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# Learning Strategy Progress Update

# Learning Strategy Progress Update 2024-2025

Our [Learning Strategy 2024-2027](#) brings together all our activity across our learning and development responsibilities, outlining our approach to providing workers, employers and others with learning support which contributes to us meeting our strategic objectives.

‘This strategy was shaped by feedback from a range of stakeholders gathered in the course of our learning and engagement activity through user insights...’

The Learning Strategy priorities were informed by our internal intelligence. This strategy was shaped by feedback from a range of stakeholders gathered in the course of our learning and engagement activity through user insights research, service design sessions, consultation responses, analysis of the usage of our learning resources and tools, stakeholder surveys and feedback from registrant surveys. Our learning and development activity contributes to the implementation of the workforce development commitments within national policy, strategies and legislation.

This report provides a summary of progress since our 2023/24 progress report, highlighting what we’ve achieved over the past year in our four priority areas, what is still in progress and what will continue to meet the objectives of the [Learning Strategy 2024-2027](#).

# The four priority areas

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# 01

## A qualified workforce



— We have established a Qualifying the Workforce Group with key national partners to identify activities to support the workforce to achieve qualifications required for registration.

The percentage of the registered workforce who are qualified has increased from 52.25% in October 2024 to 57.7% in October 2025. We have carried out a survey with SVQ candidates to identify barriers to achieving qualifications. We are using the survey findings to remove these barriers as far as possible.

### Workforce supply and demand data



- We have continued our core programme of workforce intelligence activity to support national and local workforce planning. This includes publication of the 2024 Workforce Data Report, which provides updated workforce figures and trend analysis across adult social care, children and young people services and social work. The report reflects ongoing changes in workforce size, distribution and service types and builds on the reporting format established in previous years.
- We maintained and incrementally expanded our published datasets, including updates to equality and diversity data and workforce movements and supported ongoing work through the Social Care Data and Intelligence Programme Board (SCDIPB) Workforce Data Workstream to explore options for a more consistent minimum dataset across social care and social work. This work is at an early stage and has focused on scoping user needs and reviewing existing data collections.
- We have also taken forward preparatory work to redevelop the SSSC data website, focused on improving usability, accessibility and integration with existing data tools. This work is still in progress and has primarily involved procurement, technical specification and early planning rather than build or implementation activity. We're due to complete this in 2026.

# 01

## Promote qualification pathways and funding opportunities available



- We continue to promote qualification pathways and funding opportunities to all parts of the sector on our website and other communications and plan to include this information on the Social Care Career Options Tool (SCCOT). We continue to administer and promote funding for social work students through our postgraduate bursary and hardship funding opportunities. In 2024 we introduced the Practice Learning Support Grant (PLSG) for all eligible social work students to provide them with financial support while on practice placement. We also administer the Voluntary Sector Development Fund (VSDF) on behalf of the Scottish Government to support staff in the voluntary sector to gain the qualifications necessary for SSSC registration or implementation activity. We're due to complete this in 2026.

## Recognition of prior learning (RPL)



- We are working with SQA to support the use of RPL within SVQs. This includes mapping the National Induction Framework and other learning resources to the National Occupational Standards which learners can use to evidence meeting the standards.

## Supporting the workforce to achieve qualifications



- We've used our data on the qualification status of the workforce and data from a survey of learners to identify barriers to achieving qualifications. This identified a number of actions we are taking forward to support registrants to achieve qualifications, including highlighting the use of RPL, promoting different approaches to assessment of SVQs and sharing learners' experiences.

# 01

## Development of new qualifications and review of current awards



- We continue to promote the new Integrated Health and Social Care award.
- We are working closely with key stakeholders on the review of SVQs in social services and healthcare and children and young people at levels 6, 7 and 9. We are carrying out a consultation on the proposed changes to the structure of the awards in January 2026. We'll complete the review in January 2027 and the revised qualifications will be available for delivery from March 2027.

## Review of the National Occupational Standards



- We completed a review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for health and social care and childcare, learning and development. We worked closely with our stakeholders and our UK partners to ensure that the revised NOS are relevant, current and reflect new skills demands in the sector.

