

Impact Assessment

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Question	SSSC approach
A1. Name of piece of work	Expanding the Register to Social Work Assistants
A2. Brief description of work, including purpose and summary of aims.	In 2023, the Scottish Government asked us to carry out scoping work in relation to expanding the Register to other groups of workers. We submitted a report with recommendations, which the government approved for formal consultation. The consultation opened in January 2025, for a ten-week period, closing on 9 April 2025. The “Expanding the Register” consultation outlined proposals to extend the SSSC Register to the following Groups: • Adult Day Care Service (support worker, practitioner and supervisor) • Offender (now Justice) Accommodation Service (practitioner, supervisor and manager) • Social Work Assistants. The consultation gathered views on: • registering each new group • job role and functions • qualification requirements • fee levels • Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) requirements.

	The consultation reported high levels of agreement for all the proposals across Adult Day Care Services and Justice Accommodation Services. While there was still strong support for registering Social Work Assistants, views on the proposed job role and function for this group were mixed. In May 2025, the SSSC Council met to discuss the consultation findings and agree recommendations to Scottish Government. At this time, the SSSC Council approved the job role and function descriptors (excluding social work assistants), qualification requirements, CPL requirements and fee levels for the proposed new groups, as set out in the report, for submission to Scottish Government should they decide to expand the Register. The SSSC Council agreed that if Ministers decide to register social work assistants, further refinement of their job role and function will be required. You can access a summary of the consultation findings here – Council Meeting of 22 May 2025. Since May 2025, we have engaged with key stakeholders to revise the job role and function for social assistants and gather further information on the implications of this for the sector. Key stakeholders included: Social Work Scotland (SWS), Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO), UNISON, COSLA, The Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW), and the Care Inspectorate (CI). As this next stage of the project has focused exclusively on social work assistants, this impact assessment relates to social work assistants only.
A3. How does the work link to our Strategic Plan 2026-2029? Choose one strategic theme. If helpful provide more information in A2.	Trusted
A4. Responsible department for this work	Qualifications and Standards
A5. Date of last Assessment or policy review (if relevant)	Impact Assessment: Expanding the Register to New Groups (January 2025)

A6. Have you completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment? If yes, please list the title and sign-off date.	Not required

SECTION B: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section B of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
B1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to equality groups? Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?	Expanding the Register to include social work assistants (SWAs) would bring SWAs in line with other workers in the sector carrying out similar roles/tasks within social work, social care and the children and young people workforce. The formal Expanding the Register consultation opened on 30 January 2025, for a 10-week period, closing on 09 April 2025. The consultation included a question around what impact expanding the register will have on equality related issues and this impact assessment includes consultation responses to this question. Section A2 provides a summary of the overall consultation response. We believe registration brings an assurance to individuals that those working with them are properly qualified, skilled and follow the SSSC Codes of Practice which set the standards for this workforce. We believe registration of SWAs will meet our equality duties by advancing equality of opportunity across the social work, social care and early years sectors in Scotland. Setting the qualification requirements at a level that accurately reflects the role of SWA will assist in demonstrating: the complexity of this role;

that the workforce is highly skilled; and help to support the professional identity of the role. This may assist in national discussions regarding Fair Work.

We understand, and have identified, that there will be some negative effects for the workforce however we do not believe these negative effects will be substantial and we have outlined the actions we are taking to support the workforce. For example, registrants will be required to pay a fee to join the register. We recognise that any fee requirement may have a greater proportionate impact on lower paid workers. We know from our registration data and workforce data that many of our registrants will be in lower paid roles.

SWAs will also be required to meet qualification requirements. We are aware of concerns that if qualification requirements are too onerous people may be discouraged from entering the workforce or decide to leave the social services workforce. However, through our scoping work we are aware that many workers already hold relevant qualifications.

The proposed qualifications for SWAs are the SSSCs recognised benchmark qualifications. However, we will follow a similar approach to other groups already on the Register and will also accept other qualifications which have been assessed as equivalent to these benchmark qualifications. It is likely that the potential negative effects of achieving the proposed qualification requirement is mitigated by these factors; workers already holding proposed benchmark qualifications and/or qualifications assessed as equivalent to these.

