Migration Advisory Committee Call for evidence: SSSC Response

June 2020

Introduction

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We are also part of Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Council for adult social care and children and young people's services in the UK. Sector Skills Councils are employer-led organisations that have responsibility for skills and workforce development in the UK.

We produce workforce data, information and intelligence for employers and other stakeholders. We also develop and publish official and national statistics on the social service workforce.

- The Annual Workforce Data report combines administrative data from service providers with data collected directly from local authorities by the SSSC to form a comprehensive picture of the paid workforce employed in the social service sector in Scotland at the end of each year.

- The SSSC and the Care Inspectorate also publish the annual vacancy report. The report has a national overview of vacancies and recruitment difficulties reported by care services to the Care Inspectorate, the body which registers and inspects these services. The definition of vacancies matches the UK Employers Skills Survey. The latest annual returns were completed by 97% of all registered care services.

This response begins with an overview of our position before focusing on the specific questions in the survey for employer representatives.

Overview

- The social service sector is a skilled sector. Registered social service workers must achieve a qualification at a minimum of SCQF 6(RQF3) or above.
- There is significant and ongoing work underway to help employers to tackle shortages in the sector. However, there is an ongoing shortage of care workers and home carers (SOC 6145). It is sensible for these workers to be on the Shortage Occupation List.

We continue to have concerns about a points-based scheme and its applicability for social care. Non-UK staff play a critical role in addressing recruitment challenges, maintaining services and supporting the economy generally. Our evidence identifies the recruitment and retention challenges for the social service sector and the critical role of the non-UK workforce.

The call to consider occupations at Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) 3-5 is a small and welcome step in the right direction. Registered social service workers obtain qualifications at equivalent Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels.

Approximately 91% of staff in registered care services (excluding childminders) must be registered or will be required to do so by September 2020. For example, support workers in care at home and housing support services must register with the SSSC by September 2020. These workers must achieve a qualification at a minimum of SCQF 6(RQF3) or above and should be recognised as skilled workers in Scotland.

We remain concerned about salary thresholds. Many social service workers earn less than the general minimum salary threshold. Most frontline care posts will earn below the £20,480 level that would be required before they can apply via the points-based scheme.

Responding to COVID-19

The social service sector is responding to an unprecedented challenge as it tackles the COVID-19 crisis. We are taking steps to support the sector during this time. For example, we extended the time period for social service workers to get registered and created a new part of our register for temporary social workers. We have also collaborated with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and others on the development of a new national recruitment hub for social care and health.

In May we published provisional official statistics on the social service workforce in Scotland to support planning for registered care services and local authority social work services during the pandemic.

We provide evidence on many of the key challenges for the sector. However, employer representative bodies and employers also bring a critical frontline perspective. Many key stakeholders may be unable to prioritise this call for evidence in the way that they normally would. There is significant risk that their perspectives will not be fully considered during this call for evidence.

We anticipate that a positive arising from the pandemic is that there will be a renewed recognition of the life-changing work undertaken by the workforce and the sector's critical economic contribution. Many areas of the sector report challenges around filling vacancies, including the independent sector and staff working in rural or island areas. The sector benefits greatly from the opportunity to recruit non-UK workers and it is imperative that it can continue to do so.

Specific responses to questions for representative organisations

Section A

A1. What is the name of your organisation?

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

A2. What is your email address?

Neil.Macleod@sssc.uk.com

A3. Which of the following options best describe your reason for completing this form?

The SSSC is the regulator for the social service sector. The SSSC is also part of Skills for Care and Development, the employer-led Sector Skills Council for the adult social care and children and young people's services in the UK. Our feedback is based on a variety of sources including our official statistics, ongoing engagement with employers and research.

Section B: Not applicable

Section C: About your organisation and the businesses you represent

C1. How many businesses/organisations do you represent?

As of November 2018, there were approximately 7,874 active services registered with the Care Inspectorate in Scotland delivering a range of key service including care homes for adults, care at home / housing support and day care of children services.[1] Most providers deliver only one service. However, most (77%) are delivered by a provider which has more than one service.

We also publish official statistics on the social service workforce in Scotland. As of December 2018, the social service sector employs approximately 204,000 workers, or 1 in 13 of all workers in Scotland.[2] This figure includes over 132,000 workers in care at home, housing support and care home for adult services and 35,000 staff in the day care of children sector.[3]

C2. How have you engaged the businesses/organisations you represent to inform this consultation response?

We have regular dialogue with key stakeholders including umbrella bodies, representation organisations and employers.

C3. Thinking of the businesses/organisations you have engaged with, in general are their staff concentrated in specific UK countries/regions or are they UK-wide?

