

Consultation on the Scottish Government's response to the UK Apprenticeship Levy: Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) response

The SSSC is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We are responsible, along with our partners in the Skills for Care and Development Sector Skills Council, for developing, maintaining and reviewing apprenticeship frameworks in the social service sector. We are also responsible for the occupational standards on which the frameworks are based. The apprenticeship frameworks are developed in consultation with employers and national organisations and we are responsible for making sure that they reflect employer need. In the social service sector, we currently see 10,000 relevant SVQs awarded per year, of which 2,500 to 3,000 are a result of Modern Apprenticeships.

As well as the implications for the sector we regulate, the levy has implications for the SSSC as an employer. Based on our current budget, the SSSC will have to pay £45,000 a year when the levy is introduced.

We welcome any measures that will increase the number, quality and diversity of Modern Apprenticeships. However, we have a number of concerns around how the levy will operate in practice. It is likely that the proceeds of the levy from Scottish public bodies including the SSSC will be paid to the UK Government, only for a portion of the total proceeds to be paid back to the Scottish Government. The levy should not become a bureaucratic exercise of recycling monies via different bodies and organisations.

Our concerns would be addressed if there was clear evidence of how the levy will support the particular challenges facing the social service sector or if the levy supported us to, for example, carry out our role as a corporate parent and provide more apprenticeships to looked after young people.

Q1. Should the Government's commitment to 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts a year by 2020 a) be maintained or b) be increased?

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to increasing the number of Modern Apprenticeships by 2020. Modern Apprenticeships contribute to the growth of the social service sector, which provides a vital contribution to the Scottish economy. For example, the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy highlights the contribution of childcare to support parents to participate in the labour market.

Data from Skills Development Scotland (Modern Apprenticeship Statistics Full Year Report 2015/16, 2016) shows that apprentice frameworks in the social service sector have some of the highest participation rates. This indicates a high level of confidence in the frameworks from employers, providers and participants. There are substantial development challenges for the social service sector and Modern Apprenticeships will help address these challenges.

One challenge is the significant expansion of the early years and childcare workforce (Programme for Government 2015-16). The substantial number of new workers joining the workforce will lead to an increased demand for qualifications. Modern Apprenticeships will play a key role in helping to address this demand. They could also support people to consider a new career in this sector, helping drive the expansion of the workforce. To support this, we urge reconsidering the current age limits set out for funding Modern Apprenticeships. These are perceived as a barrier for those considering a new career and have limited the levels of participation.

Another challenge which Modern Apprenticeships will help to address will be the opening of new areas of the SSSC register. To register with the SSSC a worker must hold, or agree to work towards, an appropriate qualification. There are 65,000 workers in housing support and care at home services (Report on 2014 Workforce Data, SSSC 2015). Registration opens for workers in these sub-sectors in 2017 and many of them will be required to gain a qualification. For example, workers in housing support services would be required to obtain an SVQ Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF level 6 or alternative award.¹ It is vital for the sector to address the demand for qualifications.

The integration of health and social care will create further development needs. Audit Scotland has recommended that NHS boards, councils and integration authorities should focus funding on workforce planning to support new models of care (Changing models of health and social care, 2016). This will create a need for health and social care workers to develop new skills to implement these new models.

The delivery of Modern Apprenticeships will help to address the increased demand in education and learning caused by these policy drivers. It could also play a key role in addressing equality issues in the sector, particularly the under-representation of male and older workers in the childcare workforce. Our last Report on Workforce Data shows that only 11% of day care of childcare workers are aged 55 or over, and only 4% are male. We suggest changing the funding mechanism to increase the accessibility of Modern Apprenticeships for people aged over 24 in sectors where older workers are underrepresented.

The Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030 suggests that the health and social care workforce should better reflect the diversity of Scotland's communities. The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce made several recommendations to address equality issues, including gender disparity

¹ <http://www.sssc.uk.com/registration/what-qualifications-do-i-need/find-out-about-qualifications?qualified=1&service=adult-services&category=support-worker-of-adult-services&role=worker-in-a-housing-support-service>

and underrepresentation of young BME workers, in Modern Apprenticeships. Skills Development Scotland has published an action plan for tackling these.

Young carers and looked after young people face significant economic barriers and would benefit from greater accessibility of Modern Apprenticeships. We suggest the creation of a fund comprising the levies paid by Scottish public bodies, who are corporate parents, which should be spent increasing the accessibility of Modern Apprenticeships for disadvantaged groups such as care leavers and young carers. This could focus particularly on high participation sectors such as social care.