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our varied roles, being a public body, regulator and an employer. We also 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. Expanding the Register to include SWAs will assist the SSSC's work to support these priorities.

B2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on equality groups did you use to support your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data? Examples could include data on SSSC employees: Mainstreaming Report, Data Annex, 2025 or the social work, social care and children and young people workforce: workforce data website. Population data is available from the Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Finder and National Records of Scotland website.	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. Our Equality Register Report, published in November 2024, holds key information on our registrants and their protected characteristics data. We use registrant data to inform our understanding of the Register and to examine how we can ensure our processes do not impose or otherwise disadvantage people with protected characteristics. We also use workforce data which we gather and publish in our role as an Official and National Statistics provider. Any reference to data in this assessment is taken from our most recent Workforce Data Report published in September 2025. Our workforce data includes all those registered with the SSSC as well as those who are working in social services and are not required to register with us. There are differences between our registration and workforce data which you can find out more about here. As part of this assessment, we also use the feedback from our initial engagement activities with the sector, as part of our scoping work, which took place between March and November 2023. At this time, we engaged with stakeholders in lots of ways including in person meetings, focus groups and written feedback. We also use the evidence we gathered throughout the formal consultation to inform our understanding of how issues around expanding the Register to new groups are experienced by workers in these new groups and employers as well as the wider social work, social care and children and young people workforce. The formal consultation included an online survey as well as online focus groups for each proposed new Register group. We have included the feedback from further engagement with key stakeholder regarding SWAs to inform our understanding and assessment.
B3: Assessing impact and taking action	The data in this section is from the Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2024 Workforce Data, published in September 2025. The report provides a snapshot of

Will your piece of work have a negative, neutral or positive equality impact? Explain why. List any actions and summarise in Section H.

the workforce as of December 2024. Data from our Equality Register Report published in November 2024 is also referred to in this section.

We do not currently gather and publish specific data regarding social work assistants therefore we have drawn on the wider workforce data we do hold to support our assessment.

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

1. eliminate discrimination
2. advance equality of opportunity
3. will 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 points.

Using this approach we do not identify any negative impacts from our proposal however we have identified some negative effects. We do not wish to disregard the impact of fee and qualification requirements for the workforce, particularly female workers and those nearing retirement, however, we think it is important to note that any impact is unlikely to be substantial.

Age – The data from our Equality Register Report suggests that age may be a factor in meeting qualification conditions. The data suggests that older workers take longer to meet conditions than younger workers. However, these figures do not consider the parts of the Register these workers are on. Similarly, these figures do not consider the qualification condition itself. For example, some older workers may also require a management qualification. The differences in time taken to achieve conditions could also be explained in whole or in part by the fact that we do not always have the exact date of completion and that many registrants in newer Register parts or Register parts with high turnover rates may

not be due to gain their qualification yet, depending on when they joined the register.

There are several reasons why some registrants take longer than others to meet conditions. These can include workload, access to training providers, verifiers or funding. It is important to keep all this data in context. We want to understand the reasons why there are differences although we need to be careful not to read too much into the data.

Our workforce data indicates that the median age across the wider social work, social care and children and young people sector is 42. Our Workforce Data Reports (WDRs) have repeatedly shown that the social sector's workforce is on average older than would be expected given the age profile of Scotland's working age population.

We do not believe that there are any age-related issues which may mean this proposal has a disproportionate impact on the basis of this characteristic.

For example, we do not believe that the introduction of a qualification requirement for SWAs would disproportionately affect individuals on the basis of their age. It is proposed that this group will be required to undertake both an academic and practice qualification and this may cause additional pressure and concern for those currently not holding any relevant qualifications. However, consultation with this group as part of our engagement activities to date has highlighted that many individuals carrying out the role of social work assistant already hold a relevant qualification.

We continue to take a flexible approach to support people to meet qualification conditions therefore we do not believe this proposal will disproportionately impact on people based on age.

