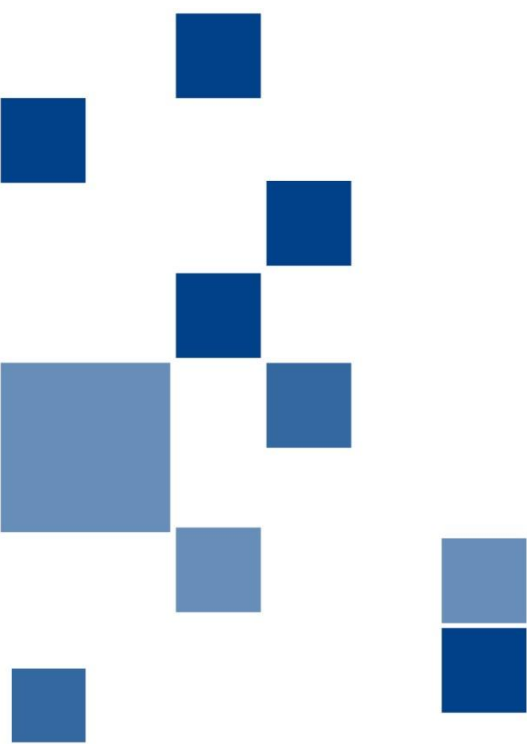


Impact Assessment

Review of Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Registration Fees

February 2025



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| General information | 2 |
| Background..... | 2 |
| Payment of fees | 3 |
| How the work links to the SSSC Strategic Plan | 3 |
| Impacts before consultation (September 2024) | 4 |
| Evidence (updated November 2024)..... | 4 |
| Equality Impact Assessment | 4 |
| Children’s rights and care experience assessment..... | 11 |
| Trauma informed assessment | 12 |
| Islands, Fairer Scotland and Vulnerable People assessment | 13 |
| Employer assessment | 15 |
| Sustainability Assessment | 15 |
| Impact Assessment action: explore care experience discount | 15 |
| Analysis of responses (updated January 2025)..... | 16 |
| Highlights from consultation..... | 16 |
| Equality Impact Assessment | 17 |
| Children’s rights and care experience assessment..... | 19 |
| Trauma informed assessment | 19 |
| Islands, Fairer Scotland and Vulnerable People Assessment..... | 20 |
| Employer assessment | 22 |
| Sustainability Assessment | 22 |
| Updated action: potential discount for experienced care (January 2025) | 23 |
| Summary of equality evidence | 23 |
| Next steps (February 2025) | 24 |
| Review and sign off..... | 24 |

General information

In February 2024 the SSSC's Council agreed to consult on a review of registration fees. The approach was finalised in August 2024.

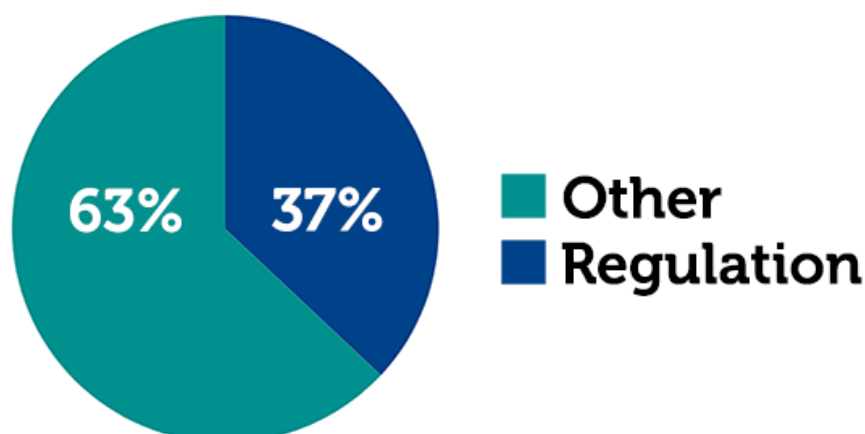
- We [consulted on fees](#) from September to December 2024 and published an [Impact Assessment \(IA\) on the Review of Fees](#).
- In early 2025 Council are due to agree the rates, subject to Ministerial consent.

This updated IA summarises the process, findings, and impacts. It also explores a discount for care-experienced individuals.

Background

When the Scottish Government established the SSSC in 2001, the goal was for registration fees to eventually cover the costs of regulating the workforce. Different fee levels were set to reflect the various worker groups and their roles and salaries. A chart from our September consultation shows that 60% of our regulation costs are currently covered by registration fees.

