

This vision and strategy has been developed and published by the members of the Social Work Services Strategic Forum
(Listed in Annex 1, page 27)

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THE SECTOR – A SNAPSHOT

SOCIAL SERVICES IS ONE OF THE LARGEST EMPLOYMENT GROUPS IN SCOTLAND EMPLOYING OVER

189,670 workers



1 in 13

PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND WORKS IN SOCIAL SERVICES



BY 2020 APPROXIMATELY **63%**

OF THIS WORKFORCE WILL BE REGISTERED

with and regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council



WHO WORKS WHERE?

SUB-SECTOR HEADCOUNT %SHARE

Housing support/ care at home (RC) **62,170** **32.8**



Care homes for adults (RC) **52,430** **27.6**



Day care of children (RC) **30,250** **15.9**



Local authority fieldwork service (NRLA) **16,010** **8.3**

Adult day care (RC) **8,240** **4.3**

Residential child care (RC) **6,810** **3.6**

Childminding (RC) **5,720** **3.0**

Other **8,050** **4.2**

Total **189,670** **100**

SERVICES INCLUDE:

ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES



ADULTS and OLDER PEOPLE



PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

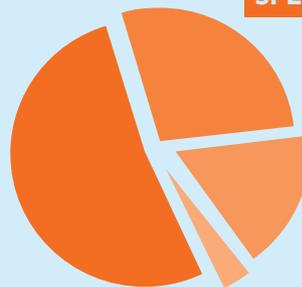


CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES



SPENDING



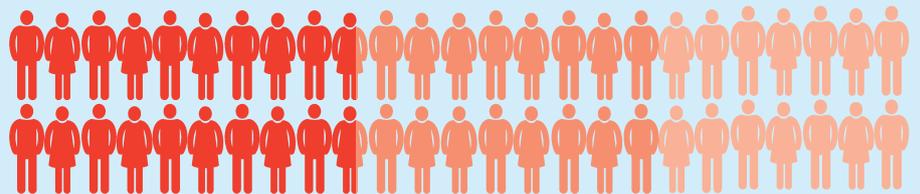
44% MOST OF THE SPEND IS ON SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

28% OVER A QUARTER ON ADULT SERVICES

22% SLIGHTLY LESS THAN THAT ON SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

5% ON OTHER SERVICES INCLUDING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK

THE SECTOR'S WORKFORCE IS EMPLOYED IN A MIX OF PROVIDERS



PRIVATE **41%** PUBLIC **32%** VOLUNTARY SECTOR **27%**

SOCIAL WORK SERVICE SPEND IS THE SECOND LARGEST AREA OF SPEND FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY BUDGETS (AFTER EDUCATION)

IN 2012-13 SOCIAL WORK SPEND COMPRISED

£3.79bn OR **22.2%**

OF LOCAL AUTHORITY GENERAL FUND REVENUE EXPENDITURE

THE SERVICES WHICH ARE THE FOCUS OF THIS VISION AND STRATEGY

ARE THOSE WHICH ARE REGULATED BY THE CARE INSPECTORATE AND WHOSE WORKFORCES ARE REGULATED BY THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL.

Foreword by the Forum Partners

Our vision is a socially just Scotland with excellent social services delivered by a skilled and valued workforce which works with others to empower, support and protect people, with a focus on prevention, early intervention and enablement.

Many people in Scotland come into contact with social services at some point in their lives. When they do they find valuable services provided by a wide range of individuals and organisations. They experience dedicated and skilled workers who are there to protect and support people or help them to deal with challenging circumstances and to get back on track with their lives.

The life-changing work undertaken by social services workers, on behalf of us all, to support children, adults and families to live lives in which they are able to achieve their potential is extremely valuable work – contributing to a more equal and socially just Scotland. The staff in social services are dedicated and committed to their work and this strategy recognises and supports both their unique contribution and the contributions they make in strong partnerships with others, such as people in the health workforce, to supporting our communities and delivering improved outcomes for the people of Scotland.

The Changing Lives report, a decade ago, set in train a wide range of developments which has led to on-going reform and improvement across social services, for example the introduction of a statutory basis for self-directed support. Changing Lives sought *“to equip social work services to rise to the challenge of supporting and protecting our most vulnerable people and communities in the early part of the 21st century”*. It is clear that a great deal has been achieved over the last ten years and Scotland has social services that are highly valued and supporting people to have better lives.

The landscape and context has, however, also changed significantly during that period and new challenges have arisen: financial constraints and austerity; increasing expectations of services and for services to be delivered in new ways; issues arising from the model of delivery and complexities in the market approach to care; challenges in approaches to commissioning and procurement; changes to the welfare system, medical advances and changes in the demography of Scotland. The progress being made towards delivery of integration of adult health and social care is a key example of a number of recent significant developments intended to deal with the challenges and improve the outcomes for people who use services. Transformational change of this scale is in itself not straightforward and brings its own complexity and challenge for people in the workforce.