Impact on age:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

• Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

• Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Disability – Many people who have a disability face significant barriers in relation to recruitment and retention in the workplace. In 2021 the Scottish Government set out a commitment to halve the disability employment gap by 2038. Our proposals may have a negative effect on people who have a disability or condition. The evidence shows that disabled people and people with a long term health condition are at greater risk of leaving employment.

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.

We believe that the requirements of registration with the SSSC are sufficiently accessible that it is unlikely that individuals with a disability will be disproportionately impacted on the basis of disability.

We do recognise that the qualification requirements of SSSC registration may have a greater impact on those with additional educational needs or learning disabilities. However, we believe that qualifications required for registration can be delivered in such a way as to mitigate any potential negative impact felt on the basis of this characteristic. We continue to take a flexible approach to support people to meet qualification requirements. For example, we can support people with disabilities or longer term health conditions by providing extra time to meet conditions.

For that reason, we do not believe that the proposal to introduce registration for staff in this group is likely to have a disproportionate impact on people on the

basis of their disability status. The data from our Equality Register Report published in November 2024 also supports this belief. The data in this report indicated that disability has minimal or no impact on the average time it takes to gain a qualification.

We will continue to monitor the impact of this proposal on the basis of disability as this project progresses.

Impact on disability

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

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 mirrors the trans status questions in the 2022 Census.

Impact on gender reassignment

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact. No impacts were identified during the consultation process.
- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact. No impacts were identified during the consultation process.
- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: no impact.

No impacts were identified during the consultation process.

Marital and Civil Partnership – We do not collect data in relation to registrants who are married or in civil partnerships.

Impact on Marital and Civil Partnership

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

We will update this section if any impacts are identified during the consultation process.

Public bodies subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty are only required to consider the first need of the duty (to eliminate unlawful discrimination) for this protected characteristic.

Pregnancy and maternity – We do not gather data on registrants who are pregnant or on maternity leave.

SSSC registration requirements ensure that individuals gain qualifications within a specific timeframe. We are aware that placing time restrictions on gaining qualifications has the potential to disproportionately impact staff based on pregnancy or maternity. However, we do not believe that the qualification requirements for SSSC registration disproportionately negatively affect individuals based on pregnancy or maternity as the timescales for achieving qualifications are sufficient to take account of this and we can also provide extra time for registrants who are pregnant or on maternity leave.

Impact on pregnancy and maternity

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

• Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

• Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Race – Our workforce data shows that 66% of the workforce is of white ethnicity, while 3% is Asian, 5% is black with 25% being unknown. Overall, 8% of the workforce is identified as belonging to an ethnic minority which is higher than the 6% reported in our 2023 Workforce Data Report) and the 2% in 2015. The largest proportion of staff identified as belonging to an ethnic minority is in the private sector, and it is the private sector that is driving the increase. Of notes, SWAs are largely employed within local authority settings.

We do not believe that the requirement for SSSC registration as proposed is likely to have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on the basis of race. We aim to make all our processes and policies inclusive and accessible, and we believe this will serve to mitigate any potential for negative impact that we have as yet not foreseen.

Our equality Register data shows differences exist across ethnic groups regarding qualification conditions. Registrants identifying as African, Scottish African or British African (89.2%), Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian (74.3%) and Caribbean or Black (79.7%) are much more likely to have a qualification condition compared to White registrants (46.5%). We would suggest caution when referring to these figures, see the [Equality Registrant Report \(November 2024\)](#) for further information.

Impact on race

• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Religion or belief – Our workforce data does not include any questions on religion. The question on religion in our registration portal mirrors the questions in the 2022 Census. Our Equality Register report shows a total of 37.4% of registrants indicate that they have no religion. The next most common response (23.5% of all registrants) is other Christian. Our Equality Register Report does not disclosed data on many Register parts due to the small numbers of responses in many instances.

We are unaware of any link between a registrant’s religion status and our proposal to register SWAs.

Impact on religion or belief

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: No impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

Sex – Our workforce data uses gender instead of sex and this data shows that, across the sector 81% of social service workers are female and 17% of workers are male. The gender of approximately 2% of the social work, social care and children and young people workforce is unknown. Given that the makeup of the

registered workforce is mostly female, there may be a disproportionate impact on females.

