

Keep the Promise: Scottish Social Services Council response (December 2020)

- The Scottish Social Services Council is the regulator for the social service workforce. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Our regulatory model contributes to the creation of a skilled, sustainable, purposeful workforce. This ensures that workers are qualified to the level appropriate for the role they carry out and committed to continuous professional learning. We are a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser.
- We protect the public by supporting the workforce to deliver high quality services. We support improvement in the quality and professionalism of the workforce which is essential to delivering high quality services.
- We are the national lead for workforce development and planning for the sector. We register the workforce, set the standards they must meet and maintain for their practice, conduct, training and education and support their professional development.
- We have several partnerships that are central to delivering our outcomes. This includes working with the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate, Skills Development Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland (NES). We are not a professional or representative body. We work closely with UNISON and bodies such as Who Cares? Scotland.

The SSSC has a key role to play in the delivery of the Promise. We've welcomed the opportunity to play a part in shaping the findings. Our Council, Executive Management Team (EMT) and staff were actively involved from the outset. The Promise highlights several recommendations for the SSSC and the workforce.

This paper sets out our responses to 'Keep the Promise' paper published in October 2020. It also summarises the steps that we're undertaking or will undertake to support the delivery of the Promise.

Q1. What do you need from The Promise Team to understand their role and responsibility and what you can and can't expect from them? What ways of working would support collaboration between you and The Promise Team?

The Promise establishes the need for reform. It also sets significant implications for the workforce and regulation. The consultation paper clearly sets out the role of the Promise. The development of the overarching plan will help us to maintain our focus on contributing to the Promise. The SSSC has a key part to play in the landscape of change and welcome the ongoing opportunities to work with the Promise and other key stakeholders on delivery.

Q2. How will you involve the care community and lived experience in your plans to #KeepThePromise?

It is critical that we consider how we involve the care community and people with lived experience throughout our work. The SSSC's new plan for supporting the care experienced community between now and 2023 ('our action plan') reinforces our ambition to put care experienced children, young people and adults at the heart of everything we do. The development of our action plan was informed by a range of key stakeholders including Who Cares? Scotland and the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS). Several activities are drawn from the Promise itself. For example, we are undertaking a review of the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers. We will engage key stakeholders such as the Promise and Who Cares? Scotland to explore how we can ensure meaningful involvement with the care community and people with lived experience.

It is critical that our staff are aware of the need to Keep the Promise. Further information on our approach is set out in our response to question seven.

Q3. What initiatives in and around the 'care system' you think need to be considered to ensure they are fully aligned to #KeepThePromise – including what needs to cease?

The workforce has a central role to play in dismantling the barriers which prevent children from having positive childhood experiences. A key starting point is around recruiting and retaining the right workers. We've developed several key resources such as a values-based recruitment toolkit¹ and a careers website.² We've recently worked with the sector to publish a series of inspiring care stories³ which celebrate the value and commitment of the wider workforce during COVID-19.

The Promise reinforces the need to ensure that regulation enables the delivery of high-quality care and is accompanied by the training and support which helps staff to exercise effective judgement. Additional priorities include the need to deliver strong supervision, reflective practice and provide appropriate care for the workforce. We've developed key guides such as a supervision learning resource.⁴ Our action plan states that we will continue to develop learning resources that reflect the needs of staff working with care experienced children and young people.

Q4. What networks and groupings currently exist that can support collaborative change?

Collaboration is particularly important and is already a key requirement in our corporate parenting role. Our action plan has examples of the way we engage with corporate parents such as the Care Inspectorate and Skills Development Scotland. We also engage with corporate parents through networks such as the Children and Young People Commissioner's Corporate Parenting involvement group.

¹ [Right values, right people: recruitment toolkit](#)

² [Your career in social services](#)

³ [Inspiring Care Stories](#)

⁴ <https://www.stepintoleadership.info/assets/pdf/SSSC-Supervision-learning-resource-Sept-16.pdf>

Q5. Lived experience must be in the room to plan for a new landscape of care. Who else in your view must also be there?

It is critical that everyone with an involvement in this agenda is involved in the development of this new landscape as a joined-up approach is essential. [The October 2020 webinars](#) by the Promise neatly demonstrate the interconnected range of partners involved in providing care and support such as early years workers, residential childcare workers, and foster carers. It is vital that regulators are also part of this discussion.

Q6. What help do you need to properly reflect the Scottish Approach to Service Design in order to #KeepThePromise?