The Forum partners and their wider set of stakeholders recognise that many of the current challenges are difficult issues for which solutions will not be easy to find and that the system and culture change required are in themselves not simple. However they are all committed to working in partnership towards ensuring delivery of the vision for social services and to doing everything they can to mitigate and manage the impacts of some of the current challenges.

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that social services are able to play their full part as robust and strong partners within the overall landscape of Scotland's public services and the shared outcomes they are working to achieve. This strategy summarises the wide range of current developments that are already underway to address the challenges. It also outlines a number of new actions intended to further support delivery of the vision. An implementation plan will be developed to address how and by when the actions will be taken forward.

The actions in this plan belong to a wide range of organisations in addition to the Forum partners and there will be wider involvement as the Implementation Plan is developed and progressed.

The Social Work Services Strategic Forum (the Forum) was established in late 2013 as a partnership forum, chaired by the Scottish Government Minister for Children and Young People, to support development and delivery of this vision and strategy. Forum members, listed on page 27, come from the following organisations and networks.



1. The Vision

This shared vision and strategy has been developed by a wide range of people and organisations involved in and committed to high quality, strong and effective social services in Scotland. It incorporates views and ideas from the organisations, senior managers and front line practitioners who will be the key contributors to making the vision a reality.

Social Services: Our Vision

Our vision is a socially just Scotland with excellent social services delivered by a skilled and valued workforce which works with others to empower, support and protect people, with a focus on prevention, early intervention and enablement.



2. Purpose and background

This strategy is focussed on a large and diverse sector which employs around 190,000 people - including social workers, people working in residential and day care services for adults and children, care at home and housing support staff, occupational therapy staff, mental health officers, people working in adult and child protection and in criminal justice services.

The strategy:

- recognises the unique role of social services and the very diverse range of support, services and workforce which comprise the sector;
- reflects on and reinforces the progress and improvement which has been made since Changing Lives;
- shares a vision for sustainable social services within the context of current policy drivers and developments and the distinctive Scottish approach to public service reform and transformation; and
- sets out where additional action is needed to ensure that social services continue to be robust partners in the work to empower, support, protect and ensure better outcomes for people and communities.

The strategy summarises the context and wide range of current developments already in train to strengthen the sector and deliver better outcomes for people. The strategy is both reflective of, and informed by, the current policy context and is not intended to duplicate or replace any of the current implementation work on-going across specific social services-related policy developments. The key policy developments of relevance to social services are summarised in **section 5**.

The strategy also sets out a range of additional actions, complementary to the current developments outlined in section 5, which partners will take forward to support delivery of our vision. The actions are in cross-cutting areas - relevant to all kinds of social services and the whole social services workforce - where it has been identified that although progress has been made, further specific effort could deliver value. The areas for action are set out in **section 6** under the following headings.

- Supporting the Workforce
- Understanding Service Quality and Performance
- Improving Use of Evidence
- Promoting Public Understanding

Background

The approach to social services in Scotland stems from the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 as amended by numerous pieces of legislation - all focussed on strengthening different kinds of services and, importantly, improving protection, outcomes and support for people with a range of needs or facing challenges in their lives – across all ages, stages and settings of life.

A review of Social Work Services in Scotland, initiated by the Scottish Government, in 2004, led to a set of recommendations in the Changing Lives report. These recommendations were aimed at delivering social services for the 21st Century that would continue to rise to the challenge of supporting and protecting vulnerable people and improving the well-being of people and communities. As a whole, the recommendations were intended to “set social work services on a sustainable course, building on the capacity of services and the workforce and providing a firm foundation for meeting the current and future needs of Scottish society”.

Over the last decade, Changing Lives has led to a very wide range of specific products and outcomes, including guidance on the role of the Chief Social Work Officer and the responsibilities of Social Workers, practice guidance for social work services, leadership and knowledge strategies for the sector and significant investment in approaches to service innovation, access to evidence, sharing of best practice and continuous learning.

The Scottish Social Services Council (established as a Public Body in 2001) has been instrumental in supporting the up-skilling and competence of the social services workforce as a whole and of the quality of the education available for workers in this sector. Similarly the Health and Care Professions Council (also established in 2001) regulates and sets standards for occupational therapists (one of the group of Allied Health Professions) working in social services. Work undertaken by the Social Work Inspection Agency and continued by the Care Inspectorate has supported improvement and higher quality of provision across the sector.

A range of other organisations and individuals have also worked to deliver on Changing Lives recommendations, including sector leaders, through organisations such as the Association of Directors of Social Work (now Social Work Scotland), Coalition for Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and Scottish Care and their member organisations; frontline practitioners, individually and collaboratively, through organisations such as trade unions, the Scottish Association of Social Work; educators; and service or user specific learning and improvement networks.

