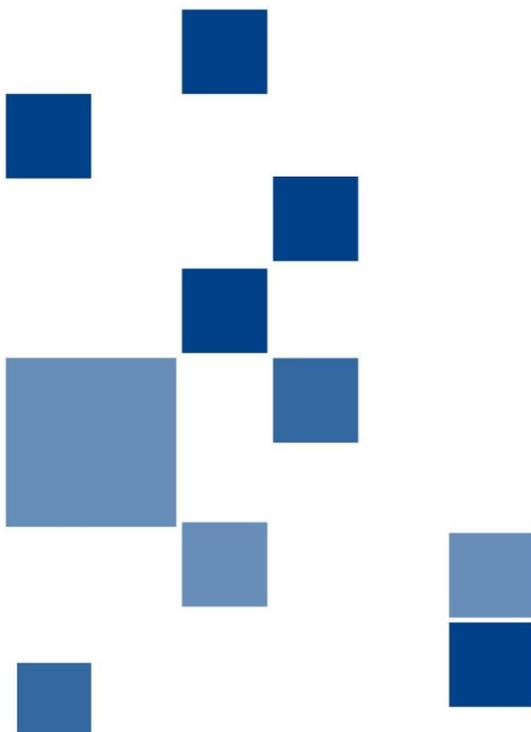




Future proofing programme: Proposals for delivery of revised qualifications

Equality Impact Assessment

November 20



Why the proposal is needed

We opened the Register to social workers back in 2003 and since then, we have gradually introduced registration to other categories of the workforce including people working in early years and children's, adult and older people's social care services. We now have more than 164,000 people on our register.

As social work, social care and early years services, and the way people access and use them, have changed over the past 20 years, so to have the skills, knowledge and qualifications that the workforce need to be able to deliver the kind of high-quality care we want for Scotland.

How the proposal contributes to our strategic objectives and/or priorities

The Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 sets out the way that our work aligns with the Government's [National Performance Framework](#). The programme is particularly aligned to three outcomes.

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We grow up loved, safe and protected so that we realise our full potential.
- We have thriving and innovating businesses with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.

The proposal will contribute to the following strategic outcomes:

Outcome 1: People who use services are protected by ensuring the regulated workforce is fit to practise.

Outcome 2: The SSSC supports and enhances the development of the registered workforce to deliver high standards of practice and drive improvement.

Outcome 3 : Our workforce planning activities support employers, commissioners and policy makers to deliver a sustainable, integrated and innovative

Outcome 4: The social work, social care and early years workforce is recognised as professional and regulated and valued for the difference it makes to people's lives.

How the proposal will meet our equality duties

We believe that the main way the proposals laid out in this document will meet our equality duties is by advancing equality of opportunity across the social work, social care and early years sectors in Scotland.

The wider acceptance and portability of qualifications for various register parts will support individuals to have wider career opportunities and reduce the barrier of having to gain additional qualifications to change roles within the sector.

The return to practice standards might be particularly helpful for people who have had to take extended time away from work such as women or men who have taken time out to raise children in evidencing to potential employers that their practice is up to date

Setting the qualification requirements at a level that accurately reflects the roles they are required for will assist in demonstrating the complexity of the roles, that the workforce is highly skilled and help to support the professional identity of the role. This may assist in national discussions regarding Fair Work

Consultation

In developing the proposals laid out in this document, we consulted with the following:

- Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser
- Mental Health and Social Care Directorate
- Early Years Directorate
- Children and Families Directorate (The Promise)
- School Age Childcare Directorate
- Care Inspectorate
- NHS Education Scotland

In December 2021 we launched a consultation on the proposed changes to the Register and qualifications. The consultation was open until March 2022. We also held a series of online events in February 2022 and follow up focus groups in August 2022.

We have established a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to support the programme. The advisory group includes several key stakeholders including Social Work Scotland, Scottish Care, COSLA, Scottish Government, the Promise and UNISON.

