

Communications Strategy 2021-2024



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1. Introduction

Our new strategy aims to build on the growing awareness and knowledge of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), maximising awareness of our roles beyond regulation and expanding the impact of our full range of services and products. Making sure that our audiences know about our services and products will allow us to support the social work, social care and early years workforce now and for the future.

The strategy is based on evidence through stakeholder research, analysis and insights as well as our policy and environmental context.

This strategy is the framework for all communication, marketing and engagement activity and can be adapted to use across all projects, making sure that our activity meets the outcomes and activities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2020-2023.



2. Overview and impact

In the last year, we focused our external communication and engagement activities on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic which included:

- championing and promoting the value of the social service workforce in light of the awareness created by the pandemic and recognition of their effort and commitment
- making sure that employers and people on our Register had the most up to date information on changes to our regulatory approach and developments that affected them
- working with our partners including Scottish Government to provide information and point to resources designed by the SSSC and others to support the workforce during the pandemic.

‘championing and promoting the value of the social service workforce in light of the awareness created by the pandemic’

What difference did it make?



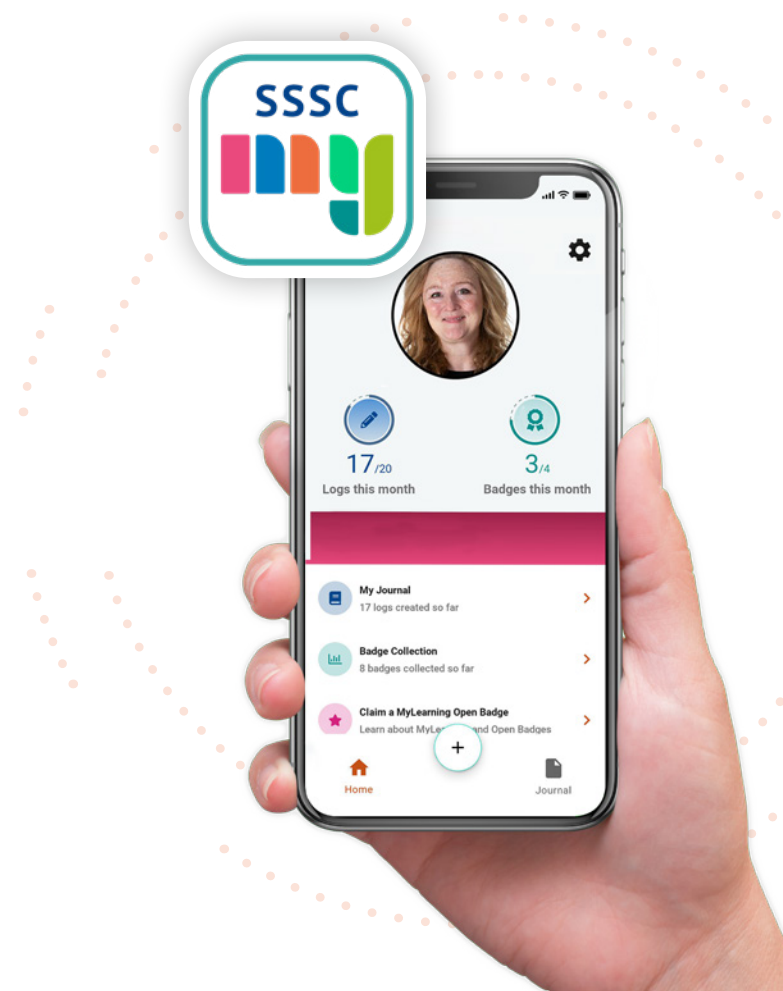
Examples of the impact of our communication activity in 2020-2021

