

Introduction

Foreword from the Chief Executive

Who we are

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. The SSSC:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social services and their employers
- register people working in social services and make sure they adhere to the SSSC Codes of Practice
- promote and regulate the learning and development of the social service workforce
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for social services in Scotland.

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.

Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2023 sets out our plans for the next three years. It also sets out our three strategic outcomes.

Outcome 1: People who use services are protected by ensuring the regulated workforce is fit to practise.

Outcome 2: The SSSC supports and enhances the development of the registered workforce to deliver high standards of practice and drive improvement.

Outcome 3: Our workforce planning activities support employers, commissioners and policy makers to deliver a sustainable, integrated and innovative workforce.

Other SSSC Commitments

The SSSC is subject to the public sector equality duty (PSED) and is also a corporate parent. The SSSC is committed to ensuring the work we do has the best possible impact, both inside and outside our organisation.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty. Unlike other human rights treaties, the UNCRC is all about children. It treats children as people in their own right, rather than just being a small adult or someone looked after by parents. The convention ensures that childhood is seen as a time for growth and development and that children are supported by governments to reach their full potential.

The UNCRC is made up of 54 articles and three optional protocols. The articles of the UNCRC define what is meant by a child (article 1) and provides protection to all children regardless of their race, sex, religion or origin, or that of their parents or guardians. The protections in the Convention include, among many others, the right to life (article 6), freedom of expression (article 13), privacy rights (article 16), the right to healthcare (article 24), the right to education (article 28), and the freedom from torture (article 37).

The three optional protocols are separate from the main convention but add additional protection for children. The first two optional protocols were introduced in 2000 and aim to offer additional protection for children in armed conflict and, protection from sale, prostitution and pornography. The third optional protocol was introduced in 2014 and allows children to bring complaints directly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child if they feel their rights have been violated. The UK has not, at the time of writing, ratified the third optional protocol.

The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, with 196 parties. The UK ratified the UNRC on 16 December 1991 and the first and second optional protocols in 2003 and 2009 respectively. Scotland is a party to the UNCRC through its membership of the UK. However, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (The Act) further enhances the Scottish Government's commitment to the UNCRC. The Scottish Government's commitment to the UNCRC rights is also evidenced by the fact that at present the Scottish Government is discussing a bill to incorporate the UNCRC rights fully into Scots law.

Incorporation of the UNCRC in Scots law

The starting point of this report has been the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which began the process of incorporating the UNCRC

rights into Scots law. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 created the duty for public bodies to report on how they give effect to the UNCRC rights.

However, at the time of writing, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill has been introduced to the Scottish Parliament. This bill looks to fully incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law and put power in the hands of Scotland's children and young people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill reaffirms the government's commitment to making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up and will shape the way we report on children's rights in the future.

Purpose of this report

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires listed public authorities to publish a report every three years that shows what steps they have taken to put the UNCRC rights into practice within their field of work.

This is the SSSC's first Children's Rights Report and we hope that it shows our commitment to ensuring that the children of Scotland can rely on social services being provided by a skilled, trusted and confident workforce, that they have opportunities to flourish and that consideration for the rights of children influences everything we do. Each department of the SSSC is responsible for a different one of our functions, but each department works to ensure we implement our obligations under the UNCRC in the work they carry out.

This report shows some of the things we have been doing over the past three years and how these actions contribute to the advancement of children's rights in Scotland. However, this report is not only about what we have achieved to date. We recognise that giving effect to the UNCRC rights is something that requires continuous effort on our part, and on the part of all public bodies in Scotland. Therefore, this report also commits to actions for the future with clear goals and timelines for their achievement.

Developing the children's rights report

Our children's rights report was developed with feedback and support from our Council, managers and wider staff. The guidance and materials made available by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have been instrumental in directing the way this report has been written. Our report has also been developed through consultation with external stakeholders with a particular interest in children's rights in Scotland. We also consulted:

- XXX
- XXX
- XXX
- XXX

The actions highlighted in this report will evolve over time as our understanding of how we contribute to the realisation of the UNCRC rights develops, and how the status of the UNCRC changes in Scotland.

The structure of the report

As noted above, the UNCRC is comprised of 54 articles and three optional protocols. In order to make reporting on children's rights easier, the United Nations recommend using the clusters approach. The clusters approach groups the rights and protocols under nine headings, depending on their subject matter.

The clusters allow articles that deal with related children's rights issues to be addressed under one heading. The clusters approach is used by the Scottish Government in their reporting on the UNCRC, we therefore feel it is the correct format for us to use. Our regulatory role contributes to a number of the articles under each cluster. This report begins with a case study on regulation. It then provides examples of our activity under each cluster and highlight the actions we are taking that address them.