Budget allocated to Regulation



Our proposed sliding scale ensures that most registrants pay lower fees compared to other workforce regulators, reflecting the lower salaries in these roles. The Scottish Government provides most of our funding, unlike other largely self-funded regulators who may charge higher fees.

As of December 2024, the Register has grown to over 176,000 people across social work, social care and children and young people services. While most of the social service workforce is now on the Register, there is considerable turnover and movement in this workforce, particularly in adult social care.

Maintaining the Register increases the work of our registration, fitness to practise and hearings functions and our qualifications and workforce development and planning functions.

As with all public organisations we regularly review our operations to make sure that we are as efficient as possible.

This year, we implemented a significant improvement programme which has streamlined our processes as well as bringing changes to the qualifications and skills requirements, making registration simpler and easier for everyone.

We continuously improve how we carry out regulatory work to make sure we remain effective and efficient and target our resources effectively.

Payment of fees

In 2022 the Scottish Government decided to fund fees for people working in local authorities. This decision is outwith the SSSC's control. We recognise that this means that the outcome of our proposals may vary depending on whether people work in the public, independent or third sector. We know that some organisations in the independent and third sector pay fees on registrants' behalf.

How the work links to the SSSC Strategic Plan

The [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) sets our four strategic themes for our work:

- trusted
- skilled
- confident
- valued.

This work links with the 'trusted' theme, although our proposed fee increase is about addressing our financial sustainability and our work centres around these four themes.

The valued theme has the following outcome: The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people's lives. Our Strategy sets out how we will contribute to this agenda. This includes our work to make sure career pathways are increased and supporting the drive to make sure people feel more valued for the work that they do. Further information on our approach is available from our website.

Our consultation on the fees closed in December 2024. The next section of the report focuses on our understanding of the evidence before this date. It has been updated to include a reference to the [November 2024 equality report](#).

Impacts before consultation (September 2024)

Evidence (updated November 2024)

As the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce, we are in the unique position of holding reliable information on the registered workforce. We use registrant data to inform our understanding of the register. It also helps us to ensure our processes do not impose or disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

- We use workforce data which we gather and publish in our role as an official and accredited statistics provider. The workforce data in the initial September 2024 assessment is from [Scottish Social Services Sector: Report on 2023 Workforce Data, published in August 2024](#). The report is a snapshot of the workforce as of December 2023. It includes workers who register or must register with us. It includes people who do not register such as childminders.
- Our assessment is also informed by feedback from the previous fee consultation in 2017. We also use our judgement where data is not available. We do not collect data on registrants' pay rates.

In November 2024 we updated this assessment to include data from the [Analysis of registrant equality data report November 2024 \(the equality Report\)](#). We did not identify any new impacts because of this evidence.

- The Equality report is a snapshot as of January 2024 and combines data on fitness to practise, registration conditions and protected characteristics for the first time. It also has data on registrants' sexual orientation and religion.
- The equality report has some data on the 23 Register parts, prior to the move to four Register parts in July 2024. We are unable to include protected characteristics data on several parts due to the small numbers involved.

Equality Impact Assessment

Relevance of this work to equality groups

The proposed fee increases apply to every registrant. We recognise that any increase in fee rates may have a greater proportionate impact on lower paid workers. We know from our registration and workforce data that many of our registrants are in lower paid roles.

Our view is that the proposals are proportionate as we are maintaining higher increases for those in higher paid roles. For example, one of our proposals is that the fee for social workers and managers will rise by £8 during each of the five years, for practitioners and supervisors £4 and for support workers will rise by £3 during each of the five years.

The proposed fee for social work students will rise by £2 each year. Our August 2024 paper for Council on the proposed fee rates included – for information – the rates set by social work regulators in other parts of the UK and rates set by health regulators.

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our varied roles which being a public body, regulator and an employer. We support initiatives to increase the diversity of the workforce in Scotland. We have obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. The proposed fee increase will support the SSSC's work to support these priorities.

Assessing impact – equality impact

For each protected characteristic we consider the three public needs, including whether the proposal will:

1. eliminate discrimination
2. advance equality of opportunity
3. foster good relations between people who share the protected characteristic and those who do not.

The exception is marriage and civil partnership where we only consider the first of these three needs. Using this approach we do not identify any negative impacts for the three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty. We do identify some negative effects in the text before the assessment of each protected characteristic.