Reflecting the cross-cutting nature of social services, the recommendations of Changing Lives can be seen in the policy intent behind many current, wider policy developments, including the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. The voluntary sector in particular has played a leading role in developing policy and practice around personalisation and self-directed support.

Changing Lives can therefore be seen as a significant point in the evolution of the high quality social services we aspire to. It was however, largely focussed on social work services and this 2015 Vision and Strategy is more reflective of the current context and the wide and diverse nature of the social services workforce.

3. Unique contribution of social services

In developing this strategy the partners have been very firm in taking a wide definition of social services, similar to that of the Changing Lives approach to social work services, as referring to “all services provided by local authorities and to commissioned services provided by the voluntary and private sectors to meet the identified needs of the communities they serve”.

The social services workforce encompasses everyone engaged in the delivery of social services. It is a large and diverse workforce (employing around 190,000 people) including social workers, people working in residential and day care services for adults and children, care at home and housing support staff, occupational therapy staff, mental health officers, people working in adult and child protection and in criminal justice services.

The social services workforce delivers essential support every day to some of our most vulnerable people. Social services encompass a wide range of support and services delivered by statutory, voluntary and private organisations. Services are there for people at all stages of life and in all kinds of circumstances. And whilst services are available when people need them and seek them out, it is important to recognise that many services are also required to assess and manage risk, to proactively intervene to protect people and to provide therapeutic interventions as well as care and support.

The promotion of human rights and social justice through tackling inequality and disadvantage is one of the key principles that underpins all public services across Scotland. The reform of public services is being driven by a renewed emphasis on achieving inclusion through partnership with people who need assistance and with those who support them: professionals, carers and communities. Within this context the importance of robust and effective social services is crucial to the delivery of a socially just Scotland where people are able to feel safe, to flourish and to experience improved opportunities and a better quality of life.

4. Values, ethics and principles of social services

Whilst it is a diverse sector in terms of job roles, career pathways and service structures, what unifies the sector is a common set of shared values and ethics which underpins the principles of those that work in the sector.

Ethical awareness, professional integrity, respect for human rights and a commitment to promoting social justice are at the core of social services practice (See for example **The Code of Ethics for Social Work, BASW, 2012**). The life changing and challenging work undertaken by those in the sector cannot be underestimated. This essential work is underpinned by the sector's core values – focussed on promoting enablement and participation, understanding each individual in the context of family and community and identifying and building on the strengths of individuals and communities.

There are also standards of conduct and practice which social services workers and employers must follow. In Scotland these are issued by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as agreed with Ministers and for Allied Health Professionals, such as occupational therapists, by the Health and Care Professions Council. Employers are responsible for making sure that they meet the standards set out in the Employers Code of Practice and understand the role they are expected to play in the development and regulation of the workforce, supporting delivery of high quality social services and promoting public trust and confidence in social services. Social services workers are responsible for making sure that their own conduct does not fall below the standards set out in the Code of Practice and that no action or omission on their part harms the wellbeing of the people they support.

Social Service Employers must:

- make sure people are suitable to enter the workforce and understand their roles and responsibilities
- have written policies and procedures in place to enable social service workers to meet the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers
- provide training and development opportunities to enable social service workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge
- put in place and implement written policies and procedures to deal with dangerous, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice
- promote the SSSC's Codes of Practice to social service workers, service users and carers and co-operate with the SSSC's proceedings.

Social Service workers must:

- protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers
- strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers
- promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm
- treat people with compassion, empathy and care
- respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people
- uphold public trust and confidence in social services
- be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.

5. Current strategic and policy developments

Setting out our vision for social services in Scotland takes place within the very challenging context of an economic downturn, pressures on public funding, increasing demand for services - particularly for older people, challenges for recruitment and retention and a potential for reduction in overall workforce numbers. All of these are providing significant challenges across the public services landscape and placing ever greater demands on those working across the sector. Effort is being made across a whole range of areas to try to deal with the challenges. There are also significant and major opportunities for innovation, improvement and better engagement across workforces and with service users.

The [Christie Commission](#) in 2011 emphasised the need for public services to be built around people and communities and to work collaboratively to achieve better outcomes. The Commission's report emphasised that the objective of any change programmes should be to ensure that:

- **public services are built around people and communities**, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience;
- public service organisations **work together effectively to achieve outcomes** - specifically, by delivering integrated services which help to secure improvements in the quality of life, and the social and economic wellbeing, of the people and communities of Scotland;
- public service organisations make a decisive shift to **preventative approaches**, to **reducing inequalities** and **promoting equality**; and
- all public services constantly seek to **improve performance** and **reduce costs**, and are open, transparent and accountable.

These principles are at the core of social service provision. As evidenced, for example, through the development of approaches to co-production - people who use services and their carers working together with service providers as equal partners to make better use of each other's assets, resources and contributions to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency.