This report will conclude with a list of actions we aim to carry out over the next three years with details of how we will achieve them.

Case study: A regulated social service workforce

The SSSC regulates the social services workforce in Scotland. We are responsible for the regulation of approximately 204,000 individuals working in the social services sector, including social workers, social care workers and early years workers.

The work carried out by our regulation directorate spans several rights clusters such as general principles, violence against children and special protection measures. Because the work of our regulation directorate touches on so many children's rights and works to safeguard all those who use social services, including children and young people, this directorate will be treated separately from the rest of the report.

Registration of workers

Social service workers that are registered with us, which make up approximately 8% of Scotland's total workforce, are required to adhere to the SSSC Codes of Practice. Section one of the SSSC Code of Practice for social service workers requires that workers protect and promote the rights and interests of people who use services and carers and are required to treat people as individuals, respect their views, support their rights and respect their dignity (article 4).

All workers registered with the SSSC are expected to uphold the values of the codes of practice, this includes workers working with children and young people. Section one of the Codes of Practice is consistent with the general principles of the UNCRC.

In order to register with the SSSC, workers need to hold the required qualifications, or be working toward them. The educational requirements ensure that Scotland has a skilled and competent workforce that is committed to promoting and upholding children's rights. The qualifications required for registration on the day care of children and residential childcare parts of the register, for example, include mandatory elements relating to child protection (article 3).

Fitness to Practise

As previously mentioned, SSSC registration requires workers to adhere to the Codes of Practice. However, when workers fall below the standards of practice and conduct expected of them, our Fitness to Practise team can investigate the worker.

Some of the workers we investigate care for and are directly responsible for children and young people. For example, workers in the Day Care of Children and Residential Child Care parts of the register. When we investigate concerns about workers from these parts of the register, our

focus is on the safety of the children which has to be balanced against the need to be fair and proportionate in our investigation and our decision. In November 2018 staff within the Fitness to Practise department undertook training in trauma and adverse childhood experiences to gain a better understanding of the effect trauma can have on survivors and how it may affect their ability to give evidence and its quality. This training was provided by Health in Mind.

The Fitness to Practise department also supported one of their senior solicitors to attend a joint investigative interview masterclass in January 2020. This masterclass provided high level insight and training into carrying out joint investigative interviews to get the best possible evidence from children and vulnerable witnesses without causing undue stress or anxiety.

Hearings

Following an investigation, the SSSC may decide that a worker's fitness to practise is impaired which may lead to an impairment hearing. Impairment hearings are generally held in public however it may be the case that evidence needs to be heard from vulnerable witnesses such as children.

The Hearings department has recently developed and implemented rules for involving vulnerable witnesses in hearings as well as gathering evidence from them. The SSSC treats any person under the age of 18 as a vulnerable witness and may arrange for evidence to be taken by video link, pre-recorded evidence, the use of screens or the use of interpreters. Where the allegations against the worker are of a sexual or violent nature, the worker is prohibited from cross-examining a vulnerable witness who has made an allegation or who has been subject to the alleged behaviour.

The SSSC's rules on vulnerable witnesses recognise the need to gather evidence in relation to allegations against registered workers while also ensuring that the rights of children and young people are respected.

The work carried out by the Regulation directorate which encompasses our Registration, Hearings and Fitness to Practise departments ensures the safety of all people who use social care services in Scotland, including children and young people. Over the last three years we have carried out 2,236 investigations concerning workers in child social services, this equates to about 24% of all the cases we investigated over this period.

In the year 2017/18 we investigated 873 cases involving workers in children's social services which saw 14 workers being removed from the register and 22 workers receiving other sanctions. In this period removals from register parts relating to children amounted to 22% of all removals

and those receiving other sanctions accounted for 15% of all such outcomes.

In 2018/19 we carried out 623 investigations, leading to 21 removals and 29 other sanctions. The number of removals amounts to 41% of the removals from our register for that period while the cases resulting in other sanctions amount for 16% of such outcomes across all register parts.

In 2019/20 we carried out 740 investigations which lead to 17 removals and 42 other sanctions. The removals from in relation to children's social services in this period amount to 31% of all removals from the SSSC register and the other sanctions account for 19% of such outcomes.

The above numbers highlight how important ensuring the smooth operation of our regulation directorate is to preserving children's rights in Scotland, with nearly one out of every four of our investigations concerning children's social service workers. That, combined with the sheer size of the workforce that we regulate, means that we are in a strong position to not only protect the rights of children, but promote them to a large section of Scottish society.

