

## **First Call for Evidence for the Independent Review of Early Learning and Childcare Workforce and Out of school Care Workforce**

This response is from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The SSSC is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and was established by the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. We are responsible for registering people who work in social services, regulating their education and training and the collation and publication of data on the size and nature of the sector's workforce. We are also the Scottish partner in Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Councils for the care sector in the UK.

Our work increases the protection of people who use services by ensuring that the workforce is properly trained, appropriately qualified and effectively regulated. We aim to protect people who use services, raise standards of practice, strengthen and support the professionalism of the workforce and improve the outcomes and experience of people who use social services. The social service workforce provides care and support for some of the most vulnerable people in Scottish society. These workers often deal with complex care needs and make a real difference to individuals' lives. The social service workforce employs more than 192,000 people in Scotland. This figure includes more than 30,000 workers in day care of children or out of school care settings.<sup>1</sup>

Our vision is that our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Our purpose is to raise standards and protect the public through regulation, innovation and continuous improvement in workforce planning and development for the social service workforce.

### **1) What are the key, critical skills, knowledge and experience necessary to achieve high quality learning and care in early years and out of school care?**

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<sup>1</sup> The SSSC publishes an annual report on the size of the social service workforce. The latest report examines the workforce as of 2012 and contains the following figures (in brackets) for the number of workers in these sub-sectors: childcare agencies (400), childminding (5,810), Day care of children (30,630). In addition, the report contains figures for residential childcare (7,170) and school care accommodation (1,200). Further information is contained within the SSSC's Workforce Data report 2012 (SSSC, 2013).

A number of studies have highlighted the need for the early years and out of school care workforce to be equipped with the key qualifications, knowledge, skills mix and training to meet service demand (Education Scotland, 2012; Deacon, 2011). In 2004 The Effective Provision of Pre School Education (EPPE) Project identified that the single factor in determining the quality of early years services is the level of qualification of the manager and the wider workforce.

The Early Years Framework focuses extensively on the importance of investing in this workforce. There are a number of key, critical skills, knowledge and experience required to achieve high quality learning and care. These include:

- **An understanding of child development:** the early years and out of school care workforce requires an extensive understanding of child development to ensure that they understand the expected norms and can identify potential and assets. Staff must have an understanding of additional support needs and the ways that they might include children with additional needs in their services. These workers also play a critical role in detecting risks or issues in children at the earliest stages. The Early Years Framework identifies a number of key priorities including a need to undertake effective cross-working across sectors and to ensure appropriate access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities (Scottish Government, 2008).
- **A familiarity with Getting It Right For Every Child and the SHANARRI indicators:** early years and out of school workers must be able to work with and apply the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and the SHANARRI (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included) indicators.
- **Supporting children to make effective transitions:** workers must be able to support children to make successful transitions such as the move from an early years setting to primary school.
- **Developing Play Skills:** play is at the heart of how children develop and learn. The workforce must have the capacity to facilitate play opportunities. Play is the universal norm for children and occurs across the full range of early years settings and at home. The SSSC supports the Scottish Government on the implementation of the Play Strategy in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014)
- **A 'technology ready' workforce:** early years and out of school care workers require the skills to understand and make the best use of technology. These skills are necessary to support children's learning across a range of activities and particularly relevant where children are using mobile or tablet technology. The SSSC is working with its partners in Skills for Care and Development on a workforce learning strategy to embed electronic assistive technology (eAT) in Social Care, including day care for children (Skills for Care and Development, 2014). We highlight a number of technical resources throughout our response.

The SSSC has a number of roles and functions which help workers to develop the required skills, knowledge and experience:

- **Registering the early years workforce:** Registration is a major part of the drive for higher standards in social services and has been successful in enabling this workforce to experience the parity of esteem enjoyed by other professionals. For example, workers within day care of children services<sup>2</sup> are required to achieve registration within six months of taking up employment. Approximately 30,000 day care of children workers are registered with the SSSC. In addition, approximately 3,000 managers and practitioners in day care of children services are registered with another regulatory body. The numbers of workers with a qualification has risen steadily in recent years. Approximately 55% of the workforce held a relevant qualification in 2005/06. As of 2013/14 approximately 89% hold a relevant qualification while the remaining 11% are working towards achieving a relevant award (SSSC, 2014).