## Publish an updated Workforce Skills Report



- We published the latest Workforce Skills Report 2025 in March which provides an overview of the qualification landscape across adult social care, children's residential care and early years services, assessing how current provision aligns with the qualification requirements for SSSC registration. It brings together evidence on workforce demand, the availability and use of key qualification pathways and the factors that influence whether workers are able to undertake and complete awards. This analysis supports national and local planning by giving a clearer picture of future qualification needs and the conditions that shape participation in learning across the sector. We will publish another report in 2026.

# 02

## Pre and post-qualifying social work education

— We have undertaken the following activities to improve pre and post-qualifying social work education.



- We implemented the mandatory Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) supported first year in practice and are now evaluating the approach and associated CPL requirements with a view to adapting these where appropriate.
- We continue to work with partners, including the Scottish Social Work Partnership and the National Social Work Agency to embed and further develop the supported first year in practice to enhance NQSWs' transition to – and retention in – the workforce.
- In August 2024 we implemented the Practice Learning Support Grant (PLSG) and continue to develop and streamline our digital systems to improve the processes for disbursement of funding relating to social work education including bursaries and practice learning fees. These improvements will help us to provide better customer service and generate more accurate and detailed data and intelligence to identify trends, inform national workforce planning and will allow us to monitor numbers of students, location, type and numbers of practice learning opportunities and numbers of newly qualifying social workers.
- We are currently revising the Framework for Social Work Education and will republish this in March 2026 with the introduction of post-qualifying standards for social work education and included of the recently revised Standards in Social Work Education. We've ensured that learning about trauma is enshrined in the framework.

# 02



- We worked with partners in Skills Development Scotland and others to develop a framework for the Graduate Apprenticeship in Social Work. We've approved the first programme and are working with colleagues in the university sector both to support this programme and to develop others across Scotland.
- We continue to develop and strengthen our quality assurance processes and have identified a number of improvement workstreams for 2026.
- We will start the review of the Rules and Standards in relation to Childhood Practice, Mental Health Officers and Practice Learning (Social Services) in 2026/27.
- We are working closely with colleagues from the Scottish Social Work Partnership to deliver and develop their priorities including the Local Learning Partnerships (LLPs).

# 03

## Career opportunities



— We carried out a range of work to enhance career pathways within social work, social care and the children and young people workforce.



- We expanded our career resources, including development of the Social Care Career Options Tool (SCCOT) and regular updates to the Careers in Care website, ensuring clearer information on roles, required qualifications and routes into the workforce. We are exploring extending the SCCOT to include live job links and early learning and childcare (ELC) roles too.
- Through the Careers and Employability Group, which we chair, we strengthened collaboration across Department of Work and Pensions, Scottish Care, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) (now part of Public Services Delivery Scotland), public health and local authorities, focusing on alternative employment routes, employability pathways and targeted support for young people entering the sector. We also increased the visibility of positive workforce stories and progression routes, linking workforce data insight with careers messaging and supporting national recruitment campaigns such as #NoWrongPath.
- We launched the National Induction Framework (NIF) for adult social care in April 2025 with our partners in NES and have monitored and promoted it. Employers using the NIF report that it is a positive experience and appreciate the clear learning progression.
- We reviewed guidance for employers for 16–17-year-olds and have worked closely with partners to enhance the international recruitment guidance in light of UK Government decisions about work visas.

# 04

## Continuous professional learning (CPL)



In June 2024 we introduced a new model of CPL to support the workforce to develop the key knowledge and skills required for their role. We also developed a CPL website to support implementation and understanding of the new model.



- We're developing the SSSC Learning Zone to host a new and improved CPL resource. Stakeholder feedback has guided the changes, ensuring our registrants and their employers have clear information about CPL requirements and the steps they need to take to meet them. The updated site will also direct users to relevant learning resources provided by the SSSC and key national partners to support their roles and ongoing career development. We'll launch the new CPL resource in April 2026.
- Data collected from registrants' annual declarations shows the registered workforce understand the new CPL requirements and are completing CPL each year. This data also shows that an increasing number of registrants are using our resources to achieve CPL. Almost 50% of the registered workforce are using our resources and almost 90% have reported positively on the resources. We will continue to analyse this data to identify gaps in learning resources.

## Future focus

Our [Learning Strategy 2024-27](#) sets out our priorities which align with our [Strategic Plan 2026-2029](#). We continue to respond to rapidly changing circumstances in the sector, particularly in respect of the significant recruitment and retention challenges the sector face.



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