The UNCRC clusters

There are nine UNCRC clusters which deal with a wide variety of rights. These are:

1. Definition of the Child
2. General Measures of Implementation
3. UNCRC General Principles
4. Civil Rights and Freedoms
5. Violence Against Children
6. Family Environment and Alternative Care
7. Basic Health and Welfare
8. Education, Leisure and Culture
9. Special Protection Measures

Cluster 1: Definition of the Child

Article 1 of the UNCRC defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. This is the case unless the child lives in a place where the law states that a child becomes an adult at an earlier age. In Scotland, people are considered to be adults at different ages, depending on the context. However, for the purposes of the UNCRC and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, people become adults at the age of 18.

Because there is clear guidance on who is considered to be a child in Scotland, this report will not address this cluster as the SSSC applies the same definition as the Scottish Government.

Cluster 2: General Measures of Implementation

This cluster is all about what the government does to bring the UNCRC rights into effect. This covers legal measures such as legislation but also includes non-legal measures such as action plans, training, and raising awareness, to name a few. The main article of the UNCRC that applies to this cluster is Article 4, which says:

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

The following examples highlight some of the ways we have given effect to the cluster of rights concerning the general measures of implementation over the last three years.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Under the Equality Act 2010 we need to consider the impact our policies have on people with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, and pregnancy/maternity. With age being one of the protected characteristics, our EIAs need to consider the impact of our policies on children. Our updated EIA guidance also reminds our staff that individuals may have more than one protected characteristic and that individuals that have more than one protected characteristic are more likely to be negatively impacted by our policies.

Carrying out EIAs allows us to:

- take effective action on equality so policies meet the needs of staff, registrants and people who use services
- ensure equal access and opportunity for all (recognising that providing the same service in the same way for everyone can create a disadvantage for those with different needs)
- develop better policies and practices based on evidence and which are more responsive to the needs of those affected
- be more transparent and accountable by demonstrating that equality considerations are central to carrying out our functions.

We have recently updated our Equality Impact Assessment procedure and template. Although age is one of the protected characteristics, our EIAs now include an area for the consideration of children's rights as a distinct group of rights, separate from the protected characteristics. Our updated guidance document directs staff to consider the impact of new policies will have on the rights of children and directs staff to link their impact assessments to the UNCRC rights.

This ensures that policy makers in the SSSC will become more and more aware of issues concerning children and our policies will better promote children's rights.

Involvement in national initiatives

The departments within the Development & Innovation directorate have represented the SSSC in several national initiatives concerned with giving better effect to the UNCRC rights. Through this work the SSSC has been represented and contributed to the Getting it Right for Every Child

(GIRFEC) leadership group, the children and families strategic leadership group, the Children and Young People Mental Health Task Force, the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) strategy developing capacity and improvement workforce subgroup and the workforce group of the Independent Care Review.

Development & Innovation representatives also participated in the steering group which worked with the Scottish Government on their refresh of the National Child Protection Guidance, helping to ensure that the UNCRC rights were reflected in the guidance.

Recruitment

Our commitment to children's rights extends to our recruitment process. Our Human Resources department supports recruitment campaigns throughout the SSSC which ensure that we recruit the right people for the right role and that the people we recruit share the SSSC's values.

Ensuring that we have the very best people working in our organisation and that they share our corporate values ensures that we will remain committed to upholding children's rights and that we will be well placed to promote children's rights to the wider sector.

Raising awareness

Within the Finance and Resources directorate, the Legal and Corporate Governance department ensures that all departments across the SSSC are aware of their statutory obligations and assists them in meeting them. This is done through knowledge transfer, horizon scanning and strategic projects.

The work that the Legal and Corporate Governance team carries out ensures that the SSSC's commitment to implementing statutory obligations, including the UNCRC rights, is put into practice across the organisation and that rights provisions and duties are complied with.

Cluster 3: UNCRC General Principles

This cluster is all about the four general principles of the UNCRC. The general principles of the UNCRC are:

- non-discrimination
- all actions concerning children should be in their best interest
- all children have the right to life and to develop to their full potential
- the views of children should be respected.

The general principles are found in Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the convention.

The SSSC's role as regulator of social services in Scotland means that the general principles of the UNCRC are really important to the work we carry out.

All our departments apply the general principles of the UNCRC in the work they do with children and those who work with children.

However, we also work to promote and incorporate the general principles in a wider sense. The following are some examples of how some of our departments promote the general principles into the work they do.

National Occupational Standards

The SSSC is the sector skills council for social services in Scotland. Part of this role is developing the National Occupational Standards (NOS). NOS provide the benchmark of competency for individuals carrying out a certain activity.