We do not wish to downplay the impact of any fee increase, as any increase in a mandatory fee could be considered a negative impact, although we think it is important to note that any impact is unlikely to be substantial. For example, there may be a negative impact for social work students, although in practice this would mean – subject to consultation – that students pay an additional £2 per year. The highest proposed increase is for social workers and managers. The impact would be that they would have to pay an additional £8 per year.

Age

The proposals are likely to have a greater impact on lower paid workers. We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates.

Our workforce data indicates that the median age across the social work, social care and children and young people sector is 43. There are some differences across the workforce. For example, the median age for private sector staff working in day care of children services is 28. The median age for all school care accommodation staff is 49. There have been initiatives to increase the pay rates for many workers. Many workers in early learning and childcare (ELC) and adult social care will receive the Scottish Living Wage.

[The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) indicates that 45% of registrants were aged between 30-49 as of January 2024. The report does not have data on every one of the previous 23 register parts due to the small numbers involved for some parts.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age group:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Disability

Many disabled people face significant barriers in recruitment and retention. In 2021, the Scottish Government committed to halving the disability employment gap by 2038. These proposals may negatively affect people with disabilities or conditions. Evidence shows that disabled individuals and those with long-term health conditions are at greater risk of leaving employment. Our proposals are also likely to have a greater impact lower-paid workers.

We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates. Our workforce data indicates that at least 2% of the social work, social care and children and young people workforce identify as having a disability. The disability status of 18% of the workforce is unknown. We do not collect detailed information on the types of disability that workers hold. The questions on our registration portal mirror the questions in the 2022 Census.

[The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) indicates that approximately 91.6% of registrants do not have a condition which has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months. Approximately 5.2% answered yes to the question, while the status of the remaining 3.2% of registrants is not known. This question is based on an equivalent question in the 2022 census.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Gender reassignment

Our workforce data does not include any questions on the proportion of workers who have gone through gender reassignment or consider themselves to be trans. The question on gender reassignment in our registration portal broadly mirror the trans status questions in the 2022 Census.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not have any evidence to identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Marriage and civil partnership

We do not collect data in relation to registrants who are married or in civil partnerships.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not have any evidence to identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Pregnancy and maternity

We do not gather data on registrants who are pregnant or on maternity leave. Registrants who are pregnant, on maternity leave or with reduced or no income while caring for young children may be negatively affected by a fee increase. A similar negative impact may also apply to male staff who are on paternity or shared family leave.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age group:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not have any evidence to identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Race

Our workforce data shows that 68% of the social service workforce is of white ethnicity, while 2% is Asian, 4% is black with 25% being unknown. However, despite the large proportion of unknown ethnicities in the sector, we can say that as a minimum 11% of staff working in care homes for adults and 8% of staff in housing support / care at home services are from ethnic minorities.

[The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) indicates that approximately 67.1% of registrants are White. The next three largest groups (figures in brackets) are African, Scottish African or British African (5.7%), Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian (3%) and Other Ethnic group (2.3%.) Just under 1% of registrants chose not to answer this question. We do not have a response to this question for approximately 20% of registrants.

The report contains data on the previous 23 register parts, although the data should be treated with caution because of the smaller numbers involved in some cases. It confirms, for example, that approximately 17.3% of registrants who were on the Support Worker in a care home service Register part in January 2024 are African, Scottish African or British African. These figures are prior to the move to the new Register parts in summer 2024.

We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Religion/belief

Our workforce data does not include questions on religion. [The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) uses the questions in the 2022 Census. Exactly 29% of respondents indicate that they do not have a religion, and we do not have any data on approximately 22.5% of all registrants. The next three largest responses were other Christian (18.2%), Another religion or body (10.5%) and Roman Catholic (7.9%.) The report has some data on the previous 23 register parts, although the data should be treated with caution because of the smaller numbers involved in many cases. Further information is available from the report.

We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Sex

Our workforce data shows that, across the sector 82% of social service workers are female and 16% of workers are male. The sex of approximately 2% of the social work, social care and children and young people workforce is unknown.

[The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) indicates that 82% of the Register is female, and 14.4% is male.

As the makeup of the registered workforce is mostly female, the payment of fees has more of an impact on women than men. Our view is that there is no evidence to suggest that this is a disproportionate impact.

The [equality data report](#) also has data on sex and Register parts, as set out in table 31. It confirms, for example, that approximately 97.1% of registrants who were on the Practitioner in day care of children service parts in January 2024 are female. The report also confirms that there are some parts of the register which have a higher proportion of male than other parts. For example, approximately 19% of social workers and 21% of workers in a Housing support service are male. The data should be treated with caution because of the smaller numbers involved in many cases. We do not publish data on the proportions of male and females in most of the managerial parts of the Register due to the relatively small numbers involved. These figures are prior to the move to the new Register parts in summer 2024. See the report and our website for further information.