Threaded throughout all of this is the importance of partnership working which is embedded in and fundamental to the new approach to public services in Scotland. As stated initially in *Changing Lives* "Social work services alone cannot solve society's problems. We need to harness all our resources and expertise to design services around the needs of people, delivering the right outcomes for the people who use them. That means finding new ways of working that position social work services alongside the work of their partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors."

In Scotland there is currently an ambitious and wide-ranging policy agenda which will have an impact on enhanced quality, improved efficiency and financial sustainability of

social services within the context of demographic change and rising need and demand. These developments as a whole are intended to help us meet the many current challenges and to facilitate the integrated, multi-disciplinary approach needed in order to improve outcomes for people in a challenging environment.

Key relevant areas of reform and transformation include the following developments, though it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list. Embedded links are provided (online version) to more information on each area.

- The aspirations of the [20:20 Vision](#) and the [integration of adult health and social care](#) being introduced through the [Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#). The required delegation of all adult health and social care planning and service delivery to new health and social care partnerships is intended to ensure that health and social care provision across Scotland is joined-up and seamless, especially for people with long term conditions and disabilities, many of whom are older people.
- Greater personalisation of services and implementation of [self-directed support](#), specifically through the [Social Care \(Self-Directed Support\)\(Scotland\) Act 2013](#). See also: [Self-Directed Support in Scotland](#)
- Major transformation programmes and new legislation focussed on improving outcomes and reshaping care for children. [Getting it Right for Every Child](#) has at its heart the wellbeing of children and young people. [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) will further the ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up in by putting children and young people at the heart of planning and services and ensuring their rights are respected across the public sector.
- [Reshaping Care of Older People](#) is focussed on shifting care towards anticipatory care and prevention approaches in order to improve care of older people, so that *“Older people are valued as an asset, their voices are heard and they are supported to enjoy full and positive lives in their own home or in a homely setting”*
- The 2013 shared vision for [Independent living in Scotland](#) is concerned with all disabled people having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, work and in the community. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.
- [The Carers and Young Carers Strategy 2010-2015](#) makes clear that carers are equal partners in the planning and delivery of care and support and that supporting carers and working in partnership with them is key to the sustainability of social services and the delivery of good outcomes for people.
- Development and implementation of [joint strategic commissioning](#) and stronger partnership approaches to service delivery. Strategic commissioning is the term used for all the activities involved in assessing and forecasting needs, linking investment to all agreed desired outcomes, considering options, planning the nature, range and quality of future services and working in partnership to put these in place.

- Reform of the Community Justice Model – where the new model is intended to deliver a community solution to the achievement of improved outcomes for community justice; to the problem of reoffending and the tasks of offender management and reintegration.
- The work of the Scottish Social Services Council and its wide range of partners to raise standards of practice, strengthen and support the professionalism of the social services workforce, and thereby increase the protection of people who use social services. This is a key strand to Scotland having in place a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Similarly the Health and Care Professions Council sets standards of practice to both regulate and support the professionalism of the Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) working in social services.
- Good employment conditions are a crucial part of having an engaged workforce. Partners such as the Scottish Government and Cosla and other social services employers are jointly considering conditions of employment issues such as approaches on the Living Wage.
- New quality and improvement approaches as outlined, for example, in the new ways of working by the Care Inspectorate and set out in the 2020 Vision for Health and Social Care.
- The UK Government Welfare Reform Act 2012 has introduced significant changes to the welfare system. The Scottish Government is working with stakeholders, partners and the UK Government to understand the impact of the Welfare reforms and doing as much as possible to understand the impact on and support public services and vulnerable people in Scotland.
- Strengthened approaches to community capacity building, empowerment and engagement, including through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill
- The Scottish approach to transformation of public services, to ensure that they are:
 - outcomes-focussed;
 - person-centred and co-produced, in order to ensure that people and communities are fully involved in the design and delivery of services;
 - assets and strengths-based, building on the strengths of individuals and communities and developing their resilience;
 - use evidence to support performance improvement and innovation
 - delivered through partnerships or integrated services;
 - empowering their staff to work in partnerships and in innovative ways;
 - focussed on prevention and early intervention.

The policy and improvement landscape which has implications for both strengthening the social services sector and for dealing with the current challenges is therefore both cross-cutting and complex. Despite its many challenges, the current environment brings significant opportunities to transform our social services and introduce improved ways of working across the sector. These opportunities in particular offer the potential to refresh and redefine relationships between the providers and commissioners of services and the people they support - all of which have the potential to deliver the improved outcomes and social justice we are collectively seeking.