The SSSC has worked closely with a range of stakeholders to support registration by collaborating on the development of a range of qualifications and resources for the early years and childcare workforce. Many of these qualifications are starting to make a difference to the way in which early years and out of school care workers practice and view themselves alongside other professionals involved in the care, learning and development of children.

- **National Occupational Standards and Scottish Vocational Qualifications:** The SSSC works with partners within the UK Sector Skills Councils to develop and revise the National Occupational Standards (NOS). The NOS are the benchmark statements of competence that a worker can be expected to demonstrate at a given level and for a specific activity. They form the basis for key qualifications and are used for a number of purposes such as developing job descriptions. Over 80% of qualifications accessed by the social service workforce are based on the relevant NOS. These awards include Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Professional Development Awards (PDAs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). The Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks in Scotland are based upon the NOS as SVQs.

The NOS are reviewed regularly in consultation with key stakeholders including employers, training providers and people who use services. The NOS were reviewed in 2011/12 and form the basis for new SVQ structures launched in February 2014. The Standards for Childhood Practice were developed as a Scottish Subject Benchmark standard and are based on the appropriate NOS (QAA Scotland, 2007).

The SVQs, Childhood Practice Awards and other qualifications are not restricted to the registered workforce. For example, childminders are increasingly providing support to vulnerable and young children and these awards can play a vital role in supporting their development.

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<sup>2</sup> Day care of children workers within the following categories are required to register with the SSSC: Managers and lead practitioners, practitioners and support workers. Further information about registration is available from the SSSC's website: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/Applying-for-registration/who-can-apply-to-register.html>

## Meeting registration requirements

The SSSC's website contains a list of the qualifications which can be used to meet registration requirements<sup>3</sup>:

- Support workers in day care of children services must obtain an SVQ2 Social Services (Children and Young People) at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 or equivalent qualification from the list on the SSSC's website. Any qualification in the category qualifications for practitioners will also be accepted.
- Practitioners in day care of children services must obtain an SVQ3 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 7 or an equivalent qualification from the list of the SSSC's website.
- Managers or lead practitioners in day care of children services must obtain a childhood practice qualification at SCQF level 9 or hold one of the equivalent qualifications on the SSSC's website.<sup>4</sup>

These awards ensure that workers develop the skills to fully consider the needs of young children and to support their care and wellbeing.

The majority of workers who are not managers in early years services are working at practitioner level. These workers are responsible for caring for and meeting the developmental needs of children as young as six weeks old. The extension to the delivery and hours of free early learning and childcare (particularly for children who are two years old, or have been subject to a kinship care order) will add to the complexity around this role. The SSSC's view is that the SVQ Social Services SCQF Level 7 may be a more natural starting point for support workers. This benchmark award is equivalent to Higher National Certificate or the first (full-time) year of an undergraduate degree. Our data illustrates the rapid improvement in qualification levels over the past decade but there may now be a need to ensure that all support workers attain a minimum benchmark award at SCQF level 7. There is also a need to ensure that funding is available to ensure that support workers can attain the award.

## Childhood Practice

"We believe that Childhood Practice gives us the confidence to do our jobs better, to understand and drive forward Scottish Government policy; Childhood Practice is making a real difference and plays a key role in supporting the implementation of the Early Years Collaborative."

Childhood Practice Graduate, February 2013

The National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce and the Scottish Government's response (2007) highlighted the need to strengthen leadership and improve career opportunities within the sector. The SSSC was asked to develop a degree-level qualification for leaders and managers of early years

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<sup>3</sup> The Website notes that additional qualifications may be acceptable. Workers are invited to contact the SSSC to discuss.

<sup>4</sup> Further information about Childhood Practice is contained later in this response.

services. There is now a suite of awards including the degree, professional development award and the postgraduate diploma. All of these awards are work-based. As of 2014 there are over 1,200 childhood practice graduates in Scotland. The early evidence highlights the difference that this award is making.