We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any disproportionate impacts for this protected characteristic.

Sexual orientation

Our workforce data does not include any questions on sexual orientation. The question on sexual orientation in our registration portal mirror the questions in the 2022 Census. We do not have evidence of a link between a registrant's response to this question and their pay rates.

[The Analysis of registrant equality data report \(November 2024\)](#) indicates that approximately 72% of registrants define themselves as straight or heterosexual. Approximately 19% of registrants have not shared any data while a further 6% have selected other or prefer not to say. Approximately 1.8% of registrants define as gay or lesbian. The remaining 1.6% define as bisexual.

The three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation:**
We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Advancing equality of opportunity:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- **Promoting good relations among and between different age groups:** We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Summary: we believe that our proposed fee increase is proportionate, and we do not identify any negative impacts for this protected characteristic.

Children's rights and care experience assessment

Understanding impact

We are aware of views suggesting that a fee increase may be a barrier to recruitment and retention. Several studies, initiatives and reports such as the Promise and Hearings Redesign Report highlight recruitment and retention challenges for the wider children and young people workforce.

We were unaware of evidence suggesting a link between registration fees and recruitment or retention when we previously revised fee rates in 2017. We recognise that the financial landscape has changed since then and employers continue to experience acute challenges.

An annual or scheduled increase in fee rates is recognised as standard practice for most regulators.

The Independent Care Review and Scottish Government publications (such as Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2022/23) highlight significant challenges and barriers faced by care experienced children, young people and people who are looked after. We are committed to playing our part to Keep the Promise to care experienced children and young people in Scotland. In June 2024 we published two statutory reports setting out how we continue to put care experience at the heart of what we do and how we embed children's rights in our work.

We will explore potential to offer a discount for care experienced people. There are several questions we would need to consider such as eligibility, potential take up and the discount level. We would seek to learn from experiences from elsewhere such as the Care Experience Bursary administered by the Student Awards Agency Scotland.

We are mindful of the key challenges faced by the sector and will continue to monitor and publish data on key indicators. For example, we publish data on vacancies. Our workforce data reports have Core Stability Index figures, a measure showing the percentage of workers who are still in post after one year.

We continue to take and participate in several steps to support the workforce to achieve qualifications. For example, as of June 2024 we take a more flexible approach to qualifications for registration to allow people to move between social care and children and young people services without having to gain two different qualifications. We ask registrants moving to another type of service to complete some extra learning, for example child or adult protection, as part of their CPL rather than doing another qualification. We are also working with partners to improve our understanding of topics such as why people leave the Register and the reasons why people drop out of Scottish Vocational Qualifications or Modern Apprenticeships.

Evidence

Our assessment of the impact on children's rights and care experience is based on a review of our Register data, workforce data and our best judgement on the impact of fee increases on the registered workforce. Our statements on the potential impact of fee increases are based on our understanding of the recruitment and retention challenges for this workforce.

We know that some people with experience of care choose to work in social work, social care, and children and young people services and many will be registered with the SSSC. We do not gather or have figures on the proportion of registrants who have experience of care.

Assessing impact

We believe that our proposals are proportionate. We do not anticipate that they will have a significant impact on recruitment, retention or the delivery of services for children and young people or people with experience of care in Scotland. We identified an action to explore a potential discount for care experienced people.

Trauma informed assessment

Understanding impact

We want to take a trauma informed approach to our work. We want a culture where people experience empathy and kindness and are empowered to access the services they need to help support their recovery.

We have not identified any substantive connection between a fee increase and our drive to take a trauma informed approach.

Evidence

We did not analyse any information in relation to trauma informed practice.

Assessing impact

We do not identify a connection between a proposed fee increase and our drive to support a trauma informed approach.

Islands, Fairer Scotland and Vulnerable People assessment

Understanding impact

Islands duty

Several reports and studies have reported that rural and island communities face particularly extreme challenges in relation to recruitment and retention. We do not anticipate that the proposed increase in fees will have a disproportionate impact on people living in an island community.

