

SSSC Intelligence Strategy 2026-2029

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Contents

SSSC Intelligence Strategy 2026-2029	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Strategic objectives	3
3. How the Intelligence Strategy Supports the SSSC Strategic Outcomes.....	5
4. Our Approach	6



SSSC Intelligence Strategy 2026-2029

1. Introduction

Our SSSC Intelligence Strategy 2026-2029 is central to delivering the SSSC's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan sets out four outcomes; trusted, skilled, confident and valued, and our Intelligence Strategy enables us to achieve these through the effective use of data and intelligence.

Our data and intelligence are integral to understanding and supporting the sector across Scotland. We will influence policy that improves the delivery of services in Scotland and protects the public.

In our Strategic Plan 2026-2029 we make a commitment to influence and support evidence-based national policy development across the social work, social care and children and young people sector.

Our role and the work we do generates a wide range of unique data and intelligence that can help us and partners improve our understanding of the sector and its workforce. This includes data and intelligence about the workforce, their qualifications, registration, and fitness to practise that all contribute to a skilled workforce and, in turn, to improved public protection.

We will inform future design of services by providing the data and intelligence that enables Scotland to better understand the sector and those who work in it. We will make our data and intelligence a powerful, trusted driver of insight and decision making across the sector.

Using the full range of data; national and local, quantitative, and qualitative, we can offer vital intelligence to our partners. This will inform their decisions and influence the development of the sector and care services across Scotland. We are the official statistics provider for workforce data in Scotland.

Vision FOR 2026-2029

Our ambition is to provide stakeholders, policymakers, and the workforce up to date, accurate and readily available data and intelligence. We will influence policy and lead the sector in setting the standard for high-quality, trusted intelligence that informs action, improvement, and national reform.

Our work will inform decision-making, deliver high-value actionable insight, and contribute to the development of a trusted, skilled, confident, and valued workforce. We will ensure that the intelligence we generate strengthens organisational priorities and drives the impact we aim to achieve across the sector. Combining this with high-value external data enables us to contribute to effective workforce planning, one stop data needs, policy development and improvement for partners, employers and learning providers.

Our Intelligence Strategy for 2026-29 is built on four pillars. We do more than just report data - we turn information into clear, practical insights that help people take action. We make sure all of this is available in a trustworthy, reliable open-data system.



The four pillars

- **Internal data**
- **External data**
- **Official statistics**
- **Research**

Internal data

Internal data refers to the information that SSSC collects and manages within the organisation. This includes:

- Registration
- Fitness to practise
- Qualifications
- Quality Assurance of programmes
- Disbursement of grants and student funding
- Continuous Professional Learning
- HR
- Finance

We quality assure this data regularly to keep it accurate, easy to access and clear. We use this data to build evidence, plan, make decisions, publish reports, and create data visualisation. We explain our data clearly and make sure it meets accessibility standards, so everyone can use the insights to make informed choices based on the safety and integrity of the data.

External data

External data is information that the SSSC can access from partner organisations and stakeholders outside our own organisation. This includes data that is shared with us or that we access through collaboration with others in the sector.

Examples include:

- Social services workforce vacancies
- Social worker filled posts and vacancies
- Numbers of practising Mental Health Officers

We combine this external data with our own internal data to create clear, useful insights.

We partner with other organisations to combine datasets and enrich our understanding of the workforce and the sector. By working together, our insights are robust and valuable. We make this information easy to access and understand, and we actively share data and learning with partners to support data-led decisions and drive positive change across the sector. We use the data to support improvements in



the workforce and partnership working across services. For example, Workforce data is used to inform Scottish Government policy decisions, to identify social care system pressures and determine allocation of resources such as Mental Health Officers (MHOs).

Official statistics

We publish clear reports on workforce trends and explain the strengths and limits of our data. Our teams will make these statistics easy to access and understand, and we'll share our findings to help everyone in the sector make better decisions.

As an Official and Accredited Statistics provider, we will use official statistics to guide our work and meet the highest standards for trustworthiness, quality, and value as defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics. For example:

MHO (Mental Health Officers) Report
Workforce Data Report

Research

We will carry out targeted analytical and research activities using our own internal data sources, such as registration, fitness to practise, workforce intelligence, learning, and organisational data. This will generate deeper insight to support improvement both at the SSSC and in the sector. We also commission research and evaluation activity to support and evidence our own work.

We will respond to data requests from third parties appropriately, commissioning external partners where relevant and making sure that the information we share is accurate, ethical, and compliant with data-protection requirements. Where requests align with our statutory functions and strategic priorities, we will facilitate access to high quality workforce, registration, and sector intelligence to enable evidence-based research. We will make sure our data is understood and used responsibly, helping to build a richer national evidence base that informs policy development, supports improvement, and strengthens outcomes for the workforce and people who use services.

We will grow and extend our research function to support our intention to develop in this area and support building a research capacity across our sector. We will develop external partnerships and build a body of evidence that inspires innovation as well as supporting evidence-based decisions that affect the sector.