6. Areas for action

Outcomes Focus

The actions in this strategy are intended as a supportive and aligned contribution to the overall direction of travel for the sector within the broader context of public service reform and innovation in Scotland as described in Section 5. Specifically the actions are intended to contribute to delivery of the Vision for Social Services and to ensure that social services are robust and making effective contributions to the delivery of national and local outcomes for people and communities as set out in the National Performance Framework, Single Outcome Agreements, the National Health and Well-being Outcomes, and the outcomes for Community Justice which are currently under development.

Delivery of the actions outlined in this section, in addition to the developments outlined in section 5, will help to ensure that social services as a whole are strong and effective partners in an increasingly collaborative and co-produced landscape.

Discussions in the Forum and with wider stakeholders over 2014 identified priority actions around four key areas. There was also a clear recognition that the vital contribution of the social services workforce is fundamental to the sustainability of services. Therefore many of the actions in the Strategy are focussed on supporting and developing the social services workforce. It is important to emphasise, however, that all four action areas are inter-related and the actions across the Strategy are intended as a whole to contribute to the achievement of our vision.

An Implementation Plan will be developed by the Forum to explore the detail of resources, timelines and specific outcomes for each action.

Supporting the workforce

The social services workforce is one of the largest employment groups in Scotland with around 190,000 people working to provide a range of support within our communities. Excellent social services require a confident, dedicated and skilled workforce which is valued by employers, service users and the wider public.

Everyone in the workforce needs to feel valued and to be motivated to improve their contribution and be innovative in their practice. Employers across social services need to ensure that workers have the right skills, knowledge and values to provide high quality services. Retaining experienced staff in front line practice is crucial to delivering excellent social services. Continuous professional development and career pathways need to be in place across the workforce so that people are equipped for their current jobs as well as for future careers.

In addition to the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and their Employers, there is a wide range of frameworks, regulations, national standards,

qualifications, learning and development infrastructure, including qualification-based registration, in place to support the development of a confident, skilled and dedicated workforce in social services. This work, being led and co-ordinated by the SSSC, must continue to be both supported and informed by all parts of the social services sector and, increasingly by the sector's partner organisations. For example, as services become increasingly integrated it will be important to work closely with bodies such as NHS Education for Scotland and the Health and Care Professions Council. Close alignment with approaches such as Everyone Matters, which sets out a vision of what the health workforce will look like by 2020 and sets out the things that need to be done to make the vision a reality, will also be crucial.

Recruiting the right people and retaining experienced staff in front line practice through career long learning and the existence of appropriate career pathways is crucial to the sustainability of the sector. Ensuring that appropriate learning and development opportunities exist for the whole workforce will encourage career progression and support people working in the wide variety of roles which exist. For employers, improving recruitment and retention, particularly in the largest part of the workforce - social care - can lead to significant benefits in respect of time and cost through reduced turnover, as well as improving consistency and continuity for service users.

Recruitment and retention is widely recognised as a significant challenge across parts of the sector. There is evidence that turnover is high in some areas of social care – perhaps due to workload pressures and the nature of the work, and to pay and conditions relative to other sectors and industries. The majority of staff working in social care are employed by voluntary and private sector organisations that provide services on behalf of public authorities. The operation of a market (or 'mixed economy') in social care, and a reliance on competitive tendering as a way of managing that market, appears to have resulted in downward pressure on service costs. Given that the great majority of service costs (up to 85% in non-residential services) relate to the workforce, this pressure has had a significant impact on pay and conditions, particularly in the context of the current economic climate.

Pressures on pay and conditions and workload impacts on morale, recruitment and on the quality of care and support provided. The economic contribution made by the sector is significant and it is a matter of concern that parts of it have developed a reputation as low-wage/low skill which impacts negatively on the workers and potentially on public confidence. Action to address low pay would enable a more positive narrative to emerge about the sector and encourage people to see it as a good career choice.

New public procurement legislation has placed a new emphasis on the importance of appropriate pay and conditions for those working in the sector and guidance has been developed that enables greater account to be given to such matters when awarding contracts. Some authorities are already starting to take the initiative to raise hourly rates paid to care providers to enable them to reward their staff more appropriately. The Taskforce on Residential Care for Older People has also recommended that financial modeling should be done to look at the implications of introducing the Living Wage in the care sector.

The workforce also requires strong leadership at all levels. High standards of leadership and professionalism are essential to the strengthening of professional credibility in the eyes of the public and other professionals. Strengthening leadership and improving citizen leadership is being driven by the Strategy for Building Leadership Capacity in Scotland's Social Services 2013-15, led by SSSC. This should be seen within the wider context of the Scottish Leaders Forum which explores work on public service core values and ethos for the whole workforce as a way of dealing with professional barriers.