In 2021/22 we held a wide-ranging consultation on our proposals to streamline and improve consultation. Over 6,500 people responded to the consultation, including people on all parts of the register along with others with an interest in our work.

We also held 13 online events with 265 attendees and met with several key sectoral stakeholders. The vast majority of respondents were

registrants and most respondents agreed with our proposals. An analysis of the responses is available from our [website](#).

Our consultation included several questions on the implications for equality. The majority of responses to these questions were broadly supportive of the proposals, noting that they would either have a neutral impact in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion, or would not have a negative impact.

The following figures show the percentage of respondents who indicated that a proposal would be neutral or would not have a negative impact on equality, diversity and inclusion in the sector:

- In relation to our proposals about the flexibility of qualifications, 81% of respondents indicated that any impact would be neutral or not negative.
- For the proposed changes to the adult social care qualification, 75% of respondents indicated that any impact would be neutral or not negative.
- Regarding our proposals around return to practice, 84% of respondents indicated that any impact would be neutral or not negative.
- For our proposals concerning continuous Professional Learning, 84% of respondents indicated that any impact would be neutral or not negative.

While these figures suggest that the proposals will not have a negative impact, we will continue to monitor any impacts as work in this area progresses.

Proposal 1 – Flexibility of qualifications

Aims of the proposal

We propose that our main benchmark qualifications, in particular Social Services and Healthcare and Children and Young People SVQ qualifications be accepted for additional register parts with the same SCQF level requirements, where that requirement is currently one of these suites of qualifications at the same level.

We propose the following changes:

Qualification	Register parts currently accepted for	Register parts to be additionally accepted for
SVQ Social Services and Healthcare SCQF Level 6	Support worker in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> care home service for adults care at home housing support services 	Support worker in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> day care of children services
SVQ Social Services and Healthcare SCQF Level 7	Practitioner in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care home service for adults Practice requirement for supervisors in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> care home service for adults care at home housing support services 	Practitioner in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> day care of children services
SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) SCQF Level 6	Support worker in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> day care of children services 	Support worker in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> care home service for adults care at home housing support services
SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) SCQF Level 7	Practitioner in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> day care of children services Practice requirement for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential childcare workers Registrants are also required to evidence 96 academic credits of certificated knowledge at SCQF Level 7	New register levels for practitioner in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> care at home housing support services (Dependent on approval of proposal 9) Practice requirement for supervisors in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> care home service for adults care at home housing support services

Increased flexibility of qualifications will support greater career pathways and opportunities for the workforce. This will also support the flexibility of the workforce to meet service demand and new models of care delivery. This will be particularly true of services that are:

- in a remote and/or rural setting
- supporting both adults and children
- out of school care services that operate for limited hours and struggle to recruit.

The mandatory SVQ units within each qualification contain the same criteria for the knowledge, skills and understanding that need to be demonstrated in a practice setting. There are slight differences where the unit contained within the Children and Young People's suites may state 'child or young person' opposed to 'individual' in the Social Services and Healthcare suite however it is the same core skills and competence that needs to be evidenced (Reflective Practice, Communication, Safeguarding Individuals, Health and Safety).

Scottish Government early learning and childcare (ELC) funded hours requirements, and Care Inspectorate registered manager requirements, do not specify a qualification – only that requirements for SSSC registration are met therefore the changes will not impact on these requirements

Consultation and engagement

During consultation we asked:

- Should the SSSC be more flexible and accept SVQ units gained in adult or childcare settings for registration in other roles? 88.5% of respondents indicated that we should.
- Should the SSSC develop a new SVQ qualification that would support individuals to work across different roles and settings? 79.1% of respondents indicated that we should.
- How much more or less would qualifications that are accepted for different roles support new models of care? 76.4% of respondents indicated that the proposal would provide much more support or a little more support.
- How helpful would qualifications that are accepted for different roles be to address recruitment and retention pressures in the sector, especially in remote and rural areas? 83.5% of respondents indicated that the proposal would be much more helpful or a little more helpful.