The SSSC's register is qualification based which means we require everyone working in roles we register to have achieved a minimum standard of education. In Scotland the NOS can be used in their entirety as a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) which can then be used by workers to meet our registration requirements.

The SSSC works with the UK wide sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development to develop, maintain and update the NOS through engagement with employers and other stakeholders to ensure that the NOS properly reflect the needs of the sector and also incorporate relevant legislation. For example, the NOS that have been developed for social services (children and young people) and which are used as the basis for relevant SVQs include mandatory modules on safeguarding children and young people. This includes the requirement to safeguard and promote children and young people's rights.

The SSSC's contribution to the development of NOS in Scotland means that safeguarding and promoting children's rights is an essential element of the education of all social services workers. The SSSC's work with the development of NOS has also ensured that all social service workers working with children and young people in Scotland understand their duties and the wider implications of the UNCRC rights.

Youth Justice Work

We have collaborated with the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) on a number of initiatives. In 2019 we provided support, advice and information during the development of their report, [Preventing offending: Improving our approach to workforce development](#).

This report was developed to look at how CYCJ can meet the Developing Capacity and Improvement priority of the youth justice strategy for 2015-2020. The report addresses how to support workforce development in youth justice and how to encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement. The report also addresses the need to improve systems and to make the best use of available performance information. In the report, CYCJ commits to working with us to understand how we can recognise the continuing professional development that is taking place through existing resources.

The information in the report was developed by the Developing Capacity and Improvement implementation group. The implementation group was set up by the Youth Justice Improvement Board as a driver for the Youth Justice Strategy. The SSSC was an active stakeholder in the implementation group. In the last period, the SSSC has collaborated with Police Scotland, Social Work Scotland and COSLA to develop a National Joint Investigative Interviewing Programme. This programme aims to improve the consistency of how children and young people are interviewed in the course of investigations. The intention is that these interviews will be able to be used as evidence in chief and will prevent children from needing to appear in court.

National and international research and best practice were used to create a programme that is considerably more comprehensive than its predecessor and which ensures that those undergoing the training will develop an understanding of children's development and communication skills, the impact of offending on children, and age appropriate interview techniques.

The programme will reflect the SSSC codes of practice and will make reference to children's human rights throughout, ensuring that those conducting interviews of children are doing so in line with the principles of the UNCRC.

Palliative and End of Life Care

The SSSC and NHS Education for Scotland (NES) worked together to develop Enriching & Improving Experience, a framework for palliative and end of life care. This framework covers the needs of those receiving and providing palliative and end of life care. The framework is comprised of

five domains which reflect the core knowledge and skills required to deliver high quality palliative and end of life care. These domains are fundamentals of palliative care, communication and conversations, loss, grief and bereavement, care planning and delivery, and care in the last days of life.

Our palliative and end of life care resources have been developed through consultation with stakeholders including representatives from hospices across Scotland. The guidance toolkit we developed pays particular attention to how units from the Social Services (Children and Young People) SVQs interact with palliative and end of life care, ensuring that children's rights are of paramount importance in the training provided in this area. The framework takes the definition of palliative care for children ensures that respect is given to children's views, their right to life and that actions are taken in their best interest, which embodies the rights enshrined in article 3.

The SSSC worked with NES to produce the first annual [report on our partnership working for 2018/19](#). This report covers our palliative and end of life care work and shows that workers are incorporating it into their training and work plan development.

Internal mentoring programme

The SSSC runs an internal mentoring programme which aims to give young members of staff the opportunity to develop their full potential. This programme is being run by our Human Resources and Development and Innovation departments and is open to all employees aged between 16 and 25.

The programme offers young employees the chance to work closely with members of the Executive and Operational Management teams who will provide knowledge and skills to allow them to develop in their roles effectively.

The mentoring programme recognises the valuable role that young employees play within the SSSC and gives them a chance to discuss work related issues and challenges with more experienced, senior colleagues. The programme also allows senior management to gain valuable insight into the issues affecting young workers in the SSSC and will allow us to better address these issues. The internal mentoring programme also allows us to help our young workforce transition from childhood to adulthood in a supportive way.

The internal mentoring programme has measurable outcomes and it is anticipated that it will not only benefit our approximately 30 young

workers but will provide our senior management with fresh perspectives in a collaborative exchange of ideas.

Unfortunately our mentoring programme has had to be put on hold since we moved to home-based working during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this programme shows our commitment as an employer to respecting the views of our young workforce and ensuring they develop to their fullest, embodying articles 6 and 12 of the convention.

Non-discriminatory recruitment

Our Human Resources department ensures that all of our recruitment practices are open transparent and non-discriminatory so that all applicants are given the same opportunity to advance their career with the SSSC.

