

Frequently asked questions – Sector Skills Agreements

Updated May 2008

1. What are Sector Skills Agreements?

Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in partnership with:

- Employers
- Training providers
- Funders of training.

The development of a Sector Skills Agreement for the social services sector was completed in March 2008.

2. What do SSAs aim to achieve?

Sector Skills Agreements aim to ensure that public training resources and funding are directed at the priority skills needs of all sectors. SSAs outline how the SSC and employers will work with providers and funders to secure the necessary supply of training and outline how this goal will be achieved. Agreements aim to be forward looking, evidence based, driven by employers, action focussed and comprehensive.

3. Who do SSAs apply to?

Each SSA is sector specific and developed on a UK-wide basis. Agreements should, however, reflect the needs of each of the four nations of the UK and have solutions which are appropriate to the needs of each of these countries.

4. How is a Sector Skills Agreement developed?

Each SSA has five stages:

Stage 1: A sophisticated assessment is made of each sector to determine short-term, medium-term and long-term skills needs, and to map out the factors for change in the sector.

Stage 2: Current training provision across all levels is reviewed to measure its range, nature and employer relevance.

Stage 3: The main gaps and weaknesses in workforce development are analysed and priorities are agreed.

Stage 4: A review is conducted into the scope for collaborative action – engaging employers to invest in skills development to support improved business performance – and an assessment is made into what employers are likely to sign up to.

Stage 5: The final outcome is an agreement of how the SSC and employer will work with key funding partners to secure the necessary supply of training.

Written reports have been produced as part of stages 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the SSA for the social services sectors. These reports can be accessed from the SSSC website: www.sssc.uk.com

5. Why were Sector Skills Agreements developed?

Sector Skills Agreements were developed after the establishment of sector skills councils in 2003. Sector Skills Agreements are central to the successful achievement of the key goals of Sector Skills Councils, which are:

- To reduce skills gaps and shortages;
- Improve productivity, business and public service performance;
- Increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce;
- Improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and National Occupational Standards (NOS)

6. Who manages and co-ordinates of the work of the SSA?

The SSA process is managed by the sector's skills council. The SSA is developed in partnership with:

- Employers
- Training providers
- Funders of training.

The development of the SSA also involved employers, professional bodies and trade unions.

7. How are the Sector Skills Councils managed?

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) was officially launched in April 2008. UKCES funds and manages the performance and re-licensing of the 25 sector skills councils. For more information visit www.ukces.org.uk

The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils (launched in April 2008) aims to represent and co-ordinate the strategic work of sector skills councils to stakeholders across the four home nations. For more information visit www.sscalliance.org

8. What progress has been made on the SSA for the social services sector?

The development of an SSA for the social services sector began in May 2006. The stage 5 report was completed in March 2008.

The implementation process for the SSA in the Scottish social services sector is underway. Regular updates on the progress of the SSA will be available via the SSSC's ebulletins, newsletters and website.

9. Which sectors are included in the SSA for the social services sector?

Skills for Care and Development is the Sector Skills Council for the social services sector. In Scotland it includes the following sub-sectors:

- Early years and childcare
- Adult residential care
- Housing support
- Residential child care
- Care at home
- Community based social services
- Adult day care

The SSA relates to private, public and voluntary providers in each of the areas listed above.

10. How can I get further information about the SSA?

The reports from Stages 1 – 5 of the SSA process can be downloaded from the Sector Skills Agreement pages on the SSSC's website. The implementation process for the SSA is underway – regular updates will be available via the SSSC's ebulletins, newsletters and website.

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