Many care providers have staff in multiple areas of the UK. Our remit covers the Scottish social service workforce.

C4 And which region(s) or country(ies) are these organisations' staff concentrated?

Please see our response to C3. The composition of the workforce will vary in different parts of the UK. For example, most workers in some island-based local authorities are employed by the public sector.

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[1] This figure excludes the 4.978 childminders registered with the Care Inspectorate.
[2] SSSC (2019) Scottish Social Services Sector: Report on 2018 Workforce Data.
[3] Excluding 5,000 childminders.

C5 Thinking of the businesses/organisations you engage with, please tick all the relevant sectors they cover from the list below.

Most social service workers are included in the human health and social work activities category. Our remit also includes pre-primary education workers. The key SIC Codes for the social service sector are 85.1 (pre-primary education), 87 (residential childcare activities) and 88 (social work activities without accommodation).

The sector is separate from SIC Code 86 which covers health. There are key differences between the health and social care sectors such as training, recruitment and development. The composition of social services sector is also different to other public services such as education or health. As of November 2018, the private sector employed approximately 40% of the social service workforce in Scotland. A further 28% are employed by the voluntary sector.

C6 Thinking of the businesses/organisations you engage with and their number of employees, select all size bands that they cover.

All size bands in the survey apply here. As of December 2018 there are approximately 2,500 providers in the sector. Most of these providers (72%) are responsible for only one service. Approximately 67% of all providers in this sector employ fewer than 30 staff with just 5% employing more than 250. A more detailed breakdown of the workforce follows.

0-4 employees	14.2%
05-09 employees	20.7%
10-29 employees	32.4%
30-49 employees	11.3%
50-99 employees	10.2%
100-249 employees	6.0%
250-999 employees	3.8%
1000+ employees	1.5%
Total	100%

C7 Are the majority of businesses/organisations you engage with roughly of a similar size in terms of the number of employees (e.g most SMEs or most large organisations)?

The majority are SMEs.

C8 Which size band(s) are these businesses/organisations concentrated in?

All size bands apply here.

Section D: How you recruit

D1: In general, how would you describe their approach to recruitment?

It would be unhelpful to select one of the pre-determined options in the survey. It is critical that staff have the required skills, knowledge and values to provide high-quality care. On a practical level services can't necessarily fill posts immediately due security and background checks that are required before they can work with vulnerable children, families and adults.

Registered social service workers must hold a qualification as part of their registration with the SSSC. Workers on the function-based part of the SSSC's register can typically register with a condition on their registration. They will normally have the first period of their registration to gain this qualification.

D2 When the organisations you represent recruit staff (either directly or through an agency), where do they advertise or look for them? Please consider informal recruitment practices such as word of mouth.

Employers use all of these approaches.

D3 To your knowledge, have the organisations you have engaged with recruited any of the following workers in the past 3 years…?

The social service workforce in Scotland employs workers from the European Economic Area (EEA) and non-EEA countries. A research study by IPSOS Mori for the Scottish Government indicated that as of 2018 the estimated percentage of people employed within adult social care and childcare that are non-UK EU nationals is 5.6%. This equates to about 9,830 workers.

D4 Over the next 12 months are they likely to recruit any…?

The sector will continue to recruit workers from the UK, the EEA and non-EEA countries.

D5 Are any of the organisations you represent currently registered as a Tier 2 sponsor?

Employer representative bodies may be able to provide further information.

D6 Within the last 12 months have any of the organisations you represent experienced any difficulty in recruitment? This can include not being able to fill a vacancy or having to fill the vacancy with a candidate they would not regard as fully proficient at their job.

In December 2018 the Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) vacancy rate in social services was 5.5%. This compares to 3.1% across the whole of the Scottish economy as reported in the 2017 UK Employers Skills Survey. In December 2018 approximately 39% of social services indicated that they find it hard to fill vacancies.

D7 In general, for roles where the organisations you represent have experienced difficulties in recruitment, how far would they agree or disagree with the following…?

It would be difficult to provide scores for each option here as the challenges vary for different sub-sectors (such as care homes), employer types (such as the independent and third sector) and geographical areas. The key consensus is that many parts of the sector experience significant recruitment challenges. The following figures are from the SSSC and Care Inspectorate vacancies report.

- Approximately 38% of services reported having vacancies. This figure is unchanged from the previous year. This figure is higher than the 20% of all establishment, across in sectors in Scotland that report having a vacancy in the UK Employers Skills Survey.

- Approximately 47% of services with vacancies reported problems filling them[4], up 2% from the previous year. The following services reported a figure that was higher than this national average for all care services:
  - Care at home services
  - Care homes for older people
  - Housing support services
  - Nurse agency services
  - Residential special schools.

- Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Orkney had the highest proportion of services reporting that vacancies were hard to fill.

Section E: Recruitment shortages

E1 For roles that the organisations you represent are experiencing difficulties in filling, what do you think are the main reasons for recruitment difficulties?

The Care Inspectorate and SSSC vacancy report highlights many of the reasons identified in the survey. Too few applicants with experience (60%), too few applicants in general (58%) and too few qualified applicants (50%) are the most common themes within most service types that reported problems filling vacancies.

A recent survey of social care employers by Ekosgen highlights concerns about the impact of EU Exit on the sector. The sector employs a significant proportion of staff from the wider European Economic Area. It also competes with sectors such as tourism and hospitality that employ substantial numbers of staff from outwith the UK.

A recent survey of Day Care of Children employers by Ekosgen reported that more than half anticipate recruitment problems over the next year. Urban employers identified concerns about competition and rural employers highlighted the lack of applicants.

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[4] Excludes services that stated 'not applicable'

E2: And thinking about some of the recruitment issues commonly reported by employers, to what extent (if at all) do the following cause problems in recruitment for the organisations you represent?

Many of these issues are typically cited by employers in the vacancy report. For example, in December 2018, 39% of employers cited competition from other providers. The findings highlighted a slight increase in the percentage reporting competition from other sectors. Scottish Care's Care Home Workforce Data report 2018 indicated that the care home sector is increasingly calling on agency staff to maintain service delivery.

E3 Which technical skills have the organisations you represent most commonly had difficulty finding among candidates?

In 2019 the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser and COSLA commissioned Ekosgen to better understand the influences that national and local labour markets have on the social care sector and their implications for workforce planning. The study reported that one quarter of employers have hard to fill vacancies. These issues appear to be particularly prominent in the private (or independent) sector. Employers identify challenges around finding staff with the skills and experience to support people who have complex conditions. They also identified challenges around finding staff with the required digital literacy and technology skills. Employers also report challenges around finding staff with planning and communication skills.

E4: And which personal skills have the organisations you represent most commonly had difficulty finding among candidates?

Please see response to E3.

E5: On average, how long does it take to fill a vacancy in the organisations you represent?

Difficult to select one option as it will vary from role to role. Employers typically have to complete security checks before someone can begin their role.

E6: Which of the following things have the organisations you represent done to overcome difficulties filling vacancies?

Social service providers use most of these methods to tackle some of the challenges around vacancies. The integration of health and social care is a key driver for this sector. Employers are redefining existing roles and making increased use of technology enabled care. There have been two national recruitment campaigns for early learning and childcare (from 2017) and adult social care (in 2020).

The SSSC works with key stakeholders and employers to provide extensive information on career pathways and routes in the sector. For example, we:

- continue to develop regular reports examining workforce skills in the sector
- developed a new careers website
- continue to contribute to the improvement of data quality in our sector via the review of SOC codes.

We also have a variety of roles around qualifications including

- the development of SVQs

- the management of Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks
- administering the Voluntary Sector Development Fund.

The Scottish Government continues to take significant steps to support employers. For example, in 2016 the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) agreed that front line adult social care staff should be paid at least the Scottish Living Wage. In April 2020 it was agreed that social care staff would receive an immediate 3.3% pay increase rather than having to wait for the real living wage negotiations later this year. In May 2020 the Scottish Government announced funding to ensure all social care workers receive enhanced sick pay where they have received a positive COVID-19 test.

There are challenges around some of the options in the survey. For example, technology has a critical role to play in enabling people to remain independent and to stay in their own homes for longer. However, there are many instances where technology cannot be a substitute for a skilled professional.

E7: And how effective do you think each of these things have been in helping the organisations you represent overcome difficulties in filling vacancies?

The evidence suggests that many of the initiatives in this response are helping the sector to tackle these difficulties. The WTE vacancy rate in the sector fell from 5.9% to 5.5% in the twelve months to December 2018. This improvement was at a time when the overall number of workers in the sector increased by 1.2%.

E8: For each approach the organisations you represent have used to help overcome recruitment difficulties, please tell us which job role(s) they have employed this approach with.

The sector will use these approaches for many roles, particularly frontline staff.

E9: Other than the number of vacancies, are there any other ways of knowing that occupations in the sectors you work in are in shortage?

We publish data on the number of Mental Health Officers (MHOs) in Scotland. An MHO is a qualified local authority social worker who has successfully completed an MHO training course. There are statutory requirements on local authorities to appoint a sufficient number of persons to carry out the role. We report figures on the estimated shortfall between available staff time and the time local authorities feel is needed in a typical week.