Responses in the Expanding the Register consultation highlighted the impact of registration requirements for females particularly in relation to the qualification requirement. Concern was expressed about the time pressures created by qualification requirements for those who are lone parents and/or have family/caring responsibilities or are working part-time.

Within UNISONs response a member expressed that they would need sufficient time and funding to meet qualification requirements.

Through our scoping work, and focus groups undertaken as part of our formal consultation, we are aware that many workers already hold relevant qualifications.

The proposed qualifications for SWAs are the SSSCs recognised benchmark qualifications. However, we will follow a similar approach to other groups already on the Register and will also accept other qualifications which have been assessed as equivalent to these benchmark qualifications.

We continue to take a flexible approach to support people to meet qualification requirements. For example, we can support registrants by providing extra time to meet conditions.

We aim to make all our processes and policies inclusive, and this will serve to mitigate the potential for negative impact for females in this group.

Impact on sex

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation – no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: No impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

We will update this section if any further impacts are identified.

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. Our Equality Register Report shows that most registrants – 88.3% – define themselves as straight or heterosexual. A total of 2.2% define as gay or lesbian and 2.2% define as bisexual. A total of 7.5% of registrants have chosen other or prefer not to say. There are some slight differences across Register parts. For example, 90% of workers in care at home service define themselves as straight or heterosexual.

We are unaware of any link between a registrant's sexual orientation and our proposal to register SWAs.

Impact on sexual orientation

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation – no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- Advancing equality of opportunity: no impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.
- Promoting good relations among and between different age groups: No impact. We have not found any evidence to suggest an impact.

We will update this section if any impacts are identified.

SECTION C: CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND CARE EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section C of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
C1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to children’s rights and care experienced children and young people? Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?	We are aware of views suggesting that registering more workers in the sector may be a barrier to recruitment and retention due to registration requirements, in particular registration fees and qualification requirements, the responses to the consultation provided more insight around this. 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 recognise that the financial landscape has changed since 2017 and that employers continue to experience acute challenges. Our regulatory role is one of the key ways we promote children’s rights. We have more than 170,000 people on our Register. These workers have or are working towards qualifications that support them to deliver critical services for children, young people and their families every day. A small number of workers fall short and we continue to take action where necessary. Most people working in these services support children to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential. They also drive Scotland’s wellbeing economy. Therefore we believe registering SWAs in the sector will have a positive impact on care experienced children and young people. The Independent Care Review and Scottish Government publications (such as Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2022/23) highlight some of the 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.

	Both reports highlight how we have revised the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, a key part of our commitment to keep the Promise. The revised Codes address many of the points identified during the consultation process such as a need for the language to be clearer, more engaging and easier to relate to for encouraging good practice. The Codes have a focus on kindness, trauma informed practice and relationship-based practice and they are aligned to the Health and Social Care Standards. An example featured in the Care Experience Report is the data we publish on vacancies in services and key policies. In 2022 and 2023 we published a report examining 10 years of residential childcare workforce data and a report on the movement of the day care of children workforce. These reports provide critical information on the profile of the workforce and inform the expansion of funded early learning and childcare. We also published new guidance on safer recruitment in October 2023 with the Care Inspectorate. This highlights the way people with care experience suffer stigma and the need for employers to take a trauma informed approach. We have also introduced new requirements for registrants' continuous professional learning (CPL). Our approach sets out core learning elements and suggested learning topics. Subjects such as child protection, adult protection and trauma informed practice are now mandatory requirements for all register groups. We continue to raise our employees' awareness of care experience and children's rights in many ways including presentations and staff conference sessions with the Promise, Who Cares? Scotland and Each and Every Child. We believe registering SWAs in the sector will have a positive impact on care experienced children and young people.
C2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on children's rights or care experience did you use to support	Our assessment of the impact is based on a review of our Register data, workforce data and our best judgement on the impact of registering the proposed new groups. Our statements on the potential impact of adding SWAs to the SSSC

your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data? Examples: Children's social work statistics available from Scottish Government website. The Promise Scotland and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland have several resources on care experience and children's rights.	Register 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 currently gather or have figures on the proportion of registrants who have experience of care.
C3: Assessing impact and taking action Will your piece of work have a negative, neutral or positive impact on children's rights or care experience? Explain why. List any actions and summarise in Section H.	We appreciate that there may be some objections to registering SWAs. 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 in Scotland. We will update this assessment if any significant new impacts are identified.