- How much more or less attractive would a career in the sector be if qualifications were accepted for different roles? 80.9% of respondents indicated that this would make careers in the sector much more attractive or a little more attractive.

Given the results of our consultation, we have decided not to make any changes to this proposal. The responses we received from the consultation and focus groups, however, have helped to inform mitigation and the detail of what should be covered in the CPL model for those moving into different roles. For example, the development of open badges to support workers new into role, changing role or returning to the role.

General Concerns about proposals

- Feedback from the consultation survey and subsequent focus groups indicated some concern, particularly from ELC employers, that this proposal may reduce the specialist skills of staff.
- Potential for movement of staff to roles where there are better terms and conditions – for example if real living wage was increased for adult social care (ASC) but not ELC.

Mitigations

Our consultation highlighted a concern that this proposal may reduce the skills of staff working in different sectors. We believe the risk of reduced specialist skill can be addressed and mitigated through employer induction and enhanced continuous professional learning (CPL) requirements. As part of the new model we are proposing to develop CPL open badges for individuals moving setting (as discussed below).

Benefits

We believe this proposal provides:

- Support for new models of care, especially rural and remote, and out of school care.
- Improved career pathways.
- Reduced number of qualifications individuals need when changing role or working in new or across different settings.
- Support for current recruitment and retention challenges.
- Potential for enhanced practice through new skills/experience if moving to another part of the sector.
- Reduced number of registrants with a qualification condition – this will help with current supply/demand for qualifications and support proposal 6.

Impact on protected characteristics

- ***Age***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their age.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's age.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their age, is neutral.

- ***Disability***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their disability status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's disability or health condition.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their disability, is neutral.

- ***Gender reassignment***

It is not considered that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their gender reassignment status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's gender reassignment status. However, this may be owing to the small numbers of respondents identifying as having undergone gender reassignment.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have in relation to those who have undergone gender reassignment is neutral.

- ***Marriage and civil partnership***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to impact individuals, either registered workers, those who use services or members of the public on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status. The present proposal seeks to simplify the SSSC's Register, however, it will not affect the registration status of those currently registered with us, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status. Nor will the ability for individuals to gain registration with the SSSC in the future be impacted on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status as a result of this proposal.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on the basis of an individual's marital or civil partnership status, is neutral.

- ***Pregnancy and maternity***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their pregnancy or maternity.

- ***Race***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their race.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's race.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their race, is neutral.

- ***Religion/belief***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ***Sex***

We do not consider that the present proposal, which seeks to allow our main benchmark qualifications are accepted for additional Register parts where the required qualification is already one of these suites of qualifications at the same level, will put any individuals at a disadvantage on the basis of their sex.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal, in terms of sex, to be neutral.

- ***Sexual orientation***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Proposal 2 – Timescales for qualifications

Aims of the proposal

We propose that from April 2024, the timescale for new registrants on a function-based register part to achieve a required qualification will be reduced from five years to three years.

There are some exceptions to this proposal, these are as follows:

Group	Current requirement	New requirement
Any new registrant who is registered as a: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervisor• Manager• Residential childcare worker with no recognised qualification	5 years	5 years (no change)
Residential childcare worker with one of two required qualifications	5 years	3 years
All other function-based register parts	5 years	3 years

Consultation and engagement

How much easier or more difficult will this change make to ensuring individuals complete the required qualification on time? Much more difficult or a little more difficult - 50.3% (1211 of 2407 responses)

Our original proposal was to reduce the timescale for all function-based register parts from five to three years. Feedback from the consultation and focus groups included concerns that this would impact those who had more than one qualification requirement. We agreed with this point and have revised the proposal as described above.