Q2. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding support growth in the number of Graduate Level Apprenticeships in Scotland?

Yes. We welcome the development of a foundation and graduate apprentice framework. Both approaches provide a clear route of progression for young people and extend opportunities for others to gain vocational work based learning.

We are currently working with Skills Development Scotland on graduate apprenticeships and would welcome further support for growth in this area. Graduate apprenticeships will offer participants an attractive alternative way to achieve degree level qualifications. This will complement existing Scottish Government policies including Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, Curriculum for Excellence and addressing the attainment gap.

There are a number of graduate level qualifications which registered social service workers are required to achieve. For example, managers in day care of children services must have or work towards the SCQF level 9 Childhood Practice Award. With the expansion of early years and childcare services, there will be increased demand for this award and Modern Apprenticeships could help to support this.

If there is to be an increase in the number of graduate level apprenticeships, we suggest that this is accompanied by further support and improved access for care leavers and young carers. Many of these young people would benefit from the training and learning provided by apprenticeships, and they often require a higher level of support.

Q3. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to establish a flexible skills fund to support wider workforce development?

Yes. The workforce development challenges for employers in the health and social care sector are not limited to the need for workers to achieve mandatory qualifications for registration with the SSSC. The need to shift to new models of care will require innovation in the development of new roles and new skills. A flexible skills fund could support this. It could also help address the challenges around widening participation in the sector among under-represented groups.

Workers who have already achieved the appropriate qualifications to register with the SSSC could benefit from broader professional development

opportunities provided by a flexible skills fund. This could, for example, help address the challenges in the sector around staff retention.

Q4. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to support the expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships?

We would welcome moves to encourage greater understanding and take-up, and therefore expansion, of Foundation Apprenticeships. The Foundation Apprenticeships in Social Services and Healthcare and in Social Services (Children and Young People) have been available since August 2016. We also previously developed the first Higher level apprenticeship in Scotland but this was not pursued at the time due to a lack of funding.

The advantages of Foundation Apprenticeships in providing the apprentice with practical experience and a recognised qualification in a sector at school age should support employers to recruit and retain staff more easily and encourage school leavers to consider social services as a career option. This is crucial for the expansion of the social service workforce.

It is important that these apprenticeships receive stable and sufficient funding and that learners are suitably supported to complete them. As before, we urge that consideration is given to the greater support needs for looked after children and young carers.

Q5. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to help unemployed people move into employment, and to help meet the workforce needs of employers?

Yes. The SSSC carries out a number of projects to help unemployed people into the sector and to help employers recruit suitable workers. These include:

- the [‘A Question of Care’ website](#), which helps prospective care workers assess whether a career in care would be suitable for them
- supporting Ambassadors for Careers in Care, who describe what working in social services is like at careers fairs, job centres, schools and colleges
- partnership work with the Department for Work and Pensions through recruitment campaigns, webinars and engaging with job centre staff
- the Certificate for Work Readiness, a thirteen week course which helps prepare young people for employment
- working with the Care Inspectorate to update the Safer Recruitment through Better Recruitment guidance for social services.

It is vital that registered social service workers have the values appropriate to work with people who use services. Values-based recruitment therefore helps meet the workforce needs of employers in the social service sector. We would welcome the use of Apprenticeship Levy funding to support this aim, including helping unemployed people moving into employment.

Q6. Are there any additional suggestions on how Apprenticeship Levy funding might be used?

There are several ways in which Apprenticeship Levy funding could be used to help expand the social service workforce. For example, it could be used to expand the number and variety of Modern Apprenticeships in the sector. We have also suggested combining the levies paid by Scottish public bodies to help improve the accessibility of Modern Apprenticeships for disadvantaged groups such as care leavers and young carers. This would help achieve better outcomes for these groups and to expand the workforce in high need sectors.

There is currently uncertainty over which activities carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills will be ceased and which will be reallocated. This has implications for the SSSC's existing work, including revision of the National Occupational Standards. Apprenticeship Levy funding could contribute to continue this work.

We have concerns that organisations will be more reluctant to take on apprentices if they do not receive any of the proceeds of the levy fund in return. This could be addressed by deducting current Modern Apprentices from the wage bill before the levy is calculated, or by returning the organisation's contribution if it takes on apprentices.

Scottish Social Services Council
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