

# **Scottish Social Services Council – consultation on proposed register changes**

**October 2023**

## **Introduction**

### **The Scottish Social Services Council**

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is a Non-Departmental Public Body, set up under the [Regulation of Care \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#), with statutory public protection functions to regulate social service workers and to promote their education and training. They protect the public by registering over 160,000 social work, social care and early years workers (as of April 2023); setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below these standards, the SSSC can investigate and implement sanctions (including removal) where necessary. The SSSC's core functions include:

- publishing the national codes of practice for people working in social work, social care and early years services and their employers
- registering people working in social work, social care and early years and making sure they adhere to the codes of practice
- promoting and regulating the workforce's learning and development
- being the national lead for workforce development and planning for the social work, social care and early years workforce in Scotland
- producing workforce data and intelligence on the social service workforce in Scotland for employers and other stakeholders that support the development of the sector.

There are almost 210,000 people working in social work, social care and children and young people services across Scotland. This workforce includes social care workers, social workers, social work students and children and young people workers. They work across a range of care services, in residential and day centres, community facilities and in people's homes. The SSSC are responsible for registering most of this workforce, making sure they meet the standards set out in the SSSC Codes of Practice.

### **Proposals for Reform**

In December 2021, the SSSC launched their Future Proofing Programme, which aims to make sure the regulatory system is clear, transparent and raises the standards of practice in the sector. A key part of the programme is to review and build a sustainable 'Register for the Future' which will be easier to understand for all.

This consultation seeks your views on proposed changes to the Register. These changes are to:

- reduce the number of Register parts from 23 to 4,
- require employees to apply for registration within three months of starting a new role and be registered within six months, and
- include more information on the public Register, such as specialist qualifications for social workers, and information relating to fitness to practise which is currently available on a different parts of the SSSC website.

## **SSSC's Public Consultation**

In December 2021 the SSSC launched a public consultation 'A Register for the Future' which detailed proposals to streamline and improve registration. The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 20 December 2021 until 14 March 2022 and asked for views on the proposed changes to the register.

There was healthy engagement with the SSSC's consultation, with respondents sharing their thoughts, feedback and ideas. There were over 6,500 responses from people on all parts of the Register, alongside key stakeholders, sector partners, and others with an interest in SSSC's work. Key figures are shown below:

- 91% of responses were from registrants.
- 777 identified as employers or service providers.
- 243 identified as someone who acts for a person who uses social services.
- 39 responses from people who use social services.

Most respondents agreed with the proposed changes to the SSSC Register and the analysis report from the consultation can be found at the following link: [Consultation: A register for the Future](#)

## **Reduction of the Register to Four Parts**

The SSSC Register was originally designed to allow for the gradual expansion of registration, which has ultimately led to the Register being made up of twenty-three different parts. At the moment, people moving to a different care service setting and/or obtaining a promotion are required to formally remove themselves from one part of the Register and apply to a new part. This makes the process of registering with the SSSC time-consuming and confusing for the workforce, employers and the SSSC.

In order to make registration as straight forward and easy to understand as possible, we propose that the Register will be split into four separate parts. The four parts will likely comprise social workers, social work students, social care workforce and children and young people workforce. This takes into account the changing and emerging roles, as well as changes in the way services are delivered.

Streamlining the Register to four parts will reduce the need for people to be registered on multiple parts and also will make the process of getting promoted or changing service an easier and less laborious process.

A simplified Register with an increase in self-service and automation will not only benefit the workforce, it will also result in cost efficiencies within the SSSC as the new Register will cost less to administer, as well as reducing the costs to the sector in supporting staff to register.

## **Timescales for Applying**

Currently the social services workforce have six months after starting employment to register with the SSSC. This means there can be a lengthy gap before the SSSC is assessing the fitness to practise of someone joining a care service.

We propose the introduction of a mandatory requirement to apply for registration within three months of starting employment.

This will improve public protection by assessing an applicant's fitness to practise earlier, which would include reviewing any information the SSSC holds about the applicant.

## **Changes to the Public Facing Register**

This consultation also seeks your views on the proposal to include more information on the searchable public Register. The information which would be made public would be the following:

- The level of role – currently the Register part tells you the level at which an individual is registered to operate (manager, supervisor, support worker). If, following the outcome of this consultation, the decision is taken to reduce the Register parts from 23 to 4, this level of detail would no longer be available. Instead, the Register would detail, for example, that a worker is on the Social Care Workforce part of the Register with no indication of the level at which they are working. We propose to include this detail on the public facing Register. This will allow employers/interested parties to know the level at which a worker is operating.
- Whether a registrant has the qualification for their role - the proposed change will make it optional for the SSSC to display qualifications on the public facing Register. This will initially show certain specialist qualifications with the intention that this is expanded in the future. This will promote the importance of qualifications, and particularly the importance of specialist qualifications.
- Whether there is a fitness to practise warning and/or condition – this information is currently published on another page of the SSSC's website, but is not linked to the public facing Register. This will show any live sanction in place. This means the public facing Register will show, at a glance, all relevant information regarding an individual's registration and fitness to practice. Sanctions are currently shown on a different part of the website, but not linked to the public facing Register. This means the existence of a sanction could easily be missed. Having this information available on the public facing Register makes it easier for interested parties to see full details of the reasons for any sanctions being in place. This is the approach taken by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

- Whether a registrant holds a specialist qualification such as a mental health officer award or a practice teaching award.

We believe that introducing this information to the searchable public Register will improve professional recognition of specialisms, whilst also making it easier for the public to check the Register and find out the status of someone working with them, or someone they care for.

The Scottish Government believe that the Public Facing Register is where the public should be able to see any issues with an individual's fitness to practice. This is currently available on a separate part of the website, however these changes would essentially make this information easier to obtain.

These changes would bring the SSSC in line with all the other professional regulators such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and would make the Public Facing Register much clearer to the public.

### **Responding to this Consultation**

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 02 January 2024.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space ([Scottish Government Consultations](#)).

Access and respond to this consultation online at [Consultation on Proposed Changes to SSSC Register](#).

You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open.

Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 02 January 2024.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form to:

SSSC Sponsorship Team  
Scottish Government  
Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser  
5 Atlantic Quay  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU

### **Handling your response**

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: [Scottish Government Privacy Policy](#)

### **Next steps in the process**

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at [Scottish Government Consultations](#). If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

### **Comments and complaints**

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at [graham.robertson2@gov.scot](mailto:graham.robertson2@gov.scot)

### **Scottish Government consultation process**

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: [Scottish Government Consultations](#). Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

## Consultation on Proposed Changes to the SSSC Register

### Respondent Information Form

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:  
[Scottish Government Privacy Policy](#)

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email Address

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

#### **Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No

## Consultation Questions

The consultation questions are:

### Question One:

Are you responding as an individual or organisation/employer/service provider?

Individual

Employer/Service Provider

### Question Two:

Do you agree that reducing the number of SSSC Register parts will be an improvement to the current structure?

Yes

No

Don't Know

### Question Three:

Is three months after starting in their role an appropriate timescale to require workers to apply for registration?

Yes

No

Don't Know

### Question Four:

Do you agree with SSSC's proposals to include more information on the searchable public Register?

Yes

No

Don't Know

### Question Five:

Do you have any specific views on the proposed changes that you would like us to consider?

Free Text Response



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