Via SQA, we surveyed training providers who deliver benchmark qualifications to determine current capacity in the system and ability to adapt to changing demands and needs. We sent the survey to 212 providers, with 58 responses (response rate of 27%).

Around 50% of respondents have capacity to increase provision in ASC qualifications and 43% in ELC qualifications, with an average increase in

capacity of around 23%. 82% of respondents said they could adapt and change which awards they were delivering to meet demand.

General Concerns about proposals

- Increased demand on workforce to complete qualifications in their own time due to shorter timescales.
- Increased demand on training (funding, providers).
- Intake timescales for some programmes may be impacted by reducing our requirements.
- Access to training in rural areas can be an issue.
- Equality impact as likely to impact more women than men, and may also impact on those with disabilities, working part-time, in rural/remote areas and those with multiple qualification conditions.

Mitigations

- We have discretion and appropriate processes to provide extensions on a case by case basis where required.
- Currently the number of registrants with multiple qualification requirements is small.
- Our most recent [Workforce Data Report](#) (2021) reports that around 75% of the workforce has stayed in the same post since the last year and that 83% of the workforce are on permanent contracts.
- The same report also states that ASC groups are the least qualified, with 54,000 workers required to be qualified by 2025. 20,000 of those must be qualified by 2024, which is likely to reduce the impact the proposal will have on training providers. There is no anticipated supply/demand challenge for ELC groups.
- The current timescale for achieving an SVQ ranges on average from 6 to 18 months. This is well within the proposed three years for most new registrants. Our registration data shows that the average time for a worker to meet a qualification condition is 27 months.

Benefits

- Increased public protection.
- Increased delivery of high-quality care.
- Public are reassured that workers have the required skills.
- Enhanced professional identity and perception of the workforce as skilled.

Impact on protected characteristics

- **Age**

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their age.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's age.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their age, is neutral.

- **Disability**

We believe that changes to timescales for qualifications may have the potential to negatively impact disabled registrants. Some registrants with disabilities or long-term health conditions may require additional time and support to meet these requirements. In such circumstances, our existing reasonable adjustments policy should mitigate this impact.

Overall, we deem the impact on the basis of disable resulting from this proposal to be neutral.

- **Gender reassignment**

It is not considered that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their gender reassignment status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's gender reassignment status. However, this may be owing to the small numbers of respondents identifying as having undergone gender reassignment.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have in relation to those who have undergone gender reassignment is neutral.

- **Marriage and civil partnership**

The present proposal is not deemed likely to impact individuals, either registered workers, those who use services or members of the public on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on the basis of an individual's marital or civil partnership status, is neutral.

- **Pregnancy and maternity**

There is the potential for a negative impact on the basis of pregnancy and maternity as changes to the timescales for obtaining qualifications may impact on this basis. There is also the potential for positive impact on the basis of pregnancy and maternity as this proposal aims to facilitate a return to practice for registrants that have not worked in the sector for

some time. This may make it easier for those who have taken time away from the sector for childcare reasons to return to work more easily. The proposed new timescale for gaining qualification is three years. Our data indicates that the average time for registrants to gain qualifications is presently 27 months. Therefore, the proposed new timescale is unlikely to impact the majority of workers. It is believed that any potential negative impact on the minority of workers that may be affected by the proposed changes will be mitigated by processes that are already in place to allow extensions for qualification requirements.

- ***Race***

We believe that changes to qualification requirements may have an impact on staff who do not have English as a first language. Any potential impact in relation to language ability will be mitigated by the SSSC's plain language policy and other support mechanisms we have in place to assist registrants on a case by case basis.

- ***Religion/belief***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ***Sex***

We do not consider that, in general, the present proposal, which seeks to allow our main benchmark qualifications to be accepted for additional Register parts where the required qualification is already one of these suites of qualifications at the same level, will put any individuals at a disadvantage on the basis of their sex.