Alongside this, strengthening and protecting the professionalism of social work and social care is fundamental to the success of this strategy. There is a recognised contrast between the investment in developing this workforce compared to other public service workforces, for example in health and education. There is still much to be done supporting leadership, encouraging career progression, developing career pathways and supporting practitioners. In particular, newly qualified social workers would benefit from a more structured system of support in their first year of practice similar to other professions. In addition, newly qualified occupational therapists working in social services would benefit from similar structured support alongside their social worker colleagues as well as strengthened career progression and pathways. Local authorities that already have this in place can demonstrate its value in improving quality and retention. It is also important to support and enhance the growing professionalism of the wider social services workforce.

As the needs of the population continue to change, the demands on the social care workforce will undoubtedly increase. From this year until 2020 many groups within the social care workforce will start to come within scope of registration with the SSSC for the first time. It is this lowest paid part of the workforce that is not always able to attract high quality staff, leading to increased recruitment activity and costs for employers. In addition, the challenges here have the potential to increase any costs associated with poor practice both for the employer and for the SSSC. At the same time it is exactly this group of staff who are relied upon by service users and carers to provide some of the most personal care. It is therefore vital that the sector further invests to strengthen the recruitment, induction and continuous professional development of this staff group. Investment is likely to improve outcomes for individuals, reduce costs to employers and reduce cost of the SSSC.

In light of the challenges outlined above and the importance of supporting this workforce, the following actions are intended to build on developments already underway and contribute to mitigating the challenges and delivering further improvement.

Supporting the workforce - Actions

Review the Codes of Practice for Social Service Employees and Employers and ensure they are fit for purpose and properly enforced.

Work with partners on improved approaches to workforce planning (in line with the recommendation from the Residential Care Task Force and the needs of Health and Social Care Integration Partnerships).

Commission work to better understand recruitment and retention across Scotland, including recommendations for enhancing career pathways and ways of retaining experienced social service workers on the frontline.

Review existing workforce surveys and, if considered useful, undertake a workforce survey across the sector to better understand key issues for staff. In the light of findings, look at how support for workers could be improved to help address the issues identified e.g. caseload issues and complexity of implementation of new policy development.

Work collaboratively to foster a shared understanding between commissioners and providers of the importance of investing in pay and conditions, and to develop appropriate enabling commissioning and procurement practices.

Work to influence improvement to procurement approaches to ensure they incorporate ways of addressing workforce matters which supports fair and equitable pay and other work conditions.

In partnership with Scotland-wide approaches on this topic, undertake analysis to better understand the scale of in-work poverty in the sector, the impact of the benefits system and its impact on recruitment, retention, morale and quality.

Consider the development and adoption of an ethical care charter as proposed by Unison.

Commission work to better understand investment in development of the social services workforce (by employers, government and others) in comparison to other public service workers and consider options for a more integrated approach to qualifications and CPD with other sectors.

Support the implementation of the recommendations agreed as an outcome of the current review of the social work degree.

Explore the benefits and related costs of strengthening and improving the mandatory, structured framework for newly qualified social workers. Work with partners to ensure that similar work is taken forward for newly qualified occupational therapists working in social services.

Review current guidance and approaches to recruitment of social services workers, particularly to more strongly incorporate values-based recruitment approaches.

Commission work to update existing induction guidance and consider a shared/ multi professional induction "passport" with other public sector workers where there are common core elements.

Deliver the leadership event "Imagining the Future" over a period of 2 years to support the development of future leaders as part of the ongoing implementation of the Leadership Strategy for Social Services.

Understanding service quality and performance

For us to be clear that we have excellent social services in place we need to know that the support being delivered is working and that it is having the desired outcomes for the people being supported. A better understanding, by all involved in the delivery of services of the evidence on quality and performance will lead to the improvement of services and interventions, in turn leading to better outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

A wide range of activities and tools is already in place to measure performance and regulate or quality assure services. The purpose of this action strand is therefore not to duplicate or create new or additional performance tools or measures, but to bring greater cohesion to and understanding of the wide range of information which is already available. The actions are intended to help workers, decision-makers and the public to have an easier understanding of how social services are performing in Scotland and how they could be improved. It is not about developing a standard or centralised approach to performance management, rather it is about how to interpret performance at local level to improve delivery and ensure better outcomes for service users. In undertaking the actions we may also identify gaps in our knowledge and would then look to ways of building new evidence.

There is a wide range of work already going on in this area from Audit Scotland Best Value Reviews, through central collection of a wide range of datasets down to local reporting, evaluation of services and feedback through customer surveys. In the current policy context a great deal of effort is also going into understanding the impact and outcomes of services. Importantly, the social services sector has a key lead body with responsibility for understanding performance and supporting improvement – the Care Inspectorate.

It is, therefore, clear that there is rich performance information available; however, there are opportunities to use this information more cohesively. We need to develop greater clarity, consistency and transparency on how performance can be interpreted, what should be measured and how it is being measured. We need to build greater understanding of what good performance and high quality services look like particularly by engaging service users for their feedback.