We are aware that the composition of the workforce in some island areas is slightly different to the composition on the mainland. For example, Workforce Data Reports consistently show that some island local authority areas – such as Orkney – have a greater proportion of public sector workers than the national average. [Scottish Social Services: Report on 2023 Workforce Data](#) (published August 2024) indicates that the 'The largest employer type is the private sector with 40% of the employment. This is followed by the public sector with 35% and the voluntary sector with 25%. However, this varies by local authority area. In each of the three island authorities (Orkney, Shetland and Na h-Eileanan Siar) the public sector accounts for more than two thirds of employment.' We briefly cover the arrangements for fees paid by local authorities in the first section of this assessment.

Fairer Scotland

The Scottish Government's guidance on the Fairer Scotland duty notes that the duty requires named public bodies to 'put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making.' The focus must be on strategic decisions. The Fairer Scotland Duty does not require us to consider inequality throughout our work. However, we believe it is appropriate to do so when making strategic decisions such as proposing to increase registrant fees. We know that socio economic disadvantage can be caused by several factors such as low income.

We also recognise that several registrants may receive a wage that is close to or equal to the Scottish Living Wage, and that many will be working in part-time roles. Throughout this assessment we have identified where we believe that there may be impacts on some registrants. We do not wish to downplay these impacts although we believe our proposals are proportionate. We propose different fee levels which reflect the different groups of workers we register and recognise the different roles and salaries.

We continue to remind registrants that they may be able to claim tax relief on their registration fees. Further information is available on our website and the UK Government's website:

<https://www.sssc.uk.com/registration/managing-my-registration/>

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/professional-fees-and-subscriptions>

Vulnerable people

The registered workforce providers support to several vulnerable people in Scotland. Several studies, initiatives and organisations, such as the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland and reports by the Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW), highlight recruitment and retention challenges for the wider social work, social care and children and young people workforce. We highlight other examples earlier in this assessment. Our proposed increase in fees aims to recognise these challenges while meeting the aims set out in the first part of this assessment.

Our proposed increases also aim to recognise the different roles and salaries for people working in social work, social care and children and young people services. Our sliding scale for fees means that the fees for most of our registrants are lower than fees other workforce regulators charge (for example, nurses) which reflect the lower salary levels for many of the roles.

Evidence

Our assessment of the impact on the Islands Duty, Fairer Scotland Duty and vulnerable people is based on a review of our Register data, workforce data and our best judgement on the impact of fee increases on the registered workforce.

Assessing impact

We appreciate that there may be some impacts, and we anticipate and understand objections to an increase in fees. We do not anticipate that they will have a significant impact on recruitment, retention or the delivery of services on Island Communities or for vulnerable people across Scotland.

Employer assessment

Understanding impact

A proposed fees increase is relevant to employers as it will affect everyone they employ in a registerable role. This may have a negative impact on recruitment and retention, as some potential workers may see it as a barrier to taking a job.

We briefly cover the arrangements for fees paid by local authorities in the first section of this assessment. We are aware that there are some third or independent sector providers who have or continue to pay registration fees for their staff. We do not capture this information and are unable to make statements on the impact on different types of employers.

Evidence

This assessment highlights some studies and initiatives which identify recruitment and retention challenges for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce. We are unaware of any specific studies examining the relationship between registration fees and the ability of employers to recruit, retain and develop their workforce.

Assessing impact

We do not anticipate that our proposals will have a significant impact on recruitment, retention or the ability of employers to recruit and retain workers.

Sustainability Assessment

Understanding impact

We did not identify a link between our proposal and the sustainability duty.

Evidence

Not applicable

Assessing impact

We did not identify a link between our proposal and the sustainability duty.

Impact Assessment action: explore care experience discount

Our Impact Assessment (September 2024) identified one action.

1. We will explore the potential to offer a discount for care experienced people (Section C)

Analysis of responses (updated January 2025)

Highlights from consultation

This analysis includes all responses to the consultation on fees.

Breakdown of data on respondents

We received 3,178 responses. Some figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

- Just over 92% were from workers who are registered with the SSSC.
- Approximately 37% of respondents are on the social care worker part of the register. Approximately 35% were on the children and young people part and a further 19% are on the social worker part.
- Just under 7% of respondents are on more than one part of the register.

We also asked respondents whether they would be happy to provide other information such as their age, sex or race. Approximately 64% of respondents said that they would be happy to provide this information. For example, the data indicates that approximately:

- 82% of respondents are female
- 51% of respondents are aged 35-54
- 77% of respondents do not have a health problem or disability which limits their day-to-day activities, while 16% have a condition which limits them a little
- 94% of respondents are White, 1% are African, Scottish African or British African, and just under 1% are from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- 56% have no religion, 15% identify with the Church of Scotland and 13% as Roman Catholic.
- 85% define as Heterosexual / Straight, 5% prefer not to say, 4% define as Gay / lesbian and 3% as bisexual.

