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GET SKILLED

ISSUE
01

skills for care and development
**developing the social service
workforce for the future**



In this special edition of SSSC News, the Scottish Social Services Council, as part of Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Council for the social services sector describes the Sector Skills Agreement.



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WHAT ARE SECTOR SKILLS COUNCILS?

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) aim to ensure that public training resources and funding are directed at the priority skills needs of all sectors. They have been established by the Government and have four key goals:

- to reduce skills gaps and shortages
- improve productivity, business and public service performance
- increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce
- improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Skills for Care and Development (SfCD) is the Sector Skills Council for social care, children and young people's workforces in the UK. It is an Alliance of six organisations:

- Care Council for Wales
- Children's Workforce Development Council
- General Social Care Council
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council
- Scottish Social Services Council
- Skills for Care.

SfCD is licensed by government to represent the interests of some 60,000 employers and 1.6 million social care, children and young people's workers across the UK.

www.johnbirdsall.co.uk

WHAT IS A SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENT?



Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in partnership with:

- Employers
- Training providers
- Funders of training.

Scottish stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the SSA include:

- Careers Scotland
- LearnDirect Scotland
- Jobcentre Plus
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Funding Council
- Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Scottish Trade Union Congress.

Sector Skills Agreements aim to ensure that public training resources and funding are directed at priority skills needs of all sectors. SSAs outline how the SSC and employers will work with providers and funders to secure the necessary supply of training and outline how this goal will be achieved.

The Scottish Social Services Council (as part of Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Council for the social services sector) developed the SSA for the sector.

EACH SSA HAS FIVE STAGES:

STAGE 1: A sophisticated assessment is made of each sector to determine short-term, medium-term and long-term skills needs, and to map out the factors for change in the sector.

STAGE 2: Current training provision across all levels is reviewed to measure its range, nature and employer relevance.

STAGE 3: The main gaps and weaknesses in workforce development are analysed and priorities are agreed.

STAGE 4: A review is conducted into the scope for collaborative action – engaging employers to invest in skills development to support improved business performance – and an assessment is made into what employers are likely to sign up to.

STAGE 5: The final outcome is an agreement of how the SSC and employers will work with key funding partners to secure the necessary supply of training.

Written reports were prepared as part of stages 1, 2, 3 and 5. These reports are available from www.sssc.uk.com



The National Learning Opportunities Database (NLOD) provides access to over 90,000 learning opportunities. Discussions are taking place with LearnDirect Scotland regarding the best way of sharing this resource with the social services sector.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SSA

The implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement is underway. Initial meetings held with each of the Scottish stakeholders discussed how to progress the issues and skills needs identified:

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Many social service employees are working towards meeting the SSSC's registration criteria. Some of the Scottish stakeholders provide support which help organisations to meet these aims. LearnDirect Scotland's Business Support Service, for example, offers free advice and resources to organisations, including SMEs. LearnDirect Scotland's staff have been briefed on many of the key issues for social service providers and can highlight resources that organisations can access. Information about services such as the Business Support Service are currently being disseminated to the sector using different methods, including the SSSC's ebulletin, events and stakeholder publications.

The National Learning Opportunities Database (NLOD) provides access to over 90,000 learning opportunities. Discussions are taking place with LearnDirect Scotland regarding the best way of sharing this resource with the social services sector.

The SSSC is working with The Scottish Trade Unions Congress (STUC) to provide information about registration to its members. This information is shared with Trade Union Learning Representatives who often advise social services workers of qualification requirements and timescales involved.

SOFT SKILLS

The need to develop the soft skills of many individuals is an issue that was extensively referred to throughout the SSA process. LearnDirect Scotland (LDS) provide support for individuals to develop 'soft skills', primarily via Branded Learning Centres (BLCs.) There are approximately 600 BLCs throughout Scotland. Discussions are taking place between Skills for Care and Development and LDS over the best way of ensuring that social service providers can access BLCs, particularly SMEs or rural-based organisations. LDS also provide e-learning resources which can be accessed by individuals.