**Childhood Practice: Making the difference – Education Scotland report (2012)**

The first major study of Childhood Practice was undertaken by Education Scotland. Their report examined the wider impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years. The report contained a number of comments about Childhood Practice. The report noted:

"Our evidence would suggest that in almost all centres surveyed, staff, who either have the BA Childhood Practice Award or are undertaking the qualification, believe that it is having a significant and positive impact on children's learning. Theoretical studies build very well on staff's practical experience. Staff have a clearer understanding of child development and feel more confident and motivated in delivering the curriculum. We know that staff are using their new knowledge and skills to improve learning for children, for example outdoor learning. They are delivering more child-led learning which promotes deeper and challenging learning experiences."

(Education Scotland, 2012)

## **Childhood Practice: SSSC research (2014)**

We published two reports in summer 2014 which provide further evidence of the extent to which Childhood Practice is making a difference within early years services in Scotland.

**Taking the first steps – is Childhood Practice working?** This research was undertaken on our behalf by the University of Edinburgh and focuses on the unique contribution that childhood practitioners bring to the sector. The study explores way of stimulating further dialogue between childhood practitioners and the wider teams of people involved in the delivery of childhood services.

The 'first steps' study covers a variety of settings including nursery schools, out of school care and family centres. The findings highlight a number of factors which are influenced by the Childhood Practice qualifications. These include an impact on analytical practice and reflexive working; knowledge; status, confidence and employment prospects; and values, social justice and children's rights. The report contains quotes from a number of graduates including this nursery manager:

"I did the Childhood Practice degree through interest rather than necessity. I learnt how to better work with Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), children's rights and play. I especially did a lot more reading on play which was my main interest. I was able to link research theory and practice across the board and I am now much more aware of the impact of theory on practice. I have improved policies in the nursery class and changed classroom practice too".

(SSSC, 2014)

### **Knowledge, Confidence and Leadership: Childhood Practice in Action**

We have published a report which examines the achievements of the early years and childcare workforce since 2007. The report notes that Scotland is viewed as an international leader in the field of early years and education due to the Childhood Practice award. The SSSC has been invited to promote the Childhood Practice award at a series of conferences in Europe and North America (SSSC, 2014).

### **Childhood Practice: feedback from Graduates (2013)**

We held a series of focus groups for Childhood Practice graduates in February 2013. These events provided an opportunity to showcase the BA Childhood Practice. We heard a number of very positive comments from graduates. A sample of their comments follows:

- "As Childhood Practitioners we are skilled and knowledgeable advocates for children's rights, from pre-birth onwards. Childhood Practice enables us to truly listen to the voices of even the youngest in our society and to make changes in service delivery as a result"
- "Evidence-based practice means that our opinions are well-informed, listened to and respected; Childhood Practice has given us the confidence to speak up amongst other professionals. Childhood Practice supports the GIRFEC principles encouraging multi-agency and partnership working"
- "Childhood Practice gives us the personal and professional autonomy to shape the services we work in to meet the needs of children and young people in Scotland"
- "We believe that Childhood Practice promotes professionalism in a sector which has not previously been seen as a profession in its own right. Childhood Practice is helping to raise the profile of the whole of the children's workforce; from early years to playwork. The opportunity to develop professionally is engaging the minds of the workforce".

### **Assessing learning**

The SSSC works in a number of ways to ensure the quality of assessed learning. This process includes working with awarding bodies through the establishment of the Scottish Awarding Body Forum. This forum provides partner organisations with opportunities to develop and maintain processes for the quality and integrity of qualifications. One example is the recently introduced requirement for assessors of vocational qualifications to hold a relevant practice qualification.

### **2) How best to support staff who are undertaking different levels of qualifications including the higher level qualifications such as teacher training, early years specialism, and the BA Childhood Practice Award or similar?**

There are a number of established measures which support workers undertaking qualifications. There are a number of other activities which can also support these staff. We highlight a number of examples throughout our response.

### **A workforce prepared to undertake degree level qualifications**

There are a range of work-based qualifications and awards in this sector. Undertaking qualifications can – particularly for new workers – feel like a daunting task. We have developed an online resource which contains practical

guidance on staff induction. The 'Preparing for Practice' resource is available from our Workforce Solutions portal.<sup>5</sup>

A commitment to learning and development is a key part of preparation for a degree level qualification. Approximately 54% of respondents to a recent SSSC survey held at least one qualification at SCQF levels 6 – 10 prior to undertaking the Childhood Practice award. More than 44% of these graduates held an SVQ Level 4 qualification before studying for this Award (SSSC, 2014). These figures demonstrate the high commitment that these professionals are showing towards learning and development. These figures may also account for the high percentage of graduates successfully completing the Childhood Practice award.