Our Human Resources department engages in conversations with young applicants and other stakeholders to gain their views of our recruitment process, for example through our Youth Employment, Investors in Young People and Corporate Parenting work. The SSSC is grateful for and respects the views provided to us through these outreach measures and seeks to incorporate them into our work where it is possible.

Involving People Plan

We recently published our Involving People Plan 2019/20 called, "Learning from lived experience: People, partnership and planning for involvement". The plan acknowledges the role that people with lived experience of the care sector can play, and the value they can add, to the work carried out by the SSSC, this includes children and young people.

Involving children and young people with lived experience of social services and caring is important to the SSSC for several reasons:

- we have a role in making sure people are included in decisions and developments that affect them, their voices are heard and they can influence our work
- involvement is integral to the SSSC's important public sector duties, including equality and corporate parenting
- we believe that involving people with lived experience of social services informs our work and through this, improves their experience of using care services and of the people who work with them.

Involvement can come in many forms. For example, we can work with children and young people to develop new resources for the workforce or consult people on the development of the standards. Our Involving People

Plan's involvement of children ensures that actions made by the SSSC are in the best interest of the children affected by them (article 3), and that the voices of children and young people are respected (article 12).

Cluster 4: Civil Rights and Freedoms

This cluster is all about protecting the civil rights and freedoms of children. The rights and freedoms covered by this cluster include identity rights such as those provided by articles 7 and 8, and the privacy rights seen in article 16. This cluster also encompasses educational rights, freedom of expression, religion and thought, and freedom from torture, articles 28, 13, 14 and 37 respectively.

The SSSC plays a role in ensuring that the work we do respects these rights and freedoms and promotes respect for them to the wider social services workforce. The following examples highlight some of the ways our work promotes and respects children's civil rights and freedoms in Scotland.

Learning resources

We develop a wide variety of learning and other resources for a wide variety of stakeholders, some of whom are children and young people who have experience of care.

We recently developed a film for our careers website in partnership with the children and staff at a residential childcare service. Our careers site also has a statement from a young person. These resources were developed through discussion with children and young people and driven by how they wanted to participate. Ultimately this process allowed us to better understand the needs of these young people and adapt our resources to meet them.

For example, we have examples of good practice in our leadership resources. These are illustrated and promoted through the use of real world examples which we share on our [Step into Leadership website](#). Several example of this are:

- [Rachel – Young Carer](#)
 - Rachel is a young carer who cares for her mother who suffers from bi-polar disorder. Rachel's story demonstrates the citizen leadership principles of development, equality and the wider benefit to society.
- [Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers](#)
 - The children and young people and the staff work to raise awareness of young carers in services and help services to

support them. Their story demonstrates the leadership values of potential, information and control through partnership

The SSSC has been working with the sector to support carers for a number of years. Carers are people who provide unpaid support to family members or friends and they can be any age, indeed many children carry out carer roles.

To ensure the social services sector is aware of the issues faced by carers and young carers we have collaborated with NES for a number of years, producing guidance and resources. We will continue promoting NES resources to the sector, for example, the National Trauma Training Programme.

In 2019 we jointly produced the [Equal Partners in Care](#) (EPiC) learning resource for health and social care staff. This resource is based on six outcomes for carers and young carers:

- carers are identified
- carers are supported and empowered to manage their caring role
- carers are enabled to have a life outside caring
- carers are fully engaged in the planning and shaping of services
- carers are free from disadvantages and discrimination related to their caring role
- carers are recognised and valued as equal partners in care.

EPiC identifies young carers as anyone under the age of 18 who has a significant role in caring for a member of their family. Given the age of young carers, EPiC developed its outcomes with GIRFEC in mind. GIRFEC is underpinned by the UNCRC and contains a set of indicators for children's wellbeing, namely safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (SHANARRI). EPiC ensures that the outcomes for young carers fully consider their rights as children. Our new learning resources will support EPiC's implementation in the sector.

EPiC also highlights the importance of Young Carer Statements. These were introduced by the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and aim to ensure that young carers are seen, first and foremost as children and that they are protected from undertaking caring responsibilities that would be inappropriate for their age or maturity.

Right to privacy

We take our duty to respect the privacy rights very seriously, especially when it comes to children's privacy rights. We deal with a huge amount of data on a wide variety of people as we are registered as a data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. In order for us to fulfil our statutory

functions we must collect and use personal data about individuals, such as:

- people who are or are applying to be registered
- people who work in social care but are not registered
- people who use services
- employers and universities of social service workers
- Fitness to Practise hearing witnesses
- people who have complained about a social service worker
- Panel Member applicants
- current and former employees and Panel Members
- Council Members
- people or organisations that we contract with others we might communicate with.

