areas such as the role of Mental Health Officers (MHOs), including reports and guardianship forms.

## CONSULTATION

31. Internal Stakeholders have contributed to this report. This report also provides information on how we are working with partners and stakeholders to support the sector.

## RISKS

32. There are no risks identified.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Resourcing**

33. There are no resourcing issues identified.

### **Compliance**

34. There are no compliance issues.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

35. An impact assessment is not required because this report is for noting.

## **CONCLUSION**

36. This report provides a broad overview of activity across the organisation.