Skills for Care and Development is working with Jobcentre Plus to obtain more information about the role the organisation plays in helping jobseekers to develop 'soft skills' prior to seeking employment in the social services sector. The SSSC and the Scottish Qualifications Authority are collaborating to promote the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) guidance.

SERVICE DESIGN AND EFFECTIVE USE OF WORKFORCE'S SKILLS

The need to make better use of workforce skills was highlighted throughout the SSA. The SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) is the first UK awarding body to develop the newly revised Registered Managers Award (RMA) standards, now called Leadership and Management for Care (LMC) into a qualification. The new LMC awards were launched in April 2008.

LearnDirect Scotland's Training Partnerships help organisations to identify training priorities and learning solutions. LDS are developing a series of social enterprise case studies which illustrate how training partners support social service providers.

Business Gateway provides online advice and information to new and existing organisations. Many of these services are relevant to the social services sector. Business Gateway provides guidance on creating personal development plans, for example.

CONTRACTING, PROCUREMENT AND COMMISSIONING SKILLS

New National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Contracting, Procurement and Commissioning in social services have been developed in consultation with employers. Skills Sets based on these new NOS will also be developed and promoted within the sector.

SKILLS IN PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The need to foster partnership working skills has been highlighted in many publications in recent years, including the SSA. The Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) sets out what people in the social service workforce need in order to be able to do their job well now and in the future and describes what employers need to do to support them. The CLF outlines a number of personal capabilities which will develop the ability of staff to work in partnership. The CLF will be published shortly.

ABILITY OF STAFF TO OPERATE AUTONOMOUSLY

Employers surveyed during the Sector Skills Agreement process indicated that the ability of staff to operate autonomously was an issue that they felt applied throughout the social services workforce.

Employers are encouraged to:

- use the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning Guidance
- embed the Continuous Learning Framework within their organisation.

DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology plays an increasing role in the delivery of services. LearnDirect Scotland and Skills for Care and Development are working together to promote 'learning bytes' – a catalogue of online learning resources. The online courses cover a wide range of topics, including:

- personal development, including communication and employability skills
- professional courses on business management and office software
- courses for specific sectors, including a literacy and numeracy course tailored for the care sector.

Employers surveyed as part of the SSA indicated a need to make more use of existing technology. Resources used within the sector include:

- the SSSC's 'suite of tools', including the Workforce Planning Tool, The Job Description Generator and Career Development Toolkit
- IRISS Learning Exchange
- the Social Services Knowledge Portal.

OTHER OBLIGATORY TRAINING DEMANDS

Employers highlighted training demands other than registration during the SSA process. These demands include:

- Mental Health Officer training within local authorities
- Health and safety
- Moving and handling.

Employers indicated that they did not have much concern about meeting these requirements. The SSSC, Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish colleges of further education are currently exploring potential to identify overlaps between courses undertaken for registration and those for other training purposes.

SKILLS NEEDS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Skills for Care and Development has recently commissioned research which examines the percentage of migrant workers operating in the Scottish social services sector. The research will be published shortly. Skills for Care and Development is also exploring with Scottish stakeholders the systems and initiatives that can assist migrant workers to develop skills.



CLIENT SPECIFIC SKILLS

The need to develop client specific skills was an issue highlighted by some employers during the SSA process. Employers were particularly clear on the need to develop staff training in working with people who have dementia. The SSSC developed a series of skillsets which assist employers, assessors and candidates to identify the Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) units and underpinning knowledge which is most relevant for particular areas of practice in social services in Scotland. These skillsets help individuals to develop client specific skills.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE – RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The increasing demand for social services may ultimately produce an increase in the size of the sector's workforce. A growing workforce will need increased levels of training provision. This scenario creates recruitment issues and highlights the need to develop new models of training provision.

Careers Scotland and Job Centre Plus require updated information about the social services workforce to undertake their role, while representatives from many key stakeholders are collaborating to identify regional solutions for recruitment and retention challenges.