We may be legally required to collect and use personal data to comply with the requirements of other public bodies, government departments or legislation. The Legal and Corporate Governance department ensures that staff are aware of and meet their obligations in relation to data protection and that any data sharing we need to carry out is proportionate, this ensures respect for the right to privacy (article 16).

We are also required to publish a large volume of information on our website such as hearings outcomes, notices of hearings, and equality impact assessments. The Legal and Corporate Governance team ensure that all relevant staff members are aware of the requirement to redact any sensitive information, in particular in relation to children. This is shown in our recently revised SSSC [Fitness to Practise Public Information Policy](#). This ensures that we continue to recognise children's right to privacy.

Cluster 5: Violence against Children

Children are among the most vulnerable in society and should be protected against violence in all its forms. This cluster of rights requires governments to take all reasonable steps to protect children from violence, including physical, mental and sexual abuse, neglect and maltreatment.

The UNCRC also requires governments to promote recovery after abuse or violence, ensure children are not subject to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and ensure that discipline at school conforms to the ideals of the UNCRC. The relevant articles for this cluster are articles 19, 28, 37 and 39.

The SSSC plays a fundamental role in ensuring that children in care are protected against violence. The main way we do this is through regulating the social services workforce. For more information on the work our regulation directorate do to protect children from violence and to advance children's rights in general, please refer to the dedicated section above.

Cluster 6: Family Environment and Alternative Care

This cluster is all about the role of families or care arrangements in the development of children. For example, the articles in this cluster include respecting the role of parents or other guardians and the support they should receive to help raise their children (article 5), ensuring that children are not separated from their parents against their will, unless it is in the child's best interests (article 9), rights regarding family reunification (article 10), measures to prevent abduction and non-return of children (article 11), and ensuring recognition of parental responsibilities (article 18).

The convention also provides that children have the right to be well looked after when they are not able to live with their parents (article 20), that adoptions ensure the best interest of the child (article 21) and that children have an adequate standard of living (article 27), among many others.

The cluster on family environment and alternative care also includes article 19 which addresses violence against children, so there is some overlap in the applicability of actions between this cluster and the previous one. However, the following illustrate how the SSSC addresses this cluster.

National Guidance for Child Protection

The SSSC contributed to the review of the National Guidance for Child Protection as part of the steering group. The revision of the guidance formed part of the Child Protection Improvement Plan (CPIP) and was deemed to be necessary to ensure child protection guidance was consistent with current legislation and practice. The SSSC contributed expertise and knowledge during the revision process. The revised National Guidance for Child Protection is due to be published by April 2021 (article 9).

Independent Care Review

The Head of Learning and Development represents the SSSC in the Independent Care Review's Workforce Group. The Workforce Group focused on the care workforce as a whole to consider what their

needs were in terms of support, training and learning. This included the social service workforce with reference to development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications (SCQF) level 9 qualification for residential childcare staff.

The Workforce Group also considered regulation and the way in which it can operate a barrier to children and young people forming relationships with social service professionals who they interact with. With the support of the Director of Regulation and our Chief Executive, the Workforce Group explored how the child's voice is heard in regulatory processes to recognise that relationships with social service workers can be positive where the child or young person is able to express the benefit of it to them (article 9).

Foster Standards

We have also contributed towards discussion around Foster Standards. Following the National Foster Care Review in 2013, the Scottish Government asked us to create a standard that set out the training needs of foster carers at different stages of their careers. We published the [Standard for Foster Care in 2017](#). The standard developed by the SSSC is closely linked to GIRFEC and is of an equivalent level to an SCQF Level 7.

The standard for foster care is intended to ensure that foster carers are confident and well prepared for their role and are in a good position to support the children in their care (article 5).

The standards are made up of 19 individual areas of knowledge which foster carers are required to be familiar with. The first three standards are: the rights of children and young people, ethics, values and principles, and law, policy and guidance. The first three standards ensure that all foster carers in Scotland are familiar with the UNCRC rights and other legal obligations while other standards cover areas such as keeping children safe, and health and wellbeing.

Cluster 7: Basic Health and Welfare

This cluster seeks to ensure that all children have the highest possible standards of health and can access relevant healthcare services. This group of rights covers the right to life, survival and development (article 6), the responsibilities of parents and governments (Article 18(3)), children with disabilities (Article 23), health and health services (Article 24), social security (Article 26), standards of living (Article 27) and drug abuse (Article 33).

The SSSC's role as social services regulator means that we have a responsibility to ensure the workforce are aware of their responsibilities in relation to these rights.