We also need to increase the ability to share, understand and implement good practice, based on knowledge of what works, and support a stronger focus of effective self-evaluation which is sector-led, place-based and outcomes-focussed.

The following actions are therefore intended to help us to develop a better understanding of current service quality and performance, so that this in turn can lead to service improvements which are led by and owned at all levels of the services.

Understanding service quality and performance - Actions

Develop a summary of qualitative evidence from Chief Social Work Officer Annual Reports, Care Inspectorate information, SSSC workforce data, CCPS and Scottish Care sector reports and from user feedback to give an overview of performance across the sector.

Develop an annual summary paper which collates key social services statistics and data using data from specific, already existing datasets.

Undertake a series of Practitioner Engagement events, building on the 2014 exercise, to ensure that front line practitioners are engaged in identifying what works and what can be improved.

Develop the capability across the whole social services sector to run evidence-based programmes, engaging with relevant improvement bodies to work on strengthening improvement approaches in the sector.

Work with relevant academic and other organisations to facilitate the exploitation and regular use of administrative data to identify population needs and inform commissioning and service developments.

Improving use of evidence

The creation and use of research and evidence has a central role in the development and improvement of social services and professional practice. We need to know that the support and care which individuals receive is appropriate to their needs, is effective and leads to the right outcomes. We therefore need to develop, coordinate, disseminate and implement research and evidence so that it informs service users and carers in their choices, and practitioners and managers in the improvement of social services.

There is currently a range of activity in the production and dissemination of relevant research in Scotland. To ensure that policy, practice and services are informed by the evidence base, it is essential that activity proactively involves people who access services, practitioners, policy-makers and social work educators.

Over recent years, there have been significant developments in co-ordinating and exploiting research and supporting evidence-informed practice. This includes strong infrastructure including :

- Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) for cross-sector research and innovation in social services.
- Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol (STRADA) for people working with those affected by substance misuse.
- Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland (CELCIS) - working to improve the experiences and life chances of children and young people in Scotland who are looked after, their families, and those who have left care.
- Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) - developing, supporting and understanding youth justice practice, policy and research
- WithScotland a national resource helping to improve outcomes for children in need of protection and adults at risk of harm.
- Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) - a consortium of partner organisations who work together to encourage best practice in the support of people with learning disabilities through training, information, research and public education
- The Dementia Centre (DSDC) - an international centre of knowledge and expertise dedicated to improving the lives of people with dementia.
- The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) a collaboration of several Scottish universities aiming to produce excellent research and to develop excellent researchers so as to better the development of policy, practice and public debate about crime and justice
- Social Services Knowledge Scotland which provides access to a huge range of evidence and other resources across the whole landscape of social services and beyond.

There is also a range of partnership models between government, social services organisations and universities and a range of learning opportunities, for example teaching of research methods in social work, occupational therapy and social care qualifying programmes as well as post-qualifying programmes, professional doctorates and PhDs, staff exchanges, joint appointments, collaborative training partnerships and practitioner research schemes and the use of new technology and social media to support communities of practice and knowledge hubs.

Current challenges, however, include the need to breakdown the traditional barriers between stakeholders and find ways to maximise the participation of service providers and ultimately the service users themselves in identifying research priorities. Ensuring collaborative practice in all stages of research and knowledge exchange is also key along with building on current strengths to avoid duplication and to focus on identified key priorities.

While there are clear strengths in the development of research, knowledge mobilisation and evidence-informed practice, there are important areas for further development.

The actions outlined below are intended to maximise the potential for effective use of current research and evidence, to identify priorities for new research and to develop new or improved models of knowledge exchange and transfer – either through existing networks or new fora.

Improving use of evidence - Actions

Develop a forum of key stakeholders to develop priorities for a research agenda for all aspects of social services in Scotland. This will include identifying gaps in knowledge and developing resources for identifying and sharing evidence of what works. Ensure that opportunities to explore integrated research options are exploited via integration of adult health and social care.

Adopt a strategic approach to the education of social services workers which identifies and embeds best practice in knowledge exchange, mobilisation, engagement and in research implementation models.

Engage with social services leadership development so that leaders in the sector promote and embed evidence-informed policy and practice across their organisations.

Establish a research and knowledge exchange funding forum to maximise and co-ordinate the use of existing funding opportunities for research, identify new opportunities and promote and support collaborative applications.

Promoting public understanding

Promoting public understanding is important to recognising the value of this sector and the people who work in it. Using the latest public engagement science in developing a more positive and transparent understanding in regard to roles, responsibilities and accountability when things go wrong and how improvements can be made will increase public confidence in the sector. Perceived benefits and risk are important factors to consider in working alongside the public. Organised public events and positive reporting focussed on service benefits and quality, improvement and innovation will help to highlight and promote the sector in a more effective way.