While we recognise that there is the potential that this proposal will impact women to a higher degree than men, we believe this impact to be on the basis of pregnancy and maternity, not on sex. This is discussed above.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal, in terms of sex, to be neutral.

- ***Sexual orientation***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Proposal 3 – Continuous professional learning (CPL)

Aims of the proposal

To design a new continuous professional learning (CPL) model.

The new model will be developed in consultation with the sector and include:

- an annual declaration
- a move away from current model of recording hours/days, with a focus on key skills and knowledge required at key career stages ie induction, change of role, return to practice
- inclusion of mandatory skills/knowledge requirements for each register group ie trauma
- new requirements for newly qualified social workers, to support the roll-out of the mandatory supported first year of practice
- flexibility for SSSC to revise requirements to respond to emerging skills gaps.

Revising the CPL requirements will help us to support the workforce to respond to emerging issues more quickly when required – for example, the infection control skills and knowledge required at the start of the pandemic and ensure the workforce have the right skills at the right time in their career journeys to deliver better outcomes for people.

Consultation and engagement

Should the SSSC be able to set mandatory training for CPL requirements?
Yes - 70.4% (1609 of 2285 responses)

Should there be mandatory CPL requirements for those new into role? Yes
- 77.3% (1763 of 2281 responses)

Should there be annual CPL requirements? Yes - 62.9% (1428 of 2269 responses)

There was considerable support for this proposal and therefore no specific changes were made as a result of the consultation.

The consultation informed the planned content, for example suggestions of core elements such as values, health and social care standards, safeguarding, the role of the SSSC and reflection practice, and that these should be transferable across settings.

General Concerns about proposals

- The system for recording CPL needs to be simple and accessible.

- The potential for additional costs arising from new requirements, including for staff on minimum wage.
- The need for CPL requirements to be realistic, achievable and flexible.
- The potential for groups to be disproportionately affected, for example people with disabilities, caring responsibilities or on maternity leave.

Mitigations

- Our existing MyLearning app provides an easy-to-use platform for workers to both access resources and record CPL in one place, which is portable and transferrable (the individual owns their own record).
- We plan to take a flexible approach and include SSSC and national resources that are open learning so accessible by all. We can use QR code functionality to link CPL directly in the MyLearning app.
- There are no anticipated additional costs for individuals or employers.
- Processes are already established for people who need extensions, for example due to maternity leave or illness.

Benefits

- Annual requirements will encourage workers to take ownership of their CPL.
- Ensures workers have the right skills at the right time, in turn increasing public confidence and outcomes for people.
- Allows SSSC to flex in response to emerging skills needs.
- Will support implementation of NQSW supported first year in practice.
- Will allow the SSSC to support and implement national policy and strategy programme for government commitments in respect of workforce development ie a trauma-informed workforce.

Impact on protected characteristics

- **Age**

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their age.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's age.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their age, is neutral.

- ***Disability***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their disability status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's disability or health condition.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their disability, is neutral.

- ***Gender reassignment***

It is not considered that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their gender reassignment status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's gender reassignment status. However, this may be owing to the small numbers of respondents identifying as having undergone gender reassignment.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have in relation to those who have undergone gender reassignment is neutral.

- ***Marriage and civil partnership***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to impact individuals, either registered workers, those who use services or members of the public on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on the basis of an individual's marital or civil partnership status, is neutral.

- ***Pregnancy and maternity***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their pregnancy or maternity.

- ***Race***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their race.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's race.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their race, is neutral.

- ***Religion/belief***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ***Sex***

We do not consider that the present proposal, which seeks to allow our main benchmark qualifications are accepted for additional Register parts where the required qualification is already one of these suites of qualifications at the same level, will put any individuals at a disadvantage on the basis of their sex.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal, in terms of sex, to be neutral.

- ***Sexual orientation***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Proposal 4 - Return to practice

Aims of the proposal

who have been off the register; to develop separate return to practice standards for function-based social service workers.