The format and delivery of the Childhood Practice award has played a key role in helping the workforce to access relevant qualifications. The award is a multi-option, flexible course with mentoring support. These delivery options have helped to remove some of the barriers associated with a 'traditional' degree. The work-based nature of this award has also helped many workers to establish a direct link between their learning and their role within the workplace. Many of these benefits are directly applicable to vocational education as a whole. The 'situated learning' approach supports workers to undertake a range of qualifications. For example, we are developing a number of resources – such as a 'virtual nursery' – which complement this approach. We return to this subject in our comments on the use of technology.<sup>6</sup>

These examples highlight the articulation routes that workers can use to develop their career within the early years sector.

### **Mentoring and professional dialogue**

Mentoring and professional dialogue can support staff to undertake qualifications. For example, there is a mentoring model which supports childhood practice students. Student evaluation shows that mentoring is making a difference. A number of students have indicated that they may not have completed the course without access to ongoing guidance and support. Mentoring, sharing information and professional dialogue was identified as a key theme within Education Scotland's report examining the impact of staff qualifications in early years:

"Most members of staff with the qualification (or studying for it) share their new knowledge with colleagues. This takes different forms, such as training, sharing good practice, professional dialogue and mentoring. It encourages staff to become more reflective of their practice which improves children's learning. Most staff who have gained the BA believe that, while it is very hard work, it has been an excellent CPD opportunity"

(Education Scotland, 2012)

Qualifications can help to develop a new generation of mentors. Approximately 79% of respondents to a recent study indicated that the Childhood Practice Award had influenced their ability to enable colleagues' professional

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<sup>5</sup> <http://workforcesolutions.sssc.uk.com/>

<sup>6</sup> These comments are included towards the end of our response to question 2.



development, support and mentoring (SSSC, 2014). We see evidence of many workers – particularly practitioners – developing their confidence and taking a lead role in their own professional development.

### **A workforce and sector aware of its workforce development responsibilities**

Employers and employees have a number of responsibilities around workforce development and continuous professional development. These responsibilities are set out in the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers. The Codes of Practice for Social Services Workers and Employers mirrors the joint responsibilities of employers and workers in ensuring high standards. The Codes are a key part of regulation of the social services sector within Scotland:

- The Code of Practice for Employers of Social Services Workers reinforces the requirement for employers to provide training and development opportunities to enable workers to meet their Code of Practice. Employers have responsibility in relation to the provision of relevant education and training.
- The Code of Practice for Social Services Workers highlights the requirement for employees to demonstrate professionalism in all that they do, including being accountable for the quality of their work, taking responsibility for maintaining or improving their knowledge and skills, acting in the best interests of service users and demonstrating the principle of humanity on a day to day basis.

(SSSC, 2009)

### **Inter-professional learning**

Inter-professional learning can help learners to get the best out of their education. A number of Childhood Practice courses include units that span across teacher training and Childhood Practice.

### **Access to funding for workforce development**

Significant numbers of staff are undertaking relevant qualifications. There are approximately 1,000 new early year apprentices each year. There have been more than 1,200 Childhood Practice graduates since 2008. There is a key challenge around ensuring the availability of funding to support more workers to undertake these awards. There are a number of anomalies or barriers which can hinder this progress. For example, a worker can access some forms of funding for a Higher National Certificate (SCQF level 7) but cannot access equivalent funding for an SVQ award at SCQF level 7.

One of the key challenges for many employers can be in relation to accessing funding for Modern Apprenticeships (MAs). The increasing availability of MAs (particularly for employees aged 20 to 24) is warmly welcomed. Key challenges remain in relation to accessing funding for workers aged 25 years or over. These restrictions can have an impact on the ability of employers to recruit and develop staff. It is clear that many employers are unable to access funding for the new Technical Apprenticeship in Childhood Practice. Many workers are

unable to undertake this role until they are at least 25 years of age. As a consequence they cannot access MA funding.