The public often judge social services in moral terms. Developing a proactive, rather than reactive strategy, in sharing information will help to embed a confidence in the sector and those that work in it. High profile national activities have been undertaken to promote the sector and the front-line practitioners working within it. These have included the national Care Accolades, World Social Work Day, Social Services Expo as well as specific support-focussed awards such as dementia or residential child care. These all celebrate good practice and are an opportunity to promote positively the innovative and inspiring work of the sector. Yet changing public understanding alongside the challenges faced by workers carrying out such complex roles is still a considerable challenge for the sector.

If the public image and understanding of the sector is poor, people may be less likely to engage with or seek support from services. Equally, staff may find it hard to stay motivated and people may in turn be less interested in joining the workforce. The wider public understanding and public value of the sector can ultimately impact on recruitment and retention as well as the quality of provision. However, not all parts of the sector have the same public image. We therefore need to focus strategically on the services where a greater public understanding could add most value.

To work in social services you need to be resilient - complexity is part of everyday practice and there are no simple solutions. The workforce needs to be both supported and to show confidence in its signature skills set. The nature of the work can lead to a workforce that is risk averse so it is necessary to create an environment which allows people to be innovative whilst also taking responsibility and being accountable should things go wrong.

Ultimately, as some front line staff have reflected during the development of this strategy, a skilled happy workforce engaging positively with service users whilst delivering quality services is the best kind of public statement for the sector.

Collectively we want to increase public engagement, promote the professional role of social workers and the wider social services sector, encourage the sector to be more confident in promoting what it does well and the contribution it makes across a wide range of services and partnerships.

The following set of actions is intended to help in harnessing a more positive image of the sector, raising public awareness and participation, engaging the media and better supporting the sector to be more effective when undertaking reactive and responsive media work.

Promoting public understanding - Actions

Develop a short, accessible statement that defines the sector, is clear and understandable and which is meaningful across all parts of the sector.

Develop guidance and training to support staff in dealing with the media around potentially difficult issues, for example serious case reviews. Draw on experiences, involvement and research to develop a narrative which enables service providers to present a coherent, consistent and supportive view of social services, particularly when they are under pressure.

Proactively engage the media to outline the vision for social services expressed in this strategy. This might involve regular comment pieces addressing issues being raised in the media and campaigns as a way of promoting positive stories.

Undertake research into public understanding and value of the sector. This will involve collation of existing evidence and might involve engaging with specialist public engagement researchers to identify key areas to focus on in terms of improving public understanding and evaluating public value.

Develop innovative ways of public engagement, deliberation and participation which will promote better acceptance and understanding of social services.

7. Implementing the strategy

The actions set out in this strategy are ambitious, will not be straightforward to achieve and can clearly only be delivered in partnership. They stand as a package but Forum members are realistic in recognising that some will be easier to achieve than others. Some of the actions are interrelated and will require consecutive effort, others are standalone and may be achievable as “quick wins”.

The partners in the Social Work Services Strategic Forum, supported by the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, Scottish Government (OCSWA), will develop, agree and take forward an Implementation Plan and related timeline for the actions in collaboration with wider stakeholders, including the NHS and new bodies being planned such as Community Justice Scotland.

The Implementation Plan will set out:

- **Who and when** - Ownership/leadership and timescales for each of the actions listed in the strategy, links and dependencies.
- **How** - The delivery agency or establishment of delivery action groups, as required, where actions need a broader set of partners to support delivery.
- **Resourcing** - Identification of resources, where they are required to deliver actions, and the direction of travel on how the resource will either be provided or sought – whichever is applicable.

The Forum, with support from the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser in the Scottish Government, will maintain an oversight of progress with the strategy and monitor the Implementation Plan through quarterly meetings during 2015. The Forum will produce a progress report in Spring 2016 which will help to inform next steps and adjustments to the Implementation Plan for delivery of the vision and strategy by 2020.

Social Work Services Strategic Forum

Membership at March 2015

- **Minister for Children and Young People** (Chair)
- **Scottish Government Chief Social Work Adviser** – Alan Baird
- **Scottish Social Services Council** – Anna Fowlie, Chief Executive
- **Scottish Care** - Ranald Mair, Chief Executive
- **Coalition of Care & Support Providers Scotland (CCPS)** - Annie Gunner Logan, Chief Executive
- **Social Work Scotland** – Harry Stevenson, President and Jane Devine, Business Manager
- **COSLA** – Ron Culley, Senior Policy Officer
- **SOLACE** representative – Michelle Miller (City of Edinburgh Council)
- **Care Inspectorate** – Robert Peat, Director of Inspection
- **UNISON** – Stephen Smellie
- **Scottish Association of Social Work** – Trisha Hall
- **University Schools of Social Work representative** - Andy Kendrick (Strathclyde University)
- **Joint Improvement Team** – Christina Naismith
- **Scottish Government Directors/Deputy Directors for: Children and Families, Health and Social Care Integration, Community Justice, Health Workforce**