- Our Inspiring Care Stories was our key campaign across traditional and digital media channels using real experiences and stories to promote understanding of the work of social care staff throughout the pandemic. We collected over 60 stories, ran three waves of the campaign from July to September and gained national and local media coverage in broadcast and print media and across our main social channels. The initiative reached over 151k people, with 20 national media articles and 89% of the people involved telling us they believed that sharing their stories created greater awareness and understanding of social care, social work and early years careers. [See more on our website: sssc.uk.com/inspiringcarestories](https://sssc.uk.com/inspiringcarestories)
- We launched our most successful 'SSSC Codes in Practice' video yet, developed in collaboration with Capability Scotland and reaching over 5k people helping them share, develop and promote good practice through learning from each other. [Watch the video on our website: sssc.uk.com/codes](https://sssc.uk.com/codes)
- We issued statements on behalf of the sector during the pandemic that reached national media including one to all main supermarkets calling for social care staff to be allowed the same priority access as NHS staff. And a thank you letter to our registrants from our Chief Executive was opened by over 105k people and resulted in positive comments on our social media. [Read the letter on our website.](#)
- We promoted the temporary COVID-19 recruitment portal developed by the SSSC which reached 29k people and resulted in 2.7k applications from people who wanted to return to social care careers.
- SSSC News was emailed to over 182k people each month with news and information for their registration, their learning and development and particularly to link them to sources of information and resources during the pandemic. SSSC News is a trusted source of information for the sector. We consistently engaged over 60% of registrants and employers in the content including essential information that resulted in 7 in 10 people surveyed telling us that they were aware of and regularly using our email newsletter.



‘147 people signed up, 80% said the workshop was extremely helpful or very useful and 78% said their perception of the industry improved after attending.’

- As a trusted partner with extensive reach in this sector, we helped Scottish Government, the NHS, Public Health Scotland and other partners to reach people in working in social care, social work and early years with vital information and resources during the pandemic, including wellbeing resources, infection control guidance and testing and vaccination information.
- We created the brand for the new SSSC MyLearning app and successfully launched the app via SSSC News which reached over 5k downloads in one week as a result of the direct marketing to registrants. [Find the app on our website: learn.sssc.uk.com/mylearning](https://learn.sssc.uk.com/mylearning)
- We partnered with the Scottish Government for the second wave of ‘There’s more to care than caring’, the national adult social care recruitment marketing campaign in March 2021, including holding a national workshop run by our staff and our Career Ambassadors. 147 people signed up, 80% said the workshop was extremely helpful or very useful and 78% said their perception of the industry improved after attending. [Read more at: caretocare.scot](https://www.caretocare.scot)



3. Context and policy landscape

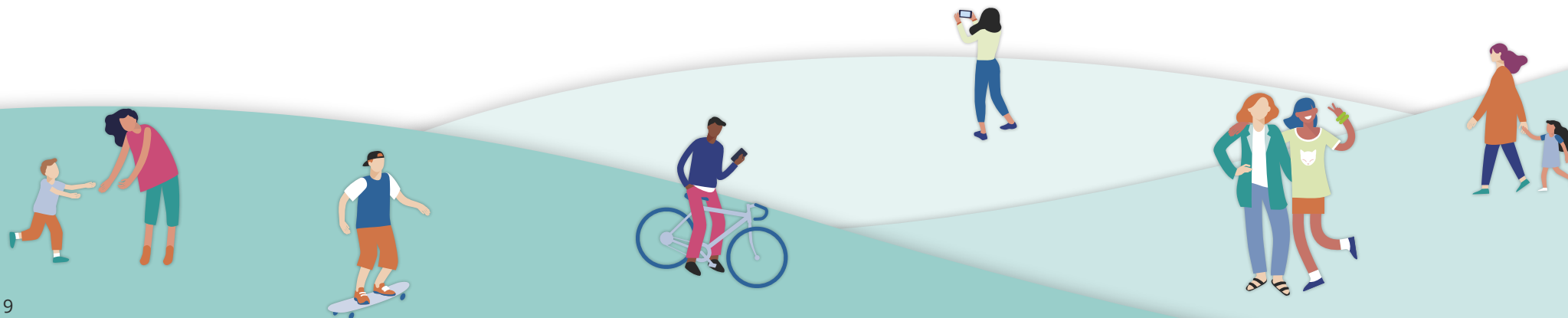
- This strategy takes account of the considerable change taking place within the cultural and policy landscape for the social work, social care and early years workforce as well as for the SSSC.
- October 2021 will be the 20th anniversary of regulation of the social work, social care and early years workforce in Scotland and across the UK. Since we opened the Register, our work has taken the workforce from zero requirement for qualifications for all but social workers to a fully qualified workforce across social care and early years, improving their skills and the quality of care they deliver.
- Key policy developments including the Independent Review of Adult Social Care and The Promise Scotland have implications for our communication and engagement in the coming years, which must be person-centred and evidence led.
- With the pandemic came an increasing awareness of the role and impact of people working in social work, social care and early years in our communities. Adult social care in particular has been under the spotlight in a way that it never has before, leading to the Independent Review of Adult Social Care (ASC Review).
- The ASC Review report published in February 2021 sets out a number of recommendations that have an impact for the SSSC. This will require significant engagement as we take part in the steps towards implementing the recommendations from the summer of 2021.