In addition we are seeing a drop in the levels of funding for some awards. For example, the 16-19 age range for the Modern Apprenticeships in Social Services (Children and Young People) has recently seen a reduction in the available funding. For 2013/14 the level of funding was £6,500 per candidate. This will be reduced to £6,000 in 2014/15.

Further funding for workers aged 25 years or over would support the sector to recruit more males or 'career changers'. The need to improve the gender balance within childcare is identified as one of the key priorities by the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, 2014).

The challenges around access to funding may become increasingly relevant over the next few years as there are a number of key challenges for the workforce in this sector:

- A number of workers must attain relevant qualifications as part of their registration with the SSSC
- Workers must meet Post Registration Training and Learning requirements
- There may be a number of workforce implications arising from the extension to the flexibility and funded hours of early learning and childcare
- The White Paper on Scotland's Future contains proposals to further extend the number of hours of free early years and childcare. The paper also refers to the implications for regulation, inspection and quality:

"This extension in the provision of early learning and childcare will be achieved in a way that is affordable and sustainable. It will include investment in training and require a substantial increase in the workforce. We estimate that it will create around 35,000 new jobs. The additional investment will also cover regulation, inspection and quality through Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council".

(Scottish Government, 2013)

## **Role of technology**

Technology plays a key role in supporting workforce development. The SSSC has developed a number of resources to support employers and employees.

- We have developed an online guide and workbook which supports workers to focus on the core skills requirements within the Modern Apprenticeships in Social Services (Children and Young People)
- We are developing a range of new online resources which will help workers to develop and use their skills. These resources include a 'virtual nursery' which will allow prospective and current workers to test their knowledge within a number of scenarios. Staff will be able to learn about the impact of their decisions in a safe and controlled environment.

- Motivation is a key part of helping staff to complete qualifications. We will be introducing a new career long development framework for the whole of the social services sector in 2015. We have developed a career development toolkit which can help workers to make informed choices and decisions about their learning and development. We have also developed an online learning plan framework. These resources highlight the experiences of a number of staff working in nurseries or as childminders.

These resources are available from our Workforce Solutions portal.<sup>7</sup>

Technology can help staff to contextualise learning and refine their skills in real world situations. Technology can also substantially reduce the costs of training and can be accessible in rural areas. Employers are informing us of the ways they are using these resources to support staff and promote workforce development. These resources help employers to ensure that their time and training budgets are focused on staff who are undertaking a range of qualifications.

### **Career long learning strategy**

The SSSC is committed to introducing a career long learning strategy by April 2015. We provide more information on our work around career development throughout our response.

### **3) How to provide opportunities for training and up-skilling the teaching workforce in specific early years pedagogy to help improve the delivery of quality experiences for children?**

The Education Scotland report notes that there are some schools where head teachers have little or no experience of managing pre-school education or leading staff in early years methodology.

"A small number of managers and/or owners of private establishments in partnership with the local authority employ teachers who may not necessarily have relevant early years experience. We found that in these situations the impact on children's experiences was limited".

(Education Scotland, 2012).

The recent review of the Childhood Practice award highlights the need for teachers to develop additional knowledge around early years and early years pedagogical approaches to learning. There are a number of actions which could be taken to up-skill this workforce.

- It would be possible to provide elements of the Childhood Practice awards within teacher training. For example, the training could include a focus on children's rights.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://workforcesolutions.sssc.uk.com/>

- It may be possible to find ways of utilising the knowledge, skills and new found confidence of the Childhood Practice graduates to support the career-long development of teachers.
- There are a relatively small number of managers of day care of children's services who register with a regulatory body other than the SSSC. There may be a need to explore the extent to which these workers have received access to Childhood Practice-related training.

Any moves in this direction will help to enhance the post-qualifying options for teachers and to improve multi-agency performance.

#### **4) How to up-skill the whole workforce in early childhood pedagogy through relevant continuing professional development to help in the delivery of quality experiences for children?**

Registered workers must comply with Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements (PRTL). These requirements ensure their continued suitability for registration with the SSSC. Registered day care of children workers must undertake 10 days or 60 hours of PRTL within their five year registration period. Registrants are responsible for meeting their PRTL requirements.<sup>8</sup>

The SSSC works closely with a number of stakeholders including the Care Inspectorate, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and employers to address key skills issues. Our online resources can support continuous professional development. In addition to the resources identified earlier<sup>9</sup> we are creating a number of self-study resources for learners. These initiatives cover a range of topics such as engaging with children and a multi-agency practice simulation. A new multi-agency practice simulation will support workers to operate effectively in a multi-professional environment. This resource will support workers to develop a greater understanding of the role of professionals from other disciplines such as social work, health visitors, education and speech and language therapists.