ACCESSIBILITY OF TRAINING FOR THE RURAL WORKFORCE

During the SSA rural employers noted particular challenges that hinder staff in terms of undertaking staff training. The need for alternative methods of training provision was highlighted. During the implementation of the SSA discussions were held with many of the key stakeholders in an attempt to redress some of these issues, and to ensure that:

- organisations are aware of e-learning courses, such as those provided by LearnDirect Scotland
- stakeholders that support or advise social service providers raise awareness of key e-learning resources and distance learning materials.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR TRAINING SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

The Stage 2 SSA report identified an apparently unequal access to funding for social care training in Scotland. Skills for Care and Development is currently developing a guide to funding and support services which support social services organisations in Scotland.

If you would like any further information about the SSA please contact Mike Docherty by email mike.docherty@sssc.uk.com, or telephone 01382 207266.

SCOTTISH VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

In stage 2 of the Sector Skills Agreement the SSSC gathered data on the uptake of awards and qualifications by the social services sector in Scotland. To build on this, as of summer 2008 the SSSC has begun to publish, on a quarterly basis, data received from Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) on Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) registrations and certifications.

The first report presents an analysis of the uptake of SVQs relevant to the sector, during the period January 2006 to December 2007. The report can now be accessed on the SSSC website: www.sssc.uk.com. The report highlights the numbers of candidates registering for, and receiving certifications on completion of an SVQ. It also identifies that registrations and certifications for SVQs, at level 3 in particular, seem to be slowing down, possibly due to reaching capacity within the workforce required for registration with the SSSC, or the reductions in Modern Apprenticeship funding that began in 2006.

The paper concludes that, overall, we appear to be in a period of rapid growth of registrations and certifications of SVQ qualifications. This is most likely to be due to the demands of SSSC registration which requires previously unqualified members of the workforce to undergo training. As the workforce becomes more qualified, we would expect to see a drop in the rate of increase of new registrations and qualifications.

If you would like further information about this work, contact James Arnold by email, james.arnold@sssc.uk.com



GROWTH AND FUTURE GROWTH

One of the most significant features of the social services sector in Scotland is the growth in its workforce, witnessed in the last 10-15 years. We know from official Government statistics (Labour Force Survey) that the number of people working in the sector rose from around 97,000 to 138,000 between 1995 and 2004. This is a 43% increase in the numbers employed during that 10-year period and is much greater than the average growth rate across the Scottish economy as a whole, which was just 7% for the same period.

The growth took place mainly amongst the private and voluntary sector providers with the voluntary sector workforce more than doubling from 17,000 to 35,000, while private sector workforce increased by over 75% from 26,000 to 46,000. Local authorities also saw an increase in their workforce, but at 7% it was the same as the Scottish average. The impact of these changes is that whereas in 1995 local authorities employed 3 out of 5 people working in the sector, by 2004 it had fallen to 2 out of 5.

Demand for services is expected to continue to grow in the years and decades ahead as more of Scotland's population reach 65 years old or older. This increased demand for services will mean further increase in demand for staff, so recent growth in the workforce is expected to be followed by continuing growth in the workforce.

ISSUES AND SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFIED DURING THE SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENT

The following issues and skills needs were identified as part of the Sector Skills Agreement process:

- registration requirements
- other obligatory training demands
- soft skills
- service design and effective use of workforce's skills
- commissioning and contracting skills
- skills in partnership working
- ability of staff to operate autonomously
- developments in technology
- skills needs of migrant workers
- client specific skills
- tendering skills
- workforce of the future – recruitment and training
- accessibility of training for the rural workforce
- Government funding for training specifically aimed at social services sector.

A series of associated actions were identified for each issue and skills need. The increased usage of the SSSC's 'Skillsets' can support individuals to develop client specific skills, for example. Many of the actions highlighted in the SSA also outline the role that other partners undertake, such as how LearnDirect Scotland's Business Support Service can assist SMEs to meet registration requirements.

The final appendix in the Sector Skills Agreement Stage 5 report contains a complete list of the issues and skills needs identified as part of the SSA process. The appendix also outlines the actions that are to be undertaken as part of each issue or skills need.