SECTION D: TRAUMA INFORMED ASSESSMENT

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section D of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
D1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to trauma informed practice? Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?	We want to take a trauma informed approach to our work. We want a culture where people experience empathy and kindness are empowered to access the services they need to help support their recovery. When considering the proposal to extend the Register, we considered the impact of trauma on: The workers in the proposed new groups including social work assistants

	• People they support.
D2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on trauma informed practice did you use to support your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data?	The National Trauma Transformation Programme has been reviewed to inform this assessment.
D3: Assessing impact and taking action Will your piece of work have a negative, neutral or positive impact on our work to promote trauma informed practice? Explain why. List any actions and summarise in Section H.	By registering SWAs, workers will be subject to continuous professional learning (CPL) requirements including mandatory trauma awareness learning in line with the rest of the registered workforce. We are ensuring that workers are keeping their practice up to date and are undertaking ongoing learning around trauma awareness. All registered workers are signposted to the resources for the National Trauma Transformation Programme. We believe our proposal will have a positive impact on our work to promote trauma informed practice.

SECTION E: ISLANDS, FAIRER SCOTLAND AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE ASSESSMENT

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section E of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
E1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to the Scottish Islands,	Islands duty

promoting a Fairer Scotland or supporting vulnerable people?

Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?

We recognise that there are parts of the country which experience particularly acute challenges in relation to recruitment and retention, including rural and island communities. We are aware of views suggesting that expanding the register to social work assistants will have a disproportionate impact on rural island communities as a consequence of registration requirements in particular fee and qualification requirements.

We are aware that the composition of the workforce in some island areas is slightly different to the composition on the mainland. For example, our 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 2024 Workforce Data (published September 2025) indicates that the largest employer type is the private sector with 41% of the employment. This is followed by the public sector with 35% and the voluntary sector with 24%. However, this varies by local authority area. In each of the three island authorities (Orkney, Shetland and Na h-Eileanan Siar) the public sector employs at least 705 of the workforce.

We understand that SSSC registration does place some financial demand on workers, however, we are aware that workers in island communities are more likely to be employed in the public sector than their counterparts on the mainland. It is possible that the cost of registration is more likely to be covered by public sector employers.

We are aware of the unique challenges that rural and island communities face in meeting qualification requirements due to accessing training provision and the method of delivery. We are working with Qualifications Scotland on approaches to delivery of SVQs exploring different methods and innovative approaches to help address the challenges.

As part of our Future Proofing Programme we now take a more flexible approach to qualifications accepted for registration to allow people to move between social care and children and young people services without having to gain two different qualification. We are aware that within rural and island communities workers

often hold roles across register parts therefore our flexibility to qualification will have a positive impact.

Our Council report '[Qualified Status of the Workforce](#)' identifies factors which are impacting on increasing the numbers of qualified workers and details actions that the SSSC are leading, influencing or collaborating with partners on to support the workforce to get qualified. Actions the SSSC are leading on to support the workforce to get qualified include: wider acceptance of qualification; targeting Voluntary Sector Development Fund funding; developing new qualification pathways including graduate apprenticeship route into social work and the SVQ Integrated Award. A full list of actions we are progressing can be accessed [here](#). We believe these actions will positively impact on rural and Island communities.

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 expanding the Register.

We recognise 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 will update this assessment if our consultation process identifies any significant new impacts.

Our scoping work indicated that there is also a large degree of variation in the conditions and pay across social work assistant roles. A Unison survey of

paraprofessional groups found that one of the priorities for this group was a review of pay grades to tackle inequality between:

- Social Work Assistants and Family Support Workers
- Different council employers
- The group and qualified social workers
- Similar roles within Education.

Setting the qualification requirements at a level that accurately reflects the roles they are required for will assist in demonstrating the complexity of the roles, that the workforce is highly skilled and help to support the professional identity of the role. This may assist in national discussions regarding Fair Work.

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

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 also highlight other examples in the Children's Rights and Care Experience section (Section C) of this assessment.

Our proposal aims to recognise these challenges while meeting the aims set out in the first part of this assessment. Our proposal also aims 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. Our more flexible approach to qualifications and continued work in supporting the workforce to get qualified also recognises the challenges experienced by the workforce.
E2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on the Islands, Fairer Scotland or vulnerable people did you use to support your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data? Examples: Scottish Government publishes data on composition of island population. We publish workforce data on proportion of staff in island local authority areas. The Government also publishes data on poverty and carers: Poverty and Income inequality statistics and Carers Census.	Our assessment of the impact is based on a review of our Register data, workforce data and our best judgement on the impact of adding new groups to the SSSC Register.
E3: Assessing impact and taking action Identify any actions here, including timescales, lead responsibility and how you will monitor success.	We believe that the proposals in this document will have a positive impact on people working in the groups we are considering for registration. 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. We understand that SSSC registration does place some financial demand on workers, however, we are aware that workers in island communities are more likely to be employed in the public sector than their counterparts on the mainland. It is possible that the cost of registration is more likely to be covered by public sector employers.

	We understand the challenges that rural and island communities may experience in relation to qualification requirements, however, we believe our ongoing actions in supporting the workforce to gain qualifications will positively impact on rural and island communities.
--	--

SECTION F: EMPLOYER AND CONSUMER DUTY ASSESSMENT

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section F of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
F1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to employers? How is this piece of work relevant to consumers? (for strategic decisions only) Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?	If taken forward, the registration of social work assistants, will have both a positive and negative impact on employers. The positive impact relates to employees being subject to the same registration requirements as the rest of the registered workforce this includes being subject to the SSSC's Codes of Practice. It also provides employers with a route to raise concerns about a worker. The negative impact relates to the additional work required by employers to monitor the registration of their workforce and to support them in gaining the required qualifications if necessary. Factors that can impact on employers abilities to do this include: workload pressures, access to training providers, verifiers or funding. Our Council report 'Qualified Status of the Workforce' identifies factors which are impacting on increasing the numbers of qualified workers and details actions that the SSSC are leading, influencing or collaborating with partners on to support the workforce to achieve qualifications. As part of our further engagement work, key stakeholders also highlighted that job descriptions and gradings may need to be reviewed and re-evaluated and that this will likely have financial implications for local authorities and health and social care partnerships. It was stressed that due consideration is given to potential workforce implications given the current financial climate for local authorities. UNISON also highlighted that an assessment of the potential cost impact for local authorities as a result of SWA registration is needed. This will be highlighted to Scottish Government.

	This proposal is also relevant to consumers, including registrants and people who use services. Registration provides public assurance that social work assistants are subject to the SSSC Codes of Practice, qualification requirements and ongoing CPL requirements. We believe this will reduce the likelihood of harm to people who use services by ensuring registration are qualified, skilled and follow the SSSC Codes of Practice which set the standards for this workforce. However, we recognise that some of the potential employer impacts may also affect registrants. For example, if employers review job descriptions and gradings in response to registration, this may create uncertainty for workers about role expectations, pay and qualification requirements. While regrading could have positive effects by recognising the complexity and professional identity of the role, there is also a risk that changes are experienced negatively if they are not communicated clearly or if workers feel registration requirements are being introduced without appropriate support. There may also be cost impacts for registrants, including registration fees. However, given that most SWAs are employed by local authorities and do not personally incur registration fees, the proportion of the workforce directly affected is likely to be small. We will seek to reduce the likelihood of harm by ensuring information for workers is clear, timely and accessible; by highlighting the potential cost implications to Scottish Government; by continuing to promote flexible qualification routes and acceptance of equivalent qualifications; and by signposting registrants to information about tax relief on registration fees where appropriate.
F2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on employers did you use to support your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data? Examples: Our data website has information on employers and active services registered with the	Our assessment of the impact is based on a review of our Register data, workforce data and our best judgement on the impact of adding new groups to the SSSC Register. 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 have also considered the information gathered through further engagement with key stakeholders, including feedback that job descriptions and gradings may