We also received a small number of responses by e-mail. These responses are not included in the figures above although we have included their feedback in this analysis.

What, if any, do you see as the main equality related issues that you feel could arise from the proposals set out in this consultation?

Just over 64% of all respondents opted to answer the equality issues question, 2024 in total. All references or quotes in this section of the assessment are from the responses to that question.

Headline messages

- At least ten responses indicated that they would not know if there were any impacts or could not identify anything new. A similar number referred to previous answers. At least one response noted that there are no equality impacts as the fees increase applies to everyone.

- A word cloud of the responses to this question (as of 5 November) indicates that the most used phrases – by some distance – are ‘cost of living’ and ‘cost of living crisis.’ Some referred to previous answers and some referred specifically to protected characteristics.
- The remainder of this section revisits each of the assessments and uses quotes from the evidence throughout.

Equality Impact Assessment

Approximately 42% of respondents opted to answer the question on equality related issues, a total of 1,319 responses. Alongside that a small number of organisations shared their feedback by e-mail. Several responses to the equality question referred to their previous answers. Some responses suggested that an increase could have a negative impact on equality and others alternative fee levels.

Approximately 10% of all responses referred to one or more protected characteristics. An overview of these responses follows.

Age: A small number of responses referred to the impact of increased fees on the ability of employers to recruit younger workers. One respondent indicated that ‘paying a fee, any fee discriminates on age.’

Disability: Some responses highlighted to date impact of a potential fee increase on disabled workers. One response noted ‘that people who work and have a disability are often unable to claim benefits and have additional costs to be able to work.’ Another said that ‘...people with poor health, disability or care responsibilities can perhaps only work part time but still have to pay the fees.’

Gender Reassignment: there are no references to an impact on gender reassignment or trans status in any of the responses.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: there are no reference to an impact on marriage or civil partnership in any of the responses.

Pregnancy and Maternity: one respondent noted that they will be in the position next year of having to pay a potentially higher fee to ‘keep my registration on maternity leave, while receiving less than half my monthly income.’ They said that it would be helpful to have an option to put registration on hold during paternal leave, or a similar arrangement. Another respondent indicated that lone parents will ‘significantly struggle’ with a fee increase.

‘Women are less likely to have senior positions, plus we are the only gender affected by maternity pay yet still have to pay the same fees. Unfair.’

Race: Some responses referred to ethnicity and some highlighted increasing numbers of people from a minority ethnic background on the register, indicating that they would be more likely to experience a negative impact result from fees increase due to the fact they may be more likely to be in lower roles. For example, one response suggested that 'women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and from lower socio-economic backgrounds' are more likely to be affected as they tend to be in lower paid roles.

One organisation indicated that poverty levels among minority ethnic communities are rising and that an increase in fees 'risks exacerbating poverty among women and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.'

Religion and Belief: none of the responses to this question highlighted an impact in relation to a registrant's religion or belief.

Sex: approximately 5% of responses to question referred directly to this protected characteristic. The figure is likely to be an underestimate as many others referred to differences between men, and women. Some responses may have used different terminology such as gender. Several of these responses highlight a disproportionate impact on females, noting that women are overrepresented in the social care, social work and children and young people workforce. Two examples follow.

- 'The majority of childcare and care sector workers are female, and it remains true that women are more likely to work part-time, or reduced hours, to accommodate their family childcare or care needs. I feel the increases will demoralise this workforce further, and possibly dissuade them from this line of work, as it is quickly becoming more economical to forgo work entirely to handle care circumstances. This is not what the industry needs, the care sector is already understaffed and funded.'
- 'The social care work force is predominantly female and white, often the sole earner in families. Any increase will impact these women and families to available income.'

A small number of responses suggested a relationship between fee levels and the gender pay gap. Some responses referred to a need to consider the relationship between pay and fee rates.

- 'Given that many female employees are at the lower end of the salary scale they shouldn't have a disproportionate increase.'

Three employer organisations stated that a fee increase would negatively affect the mainly female workforce.

Sexual orientation: none of the responses to this question highlighted an impact in relation to a registrant's sexual orientation.

Children's rights and care experience assessment

A small number of responses to equality questions mention children. These responses typically referred to people who work in children's services. For example:

- 'Care workers/Children Support workers are lowest paid but are among the lowest paid if increase this impacts our salary'

One response suggested that a fee increase could have an impact on recruitment which in turn would impact on children's rights:

- 'More workers in Social Care / Social Work are required to support those with protected characteristics and children's rights. Increasing in such a way does not promote this to happen as recruitment may be impacted.'