We anticipate that the principles behind Scottish approach to service design and the Promise Design School will be relevant to our activities. We would welcome opportunities to consider how we can apply them to our priorities.

Q7. What internal mechanisms do you have to measure change? How will these mechanisms need to change to include measurements of what matters to children and families?

It is essential that everyone at the SSSC is aware of the Promise and what it means for us. Our approach is also guided by the [Scottish Government's statutory guidance](#) on Corporate Parenting which reinforces the point that everyone has a key part to play in delivering on these aims.

The need to measure the impact of our work on children and families is key. The involvement of children, families and other key stakeholders are critical to this process and we'll continue to explore how we can do this during the implementation on our new plan for supporting care experienced children and young people. For example, we intend to work with Who Cares? Scotland and others to determine the best way of involving children and families in the development of our revised Codes of Practice.

A key priority for us has been around putting systems in place to inform and monitor the measures. These include the following steps.

- Our governing body (the Council) has recently held development sessions with representatives from the Promise and Who Cares? Scotland. These sessions covered the development of the Promise and informed our new action plan.
- Senior managers frequently update our staff on our commitment to keep the Promise and we are undertaking several other steps to raise awareness. For example, our next staff conference will include a session on the Promise and the implications for the SSSC.
- Our action plan was informed by staff from across the SSSC and contains actions for every directorate and department. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG) is chaired by a member of our Executive Management Team (EMT) and is responsible for monitoring our progress. We will also provide frequent updates to our Council and EMT.

- We use Equality Assessments (EQIAs) to help us consider the impact of our actions on people with protected characteristics. These actions help us to ensure that our approaches are based on evidence and promote equal access and opportunity for all. We've recently revised our EQIA process to reiterate that staff use these to consider the implications for care experienced children, young people and adults. The EDIG will monitor the percentage of our policies which have a completed EQIA.

Q8. What data do you capture and can it be used to monitor progress towards your organisation being able to #KeepThePromise? What other data sources do you need to understand your current position?

The SSSC collects, holds and publishes an extensive range of relevant data. We are considering how we can make greater use of that data to support the delivery of the Promise. For example, our action plan contains a commitment to introduce enhanced analysis of the common factors driving higher fitness to practise referral rates in residential childcare.

Our workforce data helps employers and commissioners to build a sustainable workforce. We will develop a report examining the last ten years of residential childcare workforce data.

Q9. What are your procurement and commissioning arrangements that facilitate or inhibit progress?

At this stage we haven't identified any barriers arising from our procurement and commissioning arrangements. Our focus is on the delivery of sustainable procurement which includes considering the social and equality opportunities and the impacts of our purchasing decisions.

Q10. What role must The Promise play in unlocking the barriers from service innovation to wholesale implementation?

We agree with the role of the Promise Partnership as set out in the consultation.

Q11. What are your current barriers to #KeepThePromise and what are the opportunities you have to make change?

Our opportunities to deliver change are briefly summarised in the introduction to this response. Our regulatory remit extends across the social service sector and includes social work and adult social care.

The SSSC has a key role to play in dismantling the barriers to #Keep the Promise. For example, our regulatory model contributes to the creation of a skilled, sustainable, purposeful workforce. This ensures that workers are qualified to the level appropriate for the role they carry out and committed to continuous professional learning.

Many key workers are either qualified or in the process of obtaining a relevant qualification to meet their registration. For example, as of September 2020 there are approximately 40,000 Day Care of Children staff on our register. We also have more than 8,000 residential child care workers on our register. These workers – along with many others such as social workers – are critical to the development of this new approach.

One of the key challenges for the SSSC will be to consider the wider implications associated with change. For example, a review of the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers must take account of ongoing integration of health and social care, adult social care reform and fair work. This wider remit means that we need to take time to involve all stakeholders and to identify any implications. It is possible that we may identify further legislative and budgetary implications in due course.

The Promise reinforces the complex landscape that is involved in the delivery of these critical services. We are mindful that the SSSC is one of many organisations which is trying to align its work to the ambition of the Promise and the implementation of the forthcoming plan. The implementation of the Promise could potentially lead to many challenges, some of which may or may not be anticipated. For example, the pace of change may have an impact on the number of referrals about the workforce that don't fall within the ethos of the Promise, particularly in relation to the change that needs to happen around risk. These implications reinforce the need for a multi-sector approach.

Q12. Are there any additional target areas the Oversight Board should be considering?

We haven't identified any further priorities at this stage.

**Scottish Social Services Council
December 2020**