2. Strategic objectives

We will achieve our vision by delivering these objectives during 2026-2029.



- **Insight and impact:** We will transform internal and external data, official statistics and research into clear, actionable insight that identifies key trends, supports evidence-based decision-making, informs policy development, and guides resource allocation.
- **Stakeholder-focused intelligence:** Our analysts will work closely with stakeholders to understand how data is used, connect analysis to real-world experience, and expand access to high-quality self-service tools, supported by robust research and clear explanation of context and meaning.
- **Quality, ethics and governance:** We will ensure all intelligence activity meets the highest standards of governance, ethics, quality and data protection compliance, underpinned by clear ethical approval processes, standard data models and strong quality controls.
- **Capability, sustainability and alignment:** We will invest in the right people, tools and organisational support to build data literacy and an intelligence-led culture, integrate multiple data sources to produce timely forecasts and workforce insights, promote trusted and accessible outputs, and ensure delivery aligns directly with the SSSC Strategic Plan.

CONTEXT POLICY AND LANDSCAPE

The Scottish Government is undertaking wide-ranging reform across health and social care to improve wellbeing, reduce waiting times, and strengthen digital services. This raises expectations for higher standards, stronger accountability, and better protection for people who use services, alongside a continued focus on developing a high-quality, valued, and sustainable workforce across the sector. Alongside this there is increasing emphasis on coordinated improvement, better use of data, and more connected approaches to planning and decision-making. Public sector reform is driving the need for more efficient service delivery, stronger collaboration, and more effective use of intelligence to target resources.

At the same time, the sector continues to face significant challenges, including workforce shortages, high turnover, recruitment difficulties, limited placement capacity, increasing complexity of need, financial pressures, and rising demand. These pressures make workforce retention, fair and sustainable employment practices, and clear progression pathways increasingly critical.

Our role in providing up to date, high quality workforce intelligence supports leaders and partners to understand these challenges, plan effectively and safeguard care quality and public protection. Reliable data on registration, qualifications, learning, vacancies, and workforce movement helps identify risks, anticipate pressures and inform policy and service planning. The intelligence strategy strengthens this role by ensuring decisions are evidence based, forward looking and grounded in workforce realities by improving planning, supporting innovation and contributing to a more connected, resilient and equitable social service system in Scotland.



3. How the Intelligence Strategy Supports the SSSC Strategic Outcomes

Trusted

The Intelligence Strategy ensures that every decision, from workforce development to public protection, is grounded in high-quality evidence and insight. By gathering, analysing, and sharing reliable data on registration, fitness to practise, and workforce qualifications, the SSSC can:

- Drive improved performance across regulation and hearings using technology, AI, and process reviews.
- Provide robust, nationally significant intelligence that underpins public trust in the regulated workforce.
- Enable transparent, accessible processes for registration and fitness to practise, supporting both workers and witnesses.
- Strengthen public protection by using intelligence to identify risk patterns, anticipate emerging issues, and support timely, proportionate action across social work, social care, and children and young people's services.

Skilled

The strategy supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice by:

- Using intelligence to inform the development and maintenance of practice standards including the revised National Occupational Standards and SVQ reviews.
- Providing data-driven insights for quality assurance in education and training, ensuring approved programmes meet required standards.
- Supporting the review and update of Codes of Practice and regulatory rules with evidence-based recommendations.
- Identifying skills gaps and highlighting future learning needs across the sector by analysing workforce intelligence, qualification data, and findings from feedback loops such as the Have Your Say survey.
- Informing research commissions and sector-wide initiatives by providing robust evidence on emerging practice issues, enabling partners to target improvement activity where it will have the greatest impact.

Confident

The SSSC's intelligence work enhances workforce confidence, competence, and career development by:

- Transforming data into actionable insights for continuous professional learning (CPL), digital learning, and resource development.
- Using fitness to practise data and research to inform frameworks and evidence-based learning.



- Supporting leadership development and targeted upskilling for new managers, guided by sector-wide intelligence.
- Promoting career pathways and supporting safe, effective recruitment and induction through data-driven approaches.

Valued

The Intelligence Strategy ensures the workforce is understood, heard, and acknowledged by:

- Listening to sector feedback, gather and use intelligence to develop capacity-building programmes like Effective Voice.
- Advancing the use of SSSC data and intelligence to publish up-to-date information that influences decisions and actions nationally.
- Focusing on wellbeing needs through surveys and collaboration and making data available to support sector-wide improvement.
- Using workforce intelligence to support the Fair Work agenda by identifying where conditions, opportunities and experiences vary across the sector.
- Highlighting workforce pressures, turnover trends, and emerging risks through clear, accessible evidence so that national and local partners can recognise the contribution of the workforce, value their expertise, and target support where it is most needed.

By aligning our intelligence work with the outcomes and activities of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029, we maintain a sharp focus on delivering maximum impact as Scotland's authoritative source of workforce statistics and intelligence.

As a recognised national provider of official workforce statistics, we protect the public, support and develop the workforce, and ensure that everyone's voice is heard by underