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| Title of Report | Future Proofing Programme report of achievements |
| Public/Confidential | Public |
| Summary/purpose of report | This report presents the achievements of the Future Proofing Programme to date. |
| Recommendations | The Council is asked to note the report and appendices |
| Author | Graeme Henderson Programme Manager |
| Responsible Officer | Hannah Coleman, Acting Director, Regulation |
| Link to Strategic Plan | The information in this report links to: Outcome 1: Trusted People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise. Outcome 2: Skilled Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice. Outcome 3: Confident Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce. 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. |
| Link to Risk Register | Risk 1: We fail to ensure that our system of regulation meets the needs of people who use services and workers. 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. |

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| | Risk 3: We fail to meet corporate governance, external scrutiny and legal obligations. |
| Impact Assessment | An Impact Assessment (IA) was not required. |
| Documents attached | <p>Appendix 1: Future Proofing Programme closure report</p> <p>Appendix 2: Summary of programme achievements</p> <p>Appendix 3: Lessons Learned Report</p> <p>Appendix 4: Summary of programme audit and assurance</p> <p>Appendix 5: Benefits Realisation update</p> |
| Background papers | <p>Regulation Review Programme (report 07/2021)</p> <p>Future-Proofing Programme Governance Arrangements (report 22/2021)</p> <p>Future Proofing Programme Consultation Report (report 50/2021)</p> <p>Future Proofing Proposals to Council (report 42/2022)</p> |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In February 2021 Council approved the establishment of a programme to review our key regulatory functions. These functions were developed when the SSSC was established in 2001 and were designed to allow a gradual process of registering the workforce. Following the conclusion of the planned phases of registration in September 2020 we began to consider how our regulatory functions support our work and the ongoing development of the workforce both now and in the future.
2. In May 2021 Council approved the Future Proofing Programme (FPP), three interconnected projects to review the Register, qualifications and skills and the Codes of Practice. The governance structure approved by Council had oversight over the programme and is detailed from paragraph 46.
3. In November 2021 Council gave authority to consult on our initial proposed changes to the Register and to qualifications and skills.
4. Our vision for the programme was that we wanted being registered with us to be simple and easy to understand, and to make sure that people know about the benefits and value of being registered, and the standards, skills and qualifications needed to deliver high quality care.
5. We carried out significant consultation and engagement with stakeholders. With the support of Scottish Government to make changes to our legislation, we delivered the following (more detail on each and the consultation carried out is contained below):
 - Revised Codes of Practice, a key commitment in the Promise
 - A streamlined structure of our register and continuous registration
 - Reduced timescales to apply for registration
 - More information available on our Public Facing Register (PFR)
 - Flexibility of qualifications
 - A new model of continuous Professional Learning (CPL)
 - A new model of return to practice
 - New practitioner level for Care at Home and Housing Support workers.
6. We launched the revised Codes of Practice on 1 May 2024. We launched the changes to the structure of our register and to qualifications and skills timescales and requirements on 3 June 2024.
7. Formal programme closure documents were presented to the FPP Sponsor Group on 20 November 2024 and closure was approved, effective on 30 November 2024. Papers presented to the Sponsor Group on 20 November 2024 are included as appendices. A summary of the key achievements to

date is provided in this report and further detail of programme achievements is at Appendix 2.

8. Initial feedback from our registrant survey is positive and we realised some of the identified programme benefits immediately at launch. The efficiencies as a result of this work will allow us to make a return on investment after four years. More detail on the programme benefits is at Appendix 5.
9. This report presents the achievements of the programme to date.

REVIEW OF THE REGISTER

10. Our plans to review the register developed over several years. We first explored a review of the register in 2018. Due to the nature of legislation being interlinked with the Care Inspectorate (CI), this work was subsumed by the care definitions work undertaken by CI sponsor team in Scottish Government.
11. The 2020 Programme for Government included a commitment to develop new definitions for registered services and care roles. This work culminated in a report by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) published in November 2021.
12. The key aims of the review of the Register were:
 - To improve the processes for applying for and maintaining registration
 - to ensure our register reflects and supports the way care is delivered both now and in the future
13. to improve public protection by reducing the time it takes to assess an applicant's fitness to practice
 - to ensure our register reflects the professional identity of the workforce
 - to give the public more information on the public facing register /our public facing register provides key registrant information.

Reduced number of register parts

14. The Register structure had developed over the twenty years since we introduced registration for social workers in 2003. We recognised that the structure had to change to better reflect the changing and emerging roles in the sector and to reflect changes in the way services are delivered.
15. The programme introduced a new four-part structure, replacing the previous 23 parts. We successfully moved 178,000 workers onto the new four-part structure in June 2024 and reduced the number of workers on multiple parts of the register from 56,279 in January 2024 to 3,149 in January 2025.

Timescales to apply for registration

16. We believe that through reducing the time required for workers to apply for registration to three months, there will be an increased level of protection for service users.
17. Previously workers knew they had six months to apply and we identified that many workers did not apply when they first started employment. When we began work on this project, workers took on average four and a half months from starting their role to apply for registration.
18. We amended legislation to introduce a new requirement for workers to apply for registration within three months of starting a new role. The requirement to gain registration within six months remains.

Public Facing Register (PFR)

19. We reviewed the position other regulators take when publishing information on their public facing registers (or equivalents). We identified that the biggest difference was how fitness to practise information was published. We published fitness to practise information on a separate page of our website. Our counterpart regulators in other UK countries, along with bodies such as the General Medical Council, all publish fitness to practise information on their PFR.
20. By bringing this information into our PFR, we can improve public protection by making fitness to practise information easier to access. This means we make our register more transparent as well as bringing us in line with equivalent regulators.

Continuous registration

21. We wanted to reduce confusion amongst workers by removing the requirement to renew their registration after three or five years (dependent on their role), and to change the perception amongst some registered workers that registration is simply about paying an annual fee. We wanted to instead focus on the responsibilities of being a registered worker.
22. By requiring workers to complete an annual declaration we will hold more up to date information on workers. We have linked the new continuous professional learning (CPL) process, detailed from paragraph 30 to the annual declaration and therefore we have an opportunity each year to remind workers of their responsibilities as a registered professional.

REVIEWING QUALIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

23. The review of the register meant that we had to assess the underpinning qualifications to ensure they remained appropriate for any new categories of registration.
24. This also provided an opportunity to consider whether the right role description and qualification levels were in place and consider the time we give to workers to obtain a relevant qualification. We also wanted to identify whether qualifications can support a more moveable, flexible workforce that can work across different settings.
25. The key aims of the review were:
 - to have a qualified workforce with the right skills
 - make qualifications more flexible so that people can move more easily to work in different kinds of services.

Flexibility of qualifications

26. Increased flexibility of qualifications will support improved career pathways and opportunities for the workforce. This approach will support the workforce in meeting service demands and new models of care delivery, particularly for services in remote or rural areas, or those services supporting both adults and children.
27. Where a worker has an existing qualification for their role working in a service for adults, we now accept that qualification when 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. Mandatory CPL will be applied. 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.
28. In practise 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, with a requirement to complete relevant CPL but without needing to gain a further qualification.

Timescales for qualification

29. 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. This came into effect in June 2024 for children and young people's workers and, following Council approval, will come into effect from June 2025 for workers in adult services.

Continuous professional learning (CPL)

30. By revising our CPL requirements, we can support the workforce to respond to emerging issues more quickly. The revised process moves from recording hours/days and instead focuses on the key skills and knowledge required at key career stages. This in turn supports the workforce to deliver better outcomes for people who use services.
31. We designed and introduced the new model of CPL in collaboration with workers and employers. Our new website (<https://learn.sssc.uk.com/cpl/>) helps workers to identify appropriate training and learning from a range of resources based on their role. Between 3 June 2024 and 16 January 2025, we saw 93,000 visits to the site with 65,500 active users.
32. Through the new annual declaration process (detailed at paragraph 21) we can track how many people meet the requirements and how many are using the resources. We can also see the differences our resources make to workers' practice.

Return to practice (RTP)

33. We wanted to ensure that social workers who wanted to return to practice were fit to do so and that they had up-to-date skills, knowledge and competence. Doing so would bring us in line with other regulators and provide public reassurance that social workers coming back to the workforce remained fit to practice.
34. The new process for social workers is for those returning to practice after two years or more out of the sector, 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.
35. By 16 January 2025, 20 social workers had rejoined the register under this process.

New practitioner level for Care at Home and Housing Support workers

36. 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. By January 2025, there were over 2,000 housing support practitioners and 1,600 care at home practitioners on the register.

REVIEWING THE CODES OF PRACTICE

37. The aims of the review of the Codes of Practice (Codes) were that:

our Codes reflect the expectations of us as a regulator, the workforce, employers and people who use services.

- our Codes align with health and social care standards
 - our Codes reflect the recommendations of The Promise
 - our Codes support risk enablement and improve professional judgement.
38. We developed the new versions in collaboration with workers and employers, involved a range of stakeholders and gathered views via consultation.
39. Since launching the new Codes, registrants have told us that they reflect best practice and lead to better outcomes for people who use services. 85% of respondents to the most recent registrant survey agreed with that statement. This is an increase from the 70% of registrants agreeing when we surveyed them before launching the revised Codes.
40. Registrants have also told us that the Codes support risk enablement and using professional judgement. 81% of registrants agreed with that statement at the last survey, compared to 58% before we launched the new Codes.
41. Between 1 May 2024 and 16 January 2025 there were:
- over 171,000 visits to our main Codes webpage, 'The SSSC Codes of Practice'
 - over 38,000 downloads of the Codes themselves, including accessible formats such as large text and easy-read versions
 - over 8,200 downloads of posters and 6,000 downloads of postcards.
42. We also sent almost 110,000 concertina-style cards which have a summary of the Codes to workers and employers over that period.

CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

43. Consultation was held throughout the programme for each of the projects. This took the form of online surveys and in-person and online events. These helped to shape the proposals to Council in November 2022 and development of new resources up to the end of the programme. Across all consultation surveys we received over 7,000 responses and had over 500 attendees at a range of in-person and online events. As we approached go-live for the programme, we held a series of online information sessions for workers and employers.
44. We took a service design approach throughout the programme to ensure that the views of workers and employers were considered when

developing new resources. For example, the development of the new CPL website was carried out in direct collaboration with a group of workers and employers who would be using the service.

45. Alongside extensive engagement through the consultation surveys, events and focus groups, we established a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), which met each quarter.
46. Representatives from all departments of the SSSC were involved within the FPP during the life of the programme.

PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

47. The programme was set up by our Programme Management Office (PMO), following Scottish Government best practise. The programme sponsor group was chaired by the Chief Executive and made up of the EMT and three members of the Council. This group met quarterly and approved the overall business case and Project Initiation Documentation and received regular decision and progress reports.
48. The project group, who reported to the sponsor group and met monthly, was chaired by the Senior Responsible Officer (the Director of Regulation) with members of the project team from across the organisation. The progress of the programme was reported to this group monthly and any issues or decisions required to be escalated put to the Sponsor Group. Regular reports were presented to Council and highlight reports sent to our Sponsor team at Scottish Government.
49. The digital project work was overseen by the established Digital Programme Board who have authority to make decisions around the progress and spend on digital activity.
50. Project Management Office (PMO) held lessons learned sessions with internal and external stakeholders and also with Executive Management Team (EMT) and Council Members. A summary report is at Appendix 3.
51. We carried out a range of assurance activity throughout the programme. This included internal audit and a series of external gateway reviews carried out by Scottish Government. A summary of these activities is at Appendix 4.
52. Please note that appendices 1 to 4 have not been updated since the review by the FPP governance board and sponsor group and therefore reflect the position as of November 2024. Appendix 5 provides an updated position on benefits realised and partially realised since the programme closed.

NEXT STEPS

53. When closed, the outstanding issues and actions reported in Appendix 1 moved to business as usual. All actions outstanding are now complete.
54. Updates on the realisation of FPP benefits will be presented as part of the organisational reporting on all benefits.

RISKS

55. No specific risks were identified as part of this report.

IMPLICATIONS

Resourcing

56. There are no resourcing requirements identified as part of this report.

Compliance

57. The systems issue relating to Notices of Decision has been resolved.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

58. Impact Assessments were developed for each workstream during the FPP.

CONCLUSION

59. We ask that the Council notes the achievements of FPP set out in this report and appendices.