Care Inspectorate. For example, have you consulted employers on your proposals? Have you identified any challenges or options? What information did you consider on the impact on consumers? Have you considered the desirability of reducing harm to consumers? (for strategic decisions only)	need to be reviewed and that this could have financial implications for employers and potential impacts for registrants. We have considered whether these impacts could create uncertainty, additional cost or other pressures for workers, and how these risks can be reduced through proportionate implementation, clear communication and continued support for qualification pathways.
F3: Assessing impact and taking action Identify any actions here, including timescales, lead responsibility and how you will monitor success. Include Consumers for strategic decisions only	If Scottish Ministers decide that the Register should be expanded to include social work assistants, we will work with Scottish Government on a timeline for implementation and we will let the workforce know when that timeline has been established. If adding social work assistants is approved, new legislation and changes to our Registration Rules will be required before we make any changes to the Register. There will be a phased approach to the registration of the new Register groups to support employers to carry out workforce development activities and ensure their employees gain the necessary qualifications within the relevant timeframes. As mentioned, our Council report 'Qualified Status of the Workforce' identifies factors which are impacting on increasing the numbers of qualified workers and details actions that the SSSC are leading, influencing or collaborating with partners on to support the workforce to achieve qualifications. Actions the SSSC are leading on to support the workforce to get qualified include: wider acceptance of qualifications; targeting Voluntary Sector Development Fund funding; developing new qualification pathways including a graduate apprenticeship route into social work and the SVQ Integrated Award. We do not anticipate that our proposals will have a significant impact on the ability of employers to recruit and retain workers.

The potential cost implications for local authorities as a result of registering social work assistants will be highlighted to Scottish Government. UNISON has suggested an assessment of the cost implications is required.

To reduce the likelihood of harm to registrants and consumers, we will ensure implementation planning includes clear information for workers and employers about registration requirements, including fees, qualification and CPL requirements, as well as timescales associated with registration. We will continue to take a flexible and proportionate approach to qualification requirements, including recognising equivalent qualifications where appropriate and supporting wider qualification pathways.

SECTION G: SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

Please see guidance notes before completing the second column in this section, particularly Part 2 and Section G of the Appendix.

Question	SSSC approach
G1. Understanding impact: How is this piece of work relevant to sustainability? Use this section to briefly set out the context. Have you considered where there might be an impact?	We did not identify a link between our proposal and the sustainability duty.
G2. Reviewing evidence and finding gaps What internal or external evidence on sustainability did you use to support your understanding (step 1) and assessment (step 3). Did you find gaps in the data?	Not applicable
G3: Assessing impact and taking action Identify any actions here, including timescales, lead responsibility and how you will monitor success.	Neutral impact. We will update this assessment if our consultation process identifies any significant new impacts.

H. FINAL REVIEW AND SIGN-OFF

SSSC approach	SSSC approach
H1. Summary of Assessment a. Summary of any actions or changes found during assessment	This impact assessment has identified an action to highlight to Scottish Government the potential cost implications for local authorities as a result of registering social work assistants. UNISON has suggested an assessment of the

b. How will we monitor this piece of work and any further impacts?	cost implications is required. The cost implications include those associated with meeting qualification requirements, fees and potential job revaluation. This impact assessment has not identified any changes required to our proposal. We will update this assessment if any new impacts are identified. We will also consider any actions that we can take to address these impacts.
H2. Owner (Head of Department): Date approved by Head of Department:	Approved on 19 May 2026 by Head of Qualifications and Standards.

NEXT STEPS

- Once finalised **please delete the cover page of assessment before finalising it. Page 1 should have section A on it.**
- Send completed IA to Policyandresearch@sssc.uk.com for their records. We should also publish the IA unless there is a good reason for not doing so. It is the author's responsibility to arrange for it to go on the website. Please raise a ticket to do that. The IA should go in the publications section of the website, Impact Assessment Section.
- Reports to Council, Committee, Executive Management Team and Programme Boards must include your IA. Please contact [Legal and Corporate Governance team](#) for further information.