For **social workers**, we are proposing a return to practice requirement based upon the length of time an individual has been out of practice. This does not include individuals who have qualified but never practiced. Those individuals would have to complete the newly qualified social work requirements.

We also propose that the number and nature of learning required will be tiered according to the length of gap – for example:

- 0 – 2 years gap – no requirement
- 2 – 5 years
- 5 years +

The requirements will be formed of supervised practice, formal learning and informal learning. This paper proposes that further consultation and development is required to set the requirements.

Other UK regulators require these hours to be completed before an individual can be registered as a social worker. We propose that this may not be the best approach given the difficulties individuals might face in gaining supervised practice experience prior to being registered. However, at this point it is not possible to register an individual as a social worker with a condition. Further development will be needed in order to either develop a pre-registration return to practice requirement, or develop such a requirement alongside our CPL requirements.

For **function-based parts of the register** we propose that return to practice requirements for will be different from social work registration. This is because individuals can join the register without any prior knowledge, skills or experience. It would therefore disadvantage those returning to roles. Additionally, workers may also return to practice from one part of the sector or register to another and therefore may also have a new qualification requirement. Asking those workers to complete a return to practice requirement in addition to this and above CPL requirements would be excessive.

We propose that the requirements of any return to practice for function-based sit with the refreshed CPL requirements. We suggest that in developing CPL requirements, workers returning to practice would be included in setting requirements of hours and skills/knowledge to be covered by registrants as part of induction requirements.

We would also see that induction requirement by employers would also support their learning.

Consultation and engagement

Should there be a return to practice process for social workers? Yes - 85.9% (1919 of 2235 responses)

Should there be a return to practice process for other Register groups? Yes - 78.6% (1752 of 2222 responses)

Our initial proposal was to develop return to practice standards for social workers and social service workers who have come off the Register for over two years and want to rejoin.

From feedback during consultation and from focus groups, including discussion around the distinct requirements for registration and the statutory requirements of social workers, we decided that it would be appropriate to have different requirements for social workers and for function-based social service workers as detailed above.

General Concerns about proposals

- The proposals may act as a barrier to recruitment when encouraging people to return to the sector.
- Assessment of return to practice learning may impact SSSC staff resourcing.
- There may be a requirement to consider charging a fee for the assessment of a return to practice portfolio.

Mitigations

- During the development of this process there will need to be clarity and consultation about social workers who are registered but not working in a practice setting and their return to practice. We also envisage that social workers who qualify but do not practice for 2 or more years would be covered by any NQSW process or requirement in place.
- To minimise impact on staff resourcing, we could take on a quality assurance role with sign-off responsibility being held by the employer or supervisor.
- We would consider the issues of fees for assessment as part of consultation work. We may wish to propose no fees, as this may encourage and support recruitment across social work.

Benefits

- Increased confidence that the competence, skills and knowledge of individuals returning to practice (particularly social workers) are up to date.
- Developing return to practice standards would bring us in line with other regulators.

Impact on protected characteristics

- ***Age***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their age.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's age.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their age, is neutral.

- ***Disability***

We believe that the current proposal will have a positive impact on the basis of an individual's disability status.

The present proposal is intended to facilitate a return to practice after a period of absence. We deem that this will have a positive impact on individuals who may have been absent from practice on the basis of disability or long-term health condition.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their disability, is positive.

- ***Gender reassignment***

It is not considered that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their gender reassignment status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's gender reassignment status. However, this may be owing to the small numbers of respondents identifying as having undergone gender reassignment.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have in relation to those who have undergone gender reassignment is neutral.

- ***Marriage and civil partnership***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to impact individuals, either registered workers, those who use services or members of the public on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on the basis of an individual's marital or civil partnership status, is neutral.

- ***Pregnancy and maternity***

The present proposal is deemed to have a positive impact on individuals on the basis of their pregnancy or maternity.

This proposal is intended to facilitate a return to practice for individuals who have been absent for a long time. This may include women who have left practice for reasons owing to pregnancy or maternity.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal to be neutral in terms of pregnancy and maternity.

- ***Race***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their race.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's race.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their race, is neutral.

- ***Religion/belief***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ***Sex***

We do not consider that the present proposal, which seeks to allow our main benchmark qualifications are accepted for additional Register parts where the required qualification is already one of these suites of qualifications at the same level, will put any individuals at a disadvantage on the basis of their sex.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal, in terms of sex, to be neutral.

- ***Sexual orientation***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Proposal 5 – New practitioner level for Care at Home and Housing Support workers

Aims of the proposal

To introduce a new register level of practitioner for care at home and housing support workers, with a qualification requirement of SVQ Social Services and Health at SCQF level 7

Consultation and engagement

Should the qualification requirement for support workers in housing support be at SCQF level 7? Yes - 58.6% (1329 of 2268 responses)

Should the qualification requirement for support workers in care at home be at SCQF level 7? Yes - 58.8% (1327 of 2255 responses)

Should we introduce an additional Register part for practitioners at SCQF level 7 to allow employers to decide what level is most appropriate? Yes - 65.6% (1465 of 2233 responses)

How much easier or more difficult would recruiting to these roles be, if the qualification level was changed? Much easier or a little easier - 36.4% (816 of 2243 responses)

How much more or less likely would individuals be to join the workforce, if the qualification level was changed? Much more likely or a little more likely - 38.3% (856 of 2235 responses)

Our original proposal was for a change to the qualification requirement for support workers in housing support/care at home from Social Service and Healthcare SCQF level 6 to SCQF level 7. Feedback from employers and other stakeholders indicated issues and concerns about the potential impact on staff terms and conditions and around barriers for entry to the profession if this were raised.

As a result of this feedback we have decided to create a new practitioner category for housing support/care at home, with qualification requirements at SCQF level 7.

General Concerns about proposals

- There may be increased demand on training providers who cannot meet this with current capacity.
- Staff qualified to a higher level may expect changes to terms and conditions to reflect this.
- There may be increased demand for level 7 qualifications, requiring additional funding to support.

Mitigations

- Via SQA, we surveyed training providers who deliver benchmark qualifications to determine current capacity in the system and ability to adapt to changing demands and needs. We sent the survey to 212 providers, with 58 responses (response rate of 27%).
- Around 50% of respondents have capacity to increase provision in ASC qualifications and 43% in ELC qualifications, with an average increase in capacity of around 23%. 82% of respondents said they could adapt and change which awards they were delivering to meet demand.
- Employers can determine suitable levels required and most appropriate for their service.
- In terms of funding, we can provide supply/demand information to Scottish Government, the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. We can also set eligibility and priority criteria for the Voluntary Sector Development Fund we disburse on behalf of the government, to prioritise where most needed. We also publish extensive information on available funding routes via our website.

Benefits

- Supports the Scottish Government's ambition to increase the skill level of the ASC workforce.
- Supports career pathways and progression.
- Consistent with other register parts, where a practitioner level already exists.
- Allows employers to decide on most appropriate level based on their service and meeting the needs of service users.
- Supports professionalism and recognises those working at a higher skill level.
- Supports new models of care and changing roles.
- Ensures staff have the right skills for their role.

Impact on protected characteristics

- **Age**

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their age.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's age.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their age, is neutral.

- ***Disability***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their disability status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's disability or health condition.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their disability, is neutral.

- ***Gender reassignment***

It is not considered that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their gender reassignment status.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's gender reassignment status. However, this may be owing to the small numbers of respondents identifying as having undergone gender reassignment.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have in relation to those who have undergone gender reassignment is neutral.

- ***Marriage and civil partnership***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to impact individuals, either registered workers, those who use services or members of the public on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on the basis of an individual's marital or civil partnership status, is neutral.