‘Independent Review of Adult Social Care and The Promise Scotland have implications for our communication and engagement in the coming years, which must be person-centred and evidence led.’



‘proactive communication and engagement with our key stakeholders and audiences, so they are involved, informed, consulted, engaged, supported and receiving the information they need from us in a timely manner.’

- Working with our key partners, including Scottish Government, local authorities, COSLA, SOLACE, the private and voluntary care sectors, education, the health sector and others, we will build on the increasing public awareness of the value of the social service workforce, how this connects with health and wellbeing more generally and a wider understanding of their essential role in our communities.
- Our response to the COVID-19 outbreak increased awareness of our role and flexible approach, our work with key partners and an increasing response to and demand for our skills and the learning and workforce development resources we provide.
- The pandemic and its effects are still with us. Developments will continue to require a robust, rapid approach which needs strategic and proactive communication and engagement with our key stakeholders and audiences, so they are involved, informed, consulted, engaged, supported and receiving the information they need from us in a timely manner.
- Now more than ever, effective and integrated communication and engagement, championed by all our staff, is central to achieving our objectives and securing the trust and buy in of our audiences and key stakeholders.



4. Research with people using our services

In 2020-21 we carried out three main strands of research with our registrants, employers and our stakeholders that have informed this strategy. The research was extensive and provided valuable insights into how people view and feel about the SSSC and how well they recognise us and what we do.

What the research told us.

- Our key audiences know who we are with high brand recognition and our visual identity is well recognised.
- Most registrants ($\frac{2}{3}$) and employers (almost $\frac{3}{4}$) have positive perceptions of the role of the SSSC.
- Most registrants (81%) and employers (96%) are clear about the role of the SSSC as a regulator but are less clear about our other roles including workforce planning.
- Our sector is diverse, covering people working in different kinds of services and at all levels and their communication and engagement needs are wide and varied.
- There is still a championing voice missing for people working in social work, social care and early years.
- Most people we engage with see us as professional, approachable, trustworthy, authoritative and helpful and view our staff very positively.