For example, we have recently worked with NES to implement the Promoting Excellence Framework. This framework is a learning framework for social service and health care staff who work with people suffering with dementia, their families and carers. The framework aims to improve the care and support offered by providing resources, training and programmes to relevant practitioners and those affected by dementia.

The Promoting Excellence Framework is based on the European Convention of Human Rights and the work we do to embed the use of the framework's resources in the workforce supports families and carers, including children and young people, to develop meaningful relationship with people living with dementia.

Supporting our staff

We have a number of policies in place to support the health and welfare of our staff, including our young employees, and their families. These includes flexible working which can allow parents to work around childcare needs, special leave which allows staff to take time off for a number of reasons and our carers policy.

We also have a number of employees who are fully trained Mental Health First Aiders who are available to support staff members who may be struggling with their mental health including our young employees. We also promote access to our Employee Assistance Programme which offers a range of supportive services to staff of all ages.

As a Healthy Working Lives employer, we regularly run health awareness campaigns, offering information regarding various health conditions and signposting to places of help and support. Through these policies we hope to ensure that our staff are supported both at work and at home.

Cluster 8: Education, Leisure and Culture

One of the aims of the UNCRC is to ensure that children everywhere have access to the education required to help them meet their full potential. This cluster is about education, but also recognizes that play, leisure and culture are important for children's development. This cluster includes the rights to and goals of education (articles 28 and 29), the rights of children from minority groups (article 30) and leisure play and culture (article 31).

The SSSC has a role to play in ensuring these rights are respected and promoted within Scotland's social services sector. One of the ways we do this is by promoting career opportunities in the social services sector to children and young people by attending events at schools and colleges. We also provide resources to Developing the Young Workforce organisations, for example we recently produced a careers insight video for the online skills academy.

We also promote careers in the social service sector through our Careers in Care website. For example, on the Careers in Care website we have a story from an equity and excellence lead which highlights the importance of careers in care and the role they have in helping children thrive. The career stories and images focus on child-led learning and importance of play with the intention of promoting these values to the wider sector.

Our work seeks to improve career opportunities to ensure we have a flexible, qualified, diverse and sustainable workforce. To do this we provide resources to ensure that those looking to work in the sector are as prepared for the challenges of working with children and young people as possible. For example, we have developed a [childhood practice](#) simulator which allows learners to experience some of the challenging aspects of childcare in a safe environment.

Our Learning Zone website contains apps and resources to help staff to develop knowledge and skills. Our resources are used by managers, volunteers, workers, coaches and mentors. They cover a range of topics including engaging with children and young people and enabling a personal outcomes approach. We also ensure that all the information we publish, including all learning resources, guidance and updates are easy to access and are easily understood by all.

Cluster 9: Special Protection Measures

This cluster is about protection for vulnerable and marginalised children such as children in trouble with the law, child refugees, asylum seeker and children who have been subject to trafficking or exploitation. The list of articles covered by this cluster is extensive but includes protections for refugee children (article 22), minority or indigenous children (article 30), child labour (article 32), drug abuse (article 33), sexual exploitation (article 34), and juvenile justice (article 40), among others.

The nature of the sector regulated by the SSSC means that children for whom the special protection measures are intended may be affected by our services.

The SSSC is committed to providing opportunities to increase life chances of looked after and previously looked after young people by building their employability, training, or skills to support their future ambitions.

Also, our commitment to youth employment strives to give young people the chance to gain work experience and to highlight to them opportunities in life that they may never have considered before perhaps because of their childhood experiences.

As an Investors in Young People organisation, we are committed to supporting and developing our young employees and those who come to us through other means such as through work placements or internships. We actively seek and respect the views of young people and wish to learn as much from them as they do from us.

Also, our policies consider those who are carers, kinship carers and foster carers and we provide paid time off to support staff who have these responsibilities and also for adoption leave.

We have also developed [Leadership Badges](#) through the 23 Things leadership programme to equip leaders in social services with the basic skills required to carry out their roles. These includes early years practitioners. We also work with the Care Inspectorate's Early Learning and Childcare Improvement Team to provide leadership and improvement learning support to early years providers via webinars and direct work with providers.

Our Next Steps

This report has addressed the work the SSSC has done over the last three year period to advance the incorporation of the UNCRC rights in the work we carry out and in the wider social services sector.

The next section shows the steps we are going to take to ensure we continue to give better effect to the rights enshrined in the UNCRC. We will monitor this in several ways.

- Our internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group helps us to mainstream equality throughout the SSSC. The group monitor a wide-ranging delivery plan which includes the actions in this plan. The group will establish targets for actions and monitor progress. Our Council and Executive Management Team receives regular updates.
- Where relevant we have identified the lead directorates or departments for each action.
- We will publish an annual update setting out our progress.