- ***Pregnancy and maternity***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their pregnancy or maternity.

- ***Race***

We do not believe that the current proposal will impact, either negatively or positively, individuals on the basis of their race.

The results from our consultation have not highlighted any impact the proposal may have on the basis of an individual's race.

The SSSC considers that the impact this proposal will have on individuals on the basis of their race, is neutral.

- ***Religion/belief***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ***Sex***

We do not consider that the present proposal, which seeks to allow our main benchmark qualifications are accepted for additional Register parts where the required qualification is already one of these suites of qualifications at the same level, will put any individuals at a disadvantage on the basis of their sex.

For this reason, we deem the impact of this proposal, in terms of sex, to be neutral.

- ***Sexual orientation***

The present proposal is not deemed likely to have an impact on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Other areas of impact

- ***Groups living in island communities***

The proposal will have a neutral impact on the following duties:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization
- Promoting good relations among and between island communities.

The proposal will have a positive impact on the following duty:

- Advancing equality of opportunity.

The proposal will widen career opportunities and reduce the number of qualifications individuals need to gain if they move roles or work in more than one setting and are on more than one register part. This is particularly beneficial in remote and rural areas where individuals may work in a variety of roles and settings.

- ***Children's rights and wellbeing***

The proposal will have a neutral impact on:

- Civil rights and freedoms
- Violence against children
- Family environment and alternative care
- Disability, basic health and welfare
- Education, Leisure and Cultural activities
- Special Protection measures.

The SSSC's register for social workers, social care workers and early years practitioners is qualifications based. This means that workers must hold the required qualifications or be working towards them to be included on our register. The educational requirements mean that Scotland has a skilled and competent workforce that is committed to promoting and upholding children's rights. The qualifications required for registration on the day care of children and residential child care parts of the Register, for example, include mandatory elements relating to child protection (UNCRC Article 3).

We use the National Occupational Standards (NOS) as the basis of the qualifications we require registrants to hold. We work with the UK sector skills council, and Skills for Care and Development to develop, maintain and update the NOS through stakeholder engagement to ensure they meets the needs of the sector and take note of relevant legislation. For example the NOS that have been developed for social services (children and young people) include mandatory modules on safeguarding children and young people, including a requirement to safeguard and promote children's rights. Any changes that are made to increase the flexibility of qualifications, will not impact the centrality of safeguarding and promoting

children's rights within the practice of relevant practitioners. Therefore, we deem that this proposal will have a neutral impact on children's rights and well-being.

- ***Health and wellbeing and health inequalities***

The proposal will have a neutral impact on:

- Removing inequalities and increasing access to opportunities for improving health and wellbeing
- Advancing opportunities for increasing health and wellbeing across the sector
- Fostering good practice for sector wide health and wellbeing.

- ***Economic and social sustainability***

The proposal will have a positive impact on:

- Removing disadvantage of inequality
- Advancing opportunities for individuals
- Fostering good relations and sustainability of communities.

Our latest figures show that approximately six percent of Scotland's total workforce work in adult social care. This adds approximately £3.4bn to Scotland's economy. The average annual earnings in the adult social care sector is £18,400, which is higher than the Scottish Living wage. The proposal aims to make it easier for individuals to gain registration with the SSSC through more flexible qualification requirements, which should encourage further growth within the sector. This in turn will have a positive impact on advancing opportunities for individuals to access higher paid employment. The proposal will also widen employment opportunities by creating additional career pathways in the social care sector, value the workforce and support new models of care delivery which will support sustainability of care delivery in communities, especially within remote and rural communities.

- ***Care experienced children, young people and adults***

The proposal will ensure the social services workforce working with care experienced children, young people and adults have the right skills, knowledge and values for the role to ensure they deliver high quality care and support and

- Promote the well-being of children and young people
- Promote the interests of eligible children and young people
- Provide opportunities to eligible children and young people.