5. What do we want to achieve by 2024?

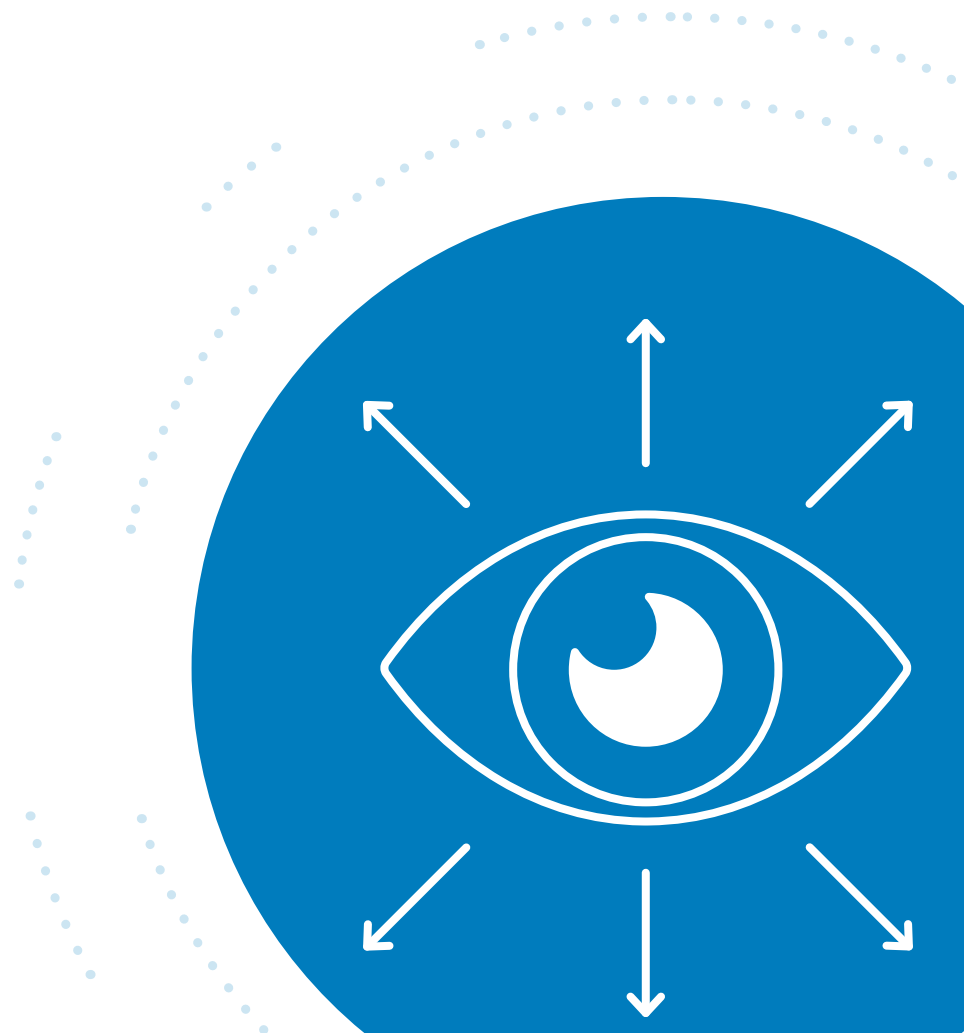
Vision

To increase awareness of our unique role as the effective regulator and go to organisation for workforce development, workforce planning, intelligence and best practice for the social work, social care and early years workforce, increasing our influence in the future direction of this sector in Scotland.

Aims

Based on the context and research, we have five communication and engagement aims. Our activity must fulfil one or more of these aims so that it fits with the strategic plan and is both relevant and necessary.

1. To increase brand awareness among our key audience groups through planned and coordinated initiatives so more of our key stakeholders know who we are and what we do and tell us they value our role.
2. To reach the right audiences with the information, services and products they need for their registration, their learning and development and for workforce planning.
3. To demonstrate the value of the SSSC with key stakeholders through planned and coordinated communication and engagement activity.
4. To promote the role and value of the social work, social care and early years workforce with key audiences.
5. To collaborate with colleagues on the design and development of our services and products and promote their benefits so that more people are aware of, accessing and using our resources.



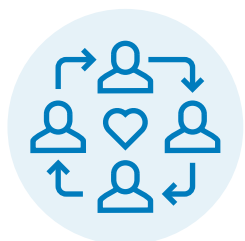
Four themes of delivery



1. Influence

What this means?

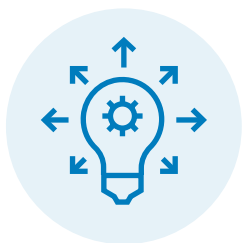
- Demonstrate the work we are doing with our key partners to support the social work, social care and early years workforce.
- Demonstrate, promote and share the impact and benefit of our services and resources for registrants, social service providers, our partners and policy makers.
- Review our stakeholder engagement framework.
- Record and monitor engagement with our key stakeholders.
- Craft effective position statements and consultation responses.
- Effective and positive media relationship and management.



2. Involvement

What this means?

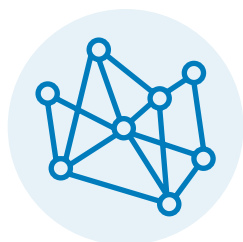
- Involve relevant stakeholders in our work and involve the SSSC in key national and strategic initiatives.
- Establish an SSSC National Advisory Forum to bring in the voice of people with lived experience of using social work, social care and early years services, our registrants, their employers.