None of the responses mentioned corporate parenting duty. One response referred to the action to explore a possible care experience discount.

- 'As the fee levels are varied according to work role, everyone in a registration category should pay the same. I understand the principle behind consideration of a discount to care experienced people but do not think such a discount should be necessary in this scenario. I would like to see consideration of the ability to pay annual fee in two instalments (without overall increase in cost) so that anyone who is struggling to pay the fee in one instalment is not disadvantaged (potentially impacting on recruitment and retention). It is unfortunate that the SG opted to lay fees for LA staff. Whilst beyond the control of the SSSC the situation creates inequality and potentially impacts on lower paid female workers most.'

Trauma informed assessment

One response highlighted pressures on social workers and the drive to take a trauma informed approach. They mentioned a fee increase as an additional pressure on the workforce.

'The push on social workers, who are more than willing, to be trauma informed yet lack of understanding of the impact of this on the profession. Burnout, higher and more complex caseloads, lower staff retention and expected to do more with less resources yet the feeling amongst the profession is that we are undervalued and lack support. To increase fees will add to this, and as stated, SSSC are not coming out to stand with the workforce they regulate to advocate on our behalf. To a government that assigned them to regulate and streamline the workforce to ensure better outcomes for those we serve, yet distinctly lack this for their own workforce.'

Islands, Fairer Scotland and Vulnerable People Assessment

Islands

One response specifically refers to the Islands. That point could be broadly interpreted as being about the Scottish Government's decision to pay fees for local authority workers rather than a point that is specific to the Islands. This decision is outwith the SSSC's control.

- 'It is not fair or equal that Shetland Islands Council employees get funding from Government to pay employee SSSC fees but charitable, third sector organisations providing vital services to vulnerable people in communities do not receive funding.'

A small number of responses referenced rural challenges but did not specify whether they included the islands in that definition.

One response suggested that the 'imbalance between local authority staff who have their fees paid for them and private, voluntary and independent staff / settings who do not' will affect equality of access to Early Learning and Childcare services in rural areas.

Three responses refer to the impact on a fee increase on rural settings. One refers to equality of access to ELC services, one refers to a risk of 'exclusion' for rural workers, and the final response argues that 'people who live in rural areas have higher costs of living and lower salaries and often work from home meaning we pay more to stay at work.'

Fairer Scotland

Several responses highlighted an inequality argument, referencing the Scottish Government's decision to pay fees for local authority workers. This section includes some brief examples as this will be covered elsewhere in the analysis of responses.

- 'I feel early years practitioners across the local authority and within the private sector should be classed as doing the same role in early years therefore they should all pay the fees or not.'
- 'I think there is great inequality as a higher paid local authority early years worker will be faced with the same fee as a private sector early years worker.'

Three of the organisations that responded by e-mail said that there is an inequality resulting from the Scottish Government's decision to pay fees for local authority employees. Several responses referenced the cost of living or economic challenges in this question. Some examples follow.

- 'Workers who are struggling financially will be most significantly affected by these changes but will be obliged to meet the rise in costs due to the need to continue working in their profession. Those most affected will likely be people experiencing poverty, social isolation, single-parent/carer families.'
- 'It sounds alarmist, but I understand the care sector is finding it very challenging going economically due to energy, inflation, and demand. I would suggest finding subsidy for these organisations, by making direct requests to the Scottish government, on their behalf. The SSSC is completing important work to developing a professional workforce, ready to diligently respond to the emerging care service and early years service demands. Additional finance to ensure the very best of innovative practice, and professionalism, should be validated by our national parliament. I worry that despite the great undertaking, of your impact assessment, for the independent sector, it could still, have negative ramifications.'
- 'The majority of childcare and care sector workers are female, and it remains true that women are more likely to work part-time, or reduced hours, to accommodate their family childcare or care needs. I feel the increases will demoralise this workforce further, and possibly dissuade them from this line of work, as it is quickly becoming more economical to forgo work entirely to handle care circumstances. This is not what the industry needs, the care sector is already understaffed and funded.'
- This has a huge impact on bank workers, part-time workers and lower paid sectors. Poverty, deprivation areas and people who work part-time because of caring responsibilities are being discriminated against.'
- 'Equality between NHS care staff and private care companies. Private care company staff loose on every level of terms and conditions. I would hope that all SSSC staff pay their own registration and some not have funded by employers. It's makes for more inequality in what is already a very unequal system.'