National Occupational Standards and SVQs help workers to undertake continuous professional development (CPD). We have developed a number of Skills Sets which support CPD. These Skills Sets are a series of guidance documents developed in conjunction with employer representatives, the Scottish Centres for Excellence and the awarding bodies Scottish Qualifications Authority (Care Scotland) and City & Guilds Scotland to assist employers, assessors and candidates to identify the Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) units and underpinning knowledge which is most relevant for particular areas of practice in social services in Scotland. They are intended to guide employers, assessors, training providers and candidates in choosing units to work on which will extend the practice skills and/or knowledge and understanding of social service workers in specified service areas. The skill sets can support workers to develop their

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<sup>8</sup> Detailed information about PRTL is available from the SSSC's website <http://www.sssc.uk.com/Already-registered/post-registration-training-and-learning-for-the-childrens-workforce.html>

<sup>9</sup> See our answer to question 3.

skills in a number of areas such as working with children with specific language needs, working with families and supporting children through transitions.

### **5) Is there scope for any further activity or support for the workforce to increase skills of those working with young children at all levels?**

A key part of this challenge is about supporting the development of a flexible workforce. The recent introduction of SVQs in Social Services and Healthcare and Social Services (Children and Young People) allow people to move within and across practice areas without the need to replicate learning. These qualifications support the development of a flexible workforce. Merging SVQ qualifications at level 3 and 4 will afford employers and the workforce greater transferability and flexibility across the children and young people sector.

The National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce and the Scottish Government's response (2007) highlighted the need for an integrated professional development and qualifications framework (Scottish Executive, 2006; Scottish Executive, 2007). This has now been achieved and provides greater opportunities and choices for workers to progress their career with greater mobility and employability. Workers will also more transferable skills. The recent changes to the structure of SVQs have expanded opportunities for experience and learning. Learners can now access knowledge from a range of areas previously covered by other awards. These areas include services for Looked After children and foster care. The SSSC works with the sector to make sure that the qualifications are of the highest quality and adequately prepares the sector for the complex roles and responsibilities around working with children.

The Childhood Practice section within the SSSC's Workforce Solutions Portal contains a wealth of information which can support the workforce to develop their pedagogical skills. The portal contains two practice simulations which can help workers to acquire and apply their knowledge and skills as they work towards completing the award. The practice simulations are ideally used as part of a structured programme of learning. The Portal also contains a research archive by practitioners on the BA in Childhood Practice.

### **6) How to increase the status of the early years workforce as a profession?**

There are a number of ways in which we can continue to increase the status of the early years workforce, including:

#### **Continuing to dispel the childcare workforce myths**

This challenge was a key theme within the Early Years Framework document and the recent report by the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce:

"As well as highlighting the importance of common values across the early years workforce, it is important to increase the status of the workforce and the value

we place on it. In order to provide the quality of services we want for children and families we must invest in the workforce delivering those services. A career in early years must be attractive to every potential recruit, dispelling the myth that it is 'low skilled, low paid, women's work'."

(Scottish Government, 2008)

"There have been some improvements in gender balance over the years in a number of areas such as the legal and accountancy professions, but for example we still have only 3% females into engineering Modern Apprenticeships and only 3% males into Modern Apprenticeships in children's care."

(Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, 2014)

The need to increase the status of the early years workforce as a profession has been long-established. Substantial progress has been made in the past decade. The sector is now a degree-led profession. The proportion of managers, practitioners and support workers with a relevant qualification has increased rapidly in recent years. Our evidence indicates that many early years workers are quick to register with the SSSC as they welcome the opportunity to identify their role and work towards attaining the relevant qualifications.

Graduates have told us that the Childhood Practice award promotes professionalism in a sector which has not previously been seen as a profession in its own right. Childhood Practice has a vital role to play in raising the profile of the children's workforce, from early years to playwork. We have already mentioned the invitations that we've received to promote the award in Europe and North America.