3. Value

What this means?

- Promote the value and benefits of the SSSC and our services, shaping a positive attitude to our role including regulation, learning and development, workforce planning and intelligence to our audiences.
- Demonstrate how we contribute to the wider value view of the sector.
- Identify opportunities to promote the value of the social work, social care and early years workforce, the standards they work to, their skills, wellbeing and the positive impact for our communities.
- Promote careers in social work, social care and early years and contribute to the national drive to improve perceptions of careers in care.

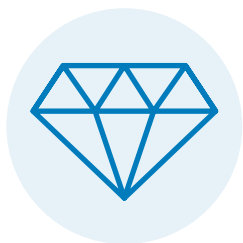


4. Connection

What this means?

- Build on the current understanding of our role to connect to our wider roles and responsibilities.
- Provide the right information in the right way.
- Design a compelling narrative about the role of regulation and workforce development that people can understand easily.
- Work closely with all SSSC departments to make sure we have planned and carefully coordinated communication and engagement for all key workstreams in the operational plan to deliver maximum impact.

Our communication and engagement principles



Clear

What this means?

- Our internal SSSC and external audiences will understand how they should use and act on the information we provide.
- Our tone is clear, professional and concise across all of communication and engagement activity.
- We are honest and open in our communication with our stakeholders.



Innovative

What this means?

- We look out for and keep up to date with changing and emerging social and communication trends, adapting and responding to reach our audiences quickly and effectively.
- We are flexible in our campaign planning and development so we can respond and adapt to changing priorities.



Consistent

What this means?

- We continue to coordinate activity with partners to ensure a joined-up approach and consistent messaging.
- People recognise and value our services and products through our clear, consistent brand.



Audience focused

What this means?

- We use effective communication channels and methods to meet the needs of our different internal SSSC and external stakeholder and customer groups, that are appropriate for their role, skills and experience.
- We provide real time, up to date and reliable sources of essential information.



Digital First

What this means?

- We make it easy to access information through our digital channels.



Evidence and insight based

What this means?

- Our activity is based on sound evidence and audience insight.
- We make sure there is two-way communication, providing our audiences with opportunities to provide feedback that influences our work.



Tested and evaluated

What this means?

- We evaluate our activity throughout, to test impact, adapt and adjust and continue to improve.
- We measure the impact of our communication and engagement activity and build on results.



Values based

What this means?

- Our communication and engagement activity always demonstrates our values.

6. Audience and message

Audience

We will define our main audiences and use this to define the audiences and messages for each workstream in the annual operational plan as required.

Identifying and prioritising audiences makes sure our activities deliver the right message and information in the right way and at the right time and makes the most of our resources.

Our stakeholders include key policy makers/influencers at UK and national level, strategic partnerships with organisations, people who use social services, the local and national media, social work, social care and early years employers, the wider public and a workforce of over 200,000 people working in different services across the public, voluntary and private sectors, most of whom are on our Register.

This is underpinned by the SSSC Stakeholder Engagement Framework which will be reviewed as part of this strategy.



Main messages

These are the key messages which underpin our corporate communications. Each main workstream in the annual operational plan must reflect these messages and include specific messages for its purpose and audiences.

The SSSC and our role

- We protect the public by supporting the social work, social care and early years workforce to deliver high quality services and we do this by registering this workforce, setting the standards they must meet and maintain for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development.
- We are unique because we both regulate and develop the workforce to be the best it can be, making life better for people using social services in Scotland.
- We are connected to around 206,000 people in this workforce plus their employers, training providers, representative bodies and other partners across social work, social care and early years and reach over 182,000 people each month via SSSC News. And we also reach those social care staff who are not required to register with us through our workforce development and planning role.
- We can and do take action where a registrant's practice falls below the standards set out in the Code of Practice which is improving the quality of the workforce and safeguarding people who use social services.
- We lead on increasing workforce capacity in the sector, regulating education and learning and designing resources to enhance and develop core skills in the workforce.
- Our unique role provides essential information and data on the social work, social care and early years workforce which informs national and local workforce planning.
- We work with our partners to strengthen the professionalism and skill of the workforce.