Vulnerable people

Some people suggested that a fee increase could have an impact on vulnerable people accessing services. Examples follow.

- 'As previously highlighted an increase in fees will affect local authority budgets which will have an impact on the services, they are able to provide directly to vulnerable adults and children, as well as funding third sector organisations, which will have a detrimental impact on the most vulnerable in society.'

- 'It increases the drain on support workers struggling to get by, which affects the vulnerable groups we support'

One response highlighted an impact of the fee increase on the registrant's family.

- 'As a parent of a vulnerable disabled young adult this is yet more taken from our finance.'

Employer assessment

This assessment aims to focus on the impact of a fee increase on employers. Several respondents note that local authority employees have their fees paid while others do not. These fees are paid by Scottish Government and any impact on budgets is unclear.

Some people suggested the cost of registration fees should be met in full or part by employers.

- '...employers should be responsible for part of workers costs, perhaps 10 per cent of yearly total.'
- 'Care staff are poorly paid already and this will make things worse. Employers should pay our registration fees.'

One employer identified a risk of increased non-payment, which may lead to an increase in dismissals:

'In our support worker population we have a much higher proportion of employees from BME backgrounds. The proposed percentage increase is second highest for this group of employees than any other category. In our support work population there is a higher proportion of part-time employees, the fees are the same regardless of full-time/part-time status, this will disproportionately impact on women. Don't see any significant issues though for the SSSC. As an employer there is a concern that non-payment of fees will lead to increased dismissals and that might show up more in a particular group.'

Some responses note that an increase in fees would make it harder for some employers to recruit staff.

Sustainability Assessment

None of the responses to this question suggested an environmental impact.

Updated action: potential discount for experienced care (January 2025)

In October 2024 the Scottish Government began a consultation on developing a universal definition of care experience. The [consultation](#), which also has an [easy-read version](#), seeks views on the need for a universal definition and considers potential impacts of introducing one. The consultation:

- notes that a universal definition could support a sense of identity for people with care experience
- could help to define eligibility for support or rights
- highlights potential disadvantages such as causing confusion around access to support and entitlements.

The Scottish Government consultation is open until 8 January, after which an independent analysis and confirmation of the next steps will be published. We may be better positioned to explore a potential discount for care-experienced individuals following the outcome of this consultation.

As noted earlier, only one response directly referred to the proposal to explore a care experience discount. They noted that this was not necessary for registration fees and suggested an option to pay by instalments instead. Two responses referred to the challenges faced by care experienced people although neither commented on a potential discount.

On 3 January 2025 the Scottish Government published an analysis of responses to their consultation on [Disclosure Scotland fees – discounting waivers and accredited bodies](#). That consultation included a specific question on a care experience discount. The Scottish Government has indicated that it intends to confirm the next steps for these fee rates in January 2025.

Summary of equality evidence

Following the consultation, we reviewed each section in this assessment. Many quotes and feedback reinforced the evidence in our original assessment. Some responses also noted that there would be a greater impact on

- women because they are over represented on the overall register and in some parts, particularly practitioners in day care of children services
- people from minority ethnic backgrounds as they are overrepresented in lower paid roles.

The current fee levels for support workers and practitioners are considerably lower than the equivalent fees for managers or social workers. Only social work students pay a lower fee than supervisors, practitioners and support workers. Our proposal is that we would not increase fees for supervisors, practitioners or support workers in 2025/26 and fees for social work students would remain at the current rate for the next five years.

The consultation responses provided further evidence of significant recruitment and retention challenges in the social work, social care, and children and young people workforce. Some responses highlighted challenges faced by islands and rural communities, while several referred to ongoing financial pressures and the cost-of-living crisis. Several responses also mentioned the ongoing situation where local authority employees have their fees paid, while others do not, a decision beyond the SSSC's control. The consultation did not identify any new evidence for our trauma or sustainability assessments.

Our original September Impact Assessment has an action to explore a proposed care experience discount. Since then, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on developing a universal definition for care experience, and we will monitor its outcome. Only one response referred to the proposed care experience discount, indicating it is unlikely to be a priority and suggesting we explore alternative options such as instalments.

Next steps (February 2025)

In early 2025 Council will agree the consultation outcome and any changes rates, subject to Ministerial consent. Once finalised we will update registrants using our usual communication channels.

Review and sign off

Owner: Director of Strategy and Performance

Date: 19 February 2025