A wage commensurate with the knowledge and skills required is a vital part of promoting the status of this profession. There are a number of complex factors which play a role in determining wage levels in childcare. We note the discussions about commissioning and fee levels during the passage of the Children and Young Bill (Education and Culture Committee, 2013). We have also noted a number of discussions about the appropriateness of zero hours contracts within this sector.

Our workforce data confirms that a substantial proportion of the childcare workforce is employed by the private and voluntary sector (SSSC, 2013). A number of these workers may be paid a rate that is below the living wage. We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to promote the living wage and the forthcoming accreditation scheme for the private and voluntary sector. We also note the recent recommendations by the Low Pay Commission around the need to increase the level of the National Minimum Wage. We are working with COSLA, Scottish Government and other stakeholders on a project which aims to work towards a minimum of the living wage for all adult care workers. We need to ensure that similar work is underway in the early years and out of school care sector. Ultimately we need to ensure that the professional early years and out of school care workforce is receiving a professional wage. The pay disparities within the public, private and voluntary sectors also need to be tackled.

We have worked closely with employers to update the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Commissioning, Procurement and Contracting in Care Services in Scotland.

We need to continue the drive towards a diverse workforce which better reflects the Scottish population. The vast majority of the early years workforce is female. We know that there is a need for more positive male role models within this sector. There have been a number of initiatives which have sought to address this balance such 'All about men'<sup>10</sup> and Kibble's 'Men Can Care' projects (Smith et al, 2008). A need to promote wider diversity in relation to career options is also a key challenge for this sector (Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, 2014). We have noted that there is a need to ensure that funding is available to allow older workers and 'career changers' to access training in this sector. We need to continue recruiting the people with the rights skills and competencies to work in early years. We explore these areas further in our answer to question seven.

We have to dispel any misconceptions about the early years workforce. Studies by the SSSC, Education Scotland and others illustrate the vital work undertaken by these workers. These reports reinforce the point that an absence of a teacher does not necessarily lead to a compromise in service quality. In some cases the reverse may be the case. We have already noted (in our response to question 3) the evidence from Education Scotland which focuses on situations where teachers do not have relevant early years experience.

There is a clear need to continue promoting the vital and complementary role of the early years workforce in the delivery of children's services. An integrated career structure is also a vital part of any professionalised sector. We have noted a number of examples of our work in relation to career development through this response. This sector contains an emerging profession and comparisons with the teaching workforce are hindered as a result. The reports by Education Scotland and the University of Edinburgh provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of Childhood Practice and registration as means of increasing skills and improving the quality of services to children.

The profile of this sector will be increased if we continue to invest in childcare. The Early Years Collaborative sums up the overriding ambition in one sentence:

"To make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up for all babies, children, mothers, fathers and families."<sup>11</sup>

The Scottish Government's Economic Strategy highlights the national benefits associated with childcare investment (Scottish Government, 2011). We welcome ongoing commitments to improve the flexibility of childcare and the emphasis on regulation and improvement. We need to ensure that funding is available to meet ongoing demand for workforce development. There are approximately

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<sup>10</sup>SSSC News, 7 July 2014: Redressing the balance in childcare:

<http://ssscnews.uk.com/2014/07/redressing-balance-childcare/>

<sup>11</sup> Early Years Collaborative website (accessed February 2014):

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/early-years-collaborative>

1,000 new childcare apprentices each year in Scotland (SSSC, 2014). We need to be prepared for a potential increase in the numbers of workers employed by the sector as outlined in the Scottish Government's recent white paper (Scottish Government, 2013).

## **7) How to increase levels of recruitment and retention of the best candidates to build careers within early learning and childcare, to grow a high quality workforce in future?**

We have addressed many of these points in our answer to question six. The need for the workforce to have secure employment and to receive appropriate terms and conditions is a vital part of this agenda.

We have also identified the importance of a clear career structure. We have to prepare people for the complex challenges that they'll face in this role. We need to attract people with graduate abilities and help them to achieve the relevant qualifications. Resources such as the Continuous Learning Framework can help employers to ensure that they are recruiting staff against the key functions that they will be required to undertake (SSSC; IRISS, 2008).