Main messages

The SSSC and the social work, social care and early years workforce

- We are here for you throughout your career in social work, social care and early years.
- Getting registered is just the start – we will continue to support you not only by setting standards for practice and training but also through developing qualifications, practice guidance and free, easy to use learning and practice support resources.
- Working in partnership we are committed to improving fair work practices across social work, social care and early years and we are working with stakeholders to embed fair work principles and achieve better terms and conditions for you.

7. Approach

Successful communication and engagement will require a mix of channels and content depending on the audiences we want to reach, their needs, influences and interests. Here are some examples.



Expert opinion

We will identify opportunities for the SSSC to lead conversations on the role of the social service workforce and the value of the workforce and the role of the SSSC. This can include briefings, traditional or social media, speaking opportunities, professional groups, statements, guest blogs and digital engagement.



Providing trusted information

In a time of multiple channels available for people to find information, we will provide trusted, real time, up to date and reliable sources of essential information for service providers and registrants including our website and social media channels, direct email news and our customer contact centre.



Media – mainstream and digital

We will continue to build on the positive momentum that is shifting perception of the social work, social care and early years workforce, following the response of the social service workforce during the COVID-19 outbreak.

This will include access to SSSC experts, case studies, key data and information for local and national media, key policy makers and influencers to use to illustrate the role and impact of this workforce.





Storytelling

Sharing and promoting stories from people working in social work, social care and early years and stories from people using these services to demonstrate the value of the workforce and raise understanding of what they do and the impact it has. We will work with our Development and Innovation and Regulation colleagues as well as existing Career and Dementia Ambassador networks and our Involving People network to draw on their experiences.

These case studies and stories will be used in different ways:

- campaign content for social media
- for our Development and Innovation colleagues to develop video and other resources
- to provide traditional local, national or broadcast media access to positive stories
- to promote a network of spokespeople who work in the sector and are prepared to talk about their work.



Social media campaigns eg #LifeChangingWork, #SSSCregistered

This will include refreshing the successful 'I'm registered' social media campaign.



Direct mail

Reaching our key stakeholders and customers via our direct email marketing and effective email newsletter so they are aware of our resources and national initiatives with partners and have the information they need at the right time and in the right way.

8. Timeline

This strategy will be in place until 31 March 2024 and will remain flexible so we can respond to the rapidly changing circumstances during this time. Each main workstream will reflect one or more of the five aims and four themes.

9. Resources

This strategy applies across all business areas.

Corporate communications costs are contained within the existing Communications Department budget for 2020-21 and are based on the annual operational plan.

Each directorate is responsible for the communication and engagement budgets for their activities in the annual operational plan where required.

Effective communication and engagement are a priority for the SSSC. We carry out our activities through collaboration and the commitment of all staff and provide a range of corporate tools to support staff in planning and delivering their communications and engagement.



10. Governance and reporting

The Communications Department is a strategic corporate function that delivers integrated communications, marketing, multimedia design and digital engagement.

The Strategy and Performance Directorate has lead responsibility for coordinating the delivery of the strategy and for overseeing communication with the public and key stakeholders.

The strategy is sponsored by the Director of Strategy and Performance.

The Head of Strategic Communications is responsible for designing and implementing the strategy and managing associated risks.

The lead officers for each strategic outcome will report quarterly on their engagement and communication activities via their assurance reports.

11. Evaluation and measuring impact

We will report progress through the quarterly assurance reporting on the measures in the Strategic Plan and annual operational plans. Each **workstream communication plan must include measures to demonstrate the return on investment and assess progress using a combination of:**

- evaluation and analysis of engagement activity and analytics
- regular analysis of stakeholder perception insights and behavioural analytics that tell us if what we are doing is reaching our audience
- feedback, case studies and survey results
- review of the overall operational plan to make sure we are on target and within budget where there are defined costs for activities.

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We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment
on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.