Action	How this gives better effect to the UNCRC	Lead Directorate	Start or completion date
<p>Raise new and existing staff awareness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges for care experienced children and young people - our Corporate Parenting duties - the Care Review and the Promise. <p>We do this by promoting key resources on our intranet, incorporate key elements into our induction programme and offering interactive training sessions for our staff.</p>	<p>Staff have the knowledge and skills to ensure care experienced children and young people needs are put at the heart of what we do.</p>	<p>Development and Innovation</p> <p>Strategy and Performance</p> <p>Finance and Resources</p>	<p>Start date: June 2020</p>
<p>Implement our Involving People Plan 2019/20 actions.</p>	<p>Involving people in how we work and deliver services is meaningful and children and those who work with them can influence our work.</p>	<p>Development and Innovation</p> <p>Strategy and Performance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Promote the use of Equality Impact Assessments throughout the SSSC. The Equality Group will monitor progress and we will share examples across SSSC.</p>	<p>We will have a process to support us to consider the impact of our work on care experienced children and young adults.</p>	<p>Strategy and Performance</p>	<p>New guidance in place by October 2020.</p>
<p>Continue to participate in and act upon the next steps for the Care Review, which include revisiting our approach to residential child care qualifications.</p>	<p>We will work to deliver on the Promise for care experienced children and young adults.</p>	<p>Regulation</p> <p>Development and Innovation</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Working with key stakeholders to revise the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.	A common language and approach within our Codes of Practice will maintain the focus on promoting children's rights and supporting relationships.	Development and Innovation	Start date: Nov 2020
Continue to quality assure approved programmes and qualifications.	Our work ensures that social service workers have the knowledge, skills and values needed to care children.	Development and Innovation	Ongoing
We will introduce enhanced analysis of the common factors driving higher referral rates in residential childcare.	Standards and resources for residential childcare workers will be updated based on improved insight. Care experienced young people will benefit from those supporting them have the right skills, knowledge and values to carry out the role.	Strategy and Performance Development and Innovation	Initial report by June 2021.
Explore how we can provide further support for children and young adults, in particular, care experienced children and young adults involved in a Fitness to Practise case.	Care experienced children and young adults are protected by ensuring that the regulated workforce is fit to practise.	Regulation	Start Date: 1 April 2021
Continue to develop learning resources that reflect the needs of staff working with children and young people, in particular care experienced children and young people.	Children and young people benefit from high quality care from staff who have the resources they need for	Development and Innovation	Ongoing

	registration and continuous professional development.		
Explore how we can support care experienced young people to work for the SSSC. Our current focus is on improving our application process. Following that we will explore how we can encourage more people to apply for roles.	Care experienced young people will be encouraged to begin and develop their career at the SSSC.	Finance and Resources Strategy and Performance	Start date: June 2020
Continue to provide opportunities for care experienced young people to access Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeships at the SSSC.	We support care experienced young people to access a learning opportunity at the SSSC.	Shared Services (HR)	Ongoing
Evaluate our first mentoring programme and expand to support more of our young staff.	We will help our younger staff to develop and use their skills in a safe environment.	Finance and Resources Development and Innovation	Start date; TBC
work with carer organisations who support young carers, by developing COVID-19 resources.	This will support carers, support staff and managers within their roles and promote the health of children in social service care.	Development and Innovation	Start date; TBC
Better promotion of career opportunities for young people and supportive routes to employment.	This was identified as a priority in our recent Strategic Options Development Analysis exercise. This would address articles 28 and 29.	Development and Innovation	Start date; TBC
Working with the Carers Managers Network to establish the current and long term needs of	The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 places the duty on responsible	Development & Innovation	Start date; TBC

their workforce, including supporting them to them to have person-centred conversations in developing outcomes focused YCS.	authorities to offer Young Carer Statements (YCS) this will allow us to understand the needs of the sector and better address these.		
Researching and implementing 'Family Firm'. The Family Firm builds on the current Corporate Parenting initiative and looks to provide young people with more work placements and experience to better prepare them for their future.	Promotes exploring ways we can further support young people, especially those who are care experienced.	Human Resources Performance & Improvement	Start date; TBC
Work to maintain Investors in Young People award by supporting and developing young employees and keeping Youth Employment Strategy and Corporate Parenting Plan updated.	This will ensure we continue to promote education (article 28), the goals of education (article 29) and the general principles of the UNCRC.	Human Resources	Start date; TBC
Training on dealing with vulnerable witnesses and taking statements or evidence from people who have experienced trauma for all relevant staff.	Ensures that children's rights are respected during our hearings and investigations processes.	Regulation	Start date; TBC