Workers in early years are attracted to the sector for a number of reasons. They may come straight from school or may have held previous voluntary roles. They may be 'career changers' or may have developed an interest in the sector after becoming a parent. We have developed a number of resources which can help employers to recruit the right candidates. We have identified a number of resources throughout our response. Additional resources include:

- **A Question of Care:** We have developed<sup>12</sup> a new online resource to support applicants who are considering a career in care. 'A Question of Care'<sup>13</sup> contains an interactive video challenge and provides candidates with a detailed personal profile. The profile will help people to understand whether a career in this sector is right for them.
- **Certificate of Work Readiness (CWR):** the CWR is designed to support young people who are ready for work but may require some guided support. The CWR allows employers to assess 'real life' work placements and provides meaningful qualifications that employers can recognise and trust. The CWR can help workers to combine enthusiasm and underpinning knowledge. Our website contains a case study which illustrates the way that one Dumfries-based nursery has benefited from the CWR<sup>14</sup>

The ongoing development of a sector with a clear sense of professional identity and a regulated workforce will play a key part in helping to recruit and retain the right candidates. The early years workforce plays a vital role in the positive

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<sup>12</sup> In collaboration with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and Skills for Care and Development (The UK-wide Sector Skills Council for the Care sector)

<sup>13</sup> A question of care: <http://www.aquestionofcare.org.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> SSSC News, Certificate of Work Readiness:  
<http://ssscnews.uk.com/2014/05/certificate-work-readiness-cwr/>



development of our children and will spend more time developing these individuals than many other professions. We need to continue promoting the vital role undertaken by these workers.

**8) How can staff, including heads and managers (teachers and childhood practitioners), with different skills, training and qualifications best be deployed to ensure a high quality provision for young children?**

Our response has already noted the importance of a good skill mix. Some settings will have a registered teacher and a member of staff with the Childhood Practice qualification. The evidence shows that this skills mix provides high quality experiences for young children (Education Scotland, 2012). The best experiences for children are located in services where there is a range of staff with complementary skills and higher-level qualifications.

There are a number of examples of this approach throughout Scotland. For example, there are a number of local authorities where early years Heads, Deputies and Senior Childhood Educators have undertaken additional qualifications beyond their pre-service training. One such project has achieved a Care Accolade.<sup>15</sup> There is a need to continue promoting these positive stories.

**9) Is the existing training for all those working within the early years workforce and the out of school care workforce equipping them with the skills and knowledge to provide high quality early learning experiences for young children?**

We have already noted that we regularly review the National Occupational Standards (NOS) to ensure that they meet the needs of employers. The NOS form the basis of SVQs. We have recently revised the SVQs and the Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Early Education and Childcare. The revised awards place a greater emphasis on working with young children and pre-birth development.

The Scottish Government's 'Common Core' document describes "the skills, knowledge, and understanding, and values that everyone should have if they work with children, young people and their families, whether they are paid or unpaid. The skills, knowledge and understanding are described as "essential characteristics" and are set out in two contexts; relationships with children, young people and families and relationships between workers" (Scottish Government, 2012). Our awards are aligned with this approach.

We meet regularly with stakeholders to identify key workforce development priorities for employers. In recent times we have held discussions with stakeholders about a number of pressing priorities such as domestic abuse and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). We have worked with these organisations to ensure that our qualifications reflect these concerns. Supporting parents with

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<sup>15</sup> Care Accolades, Childhood Practice – Raising the bar!  
<http://www.sssccareacolades.uk.com/?portfolio=childhood-practice-raising-the-bar>

mental health issues has also been identified as a key priority and we have made a number of revisions to the NOS in this area. The SVQ and the HNC have been strengthened in a number of areas such as reflective practice and communication. These examples illustrate our formal and informal engagement with stakeholders. We aim to ensure that we equip staff to provide high quality early learning experiences for young children.

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 provides that the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is responsible for the promotion of high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers and that high standards in their education and training are maintained. For example, course providers are required to seek approval from the SSSC prior to offering specialist training for social services workers in Scotland. Further information about the SSSC's quality assurance and enhancement role is available from our website.<sup>16</sup>

Scottish Social Services Council  
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<sup>16</sup> SSSC, Quality Assurance of social services qualifications,  
<http://www.sssc.uk.com/Learning/quality-assurance-of-social-service-qualifications.html>

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