Section F: Skills shortages

F1: Which of these statements best describes the proficiency of staff in the organisations you represent?

Social service workers are skilled. Registered workers must achieve a qualification at a minimum of SCQF 6(RQF3) or above.

F2: Is the fact that some of the staff in the organisations you represent are not fully proficient causing these organisations to...?

All reasons cited in the survey will impact on the ability of the workforce to obtain the required skills and knowledge to undertake their role. Many staff are developing new skills or doing new roles as part of key policy drivers such as the integration of health and social care. For example, care at home and care home staff often do specialised medical tasks that may have been previously undertaken by a nurse. Care home staff also require additional skills and knowledge as they support people with multiple and complex conditions.

F3: Thinking about the staff who are not fully proficient, which, if any, of the following technical skills do you feel most commonly need improving?

Earlier this year we began contacting employers to develop an updated understanding of skills needs. This work is on hold due to Covid-19. We will be developing an updated picture in due course.

F4: Still thinking about the staff who are not fully proficient, which, if any, of the following personal skills do you feel most commonly need improving?

Please see our response to F3.

F5: Now thinking about staff development, do the organisations you represent currently have the following in place?

Our expectation is that most employers use all or a mix of the approaches identified in the survey. Data from the UK Employers Skills survey indicates that 87% of health and social care employers offer staff training. The Employers Skills Survey also indicates that caring, leisure and other service staff are the group most likely to receive training. We publish reports on the provision and uptake of Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Health and Social Care (HSC) and Children's Care, Learning and Development (CCLD) in Scotland. There are over 10,000 SVQ registrations every year in our sector.

Section G: Occupations that are in shortage in your organisation

G1 This next part of the survey asks you to provide examples of specific jobs that you think should be added to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). If you would like to do this, please select the first option below.

Yes

G2 Using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Occupation Tool, please list the job titles (and accompanying SOC codes) that the organisations you represent have experienced difficulties in recruiting suitable workers for over the past 12 months... (Maximum of 10 job titles).

- 6145 Care workers and home carers

G3 For each job that the organisations you represent have had difficulties recruiting suitable workers for, please tell us the following, using the grid below:

SOC	Average hours	Minimum. Qualification	Where	Average staff per organisation	On SOL?
6145	27	RQF3	Scotland	4.4	Yes

G4 Please could you tell us why you think that this job title should be on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL)?

SOC 6145 is a skilled occupation which we believe to be in shortage. There is a WTE vacancy rate of 7.2% in care at home and housing support services and 5% in care homes for adults. It is sensible for this occupation to be added to the list.

- Shortages in this sector can have an impact of the viability of services. There are significant initiatives underway to promote a career in this high public value sector to all workers.
- Recruiting from the EEA or outwith the EEA will not have an impact on employers' incentives to invest in and upskilling UK workers. The registration requirements on SOC 6145 continue to mean that all workers must obtain the relevant qualifications.
- There are not enough people in training (who aren't in employment) to fill shortages. Most workers obtain qualifications whilst in employment.
- The sector is expanding due to demographic change and government policy. It will continue to recruit UK citizens alongside workers from outwith the UK.
- We are unaware of any evidence suggesting that the recruitment of non-UK workers has led to UK workers being excluded.

G5 Please let us know the average salary the organisations you represent would pay for the job role. You may select whether you would like to provide the average annual, monthly or weekly salary.

A recent study of 50 care assistant posts indicates an average mid-point salary of £19,630 per annum.

G6 You have indicated that for the following job role(s), the average salary that the organisations you represent pay is higher than the average for this job role across the UK. Please could you tell us how the salary was set?

Not applicable.

G7 You have indicated that for the following job role(s), the average salary that the organisations you represent pay is lower than the average for this job role across the UK. For each job role, please can you tell us whether the organisations you represent would be able to pay the additional wage (given below) to meet the required salary for a sponsored worker.

The average mid-point salary for care assistants (see G5) is approximately £6k below the £25,600 salary threshold.

G8. Why don't you think the organisations you represent will be able to pay this additional wage to meet the required salary for a sponsored worker for the following job role(s)?

There are limitations around the sector's ability to increase wages. The agreement on a living wage has led to an increase in salaries for many care workers. However, these figures still fall below the required salary threshold.

Section H: Closing questions

H1. Would you like to be added to our stakeholder database so we can send updates on MAC work?

Yes

H2. Would you be happy for us to recontact you in the next 12 months to invite you to take part in follow-up research regarding similar issues covered in this survey?

Yes

H3. And would you be willing for us to contact you if we needed to clarify or supplement responses you have given to this survey?

Yes

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Scottish Social Services Council
June 2020

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References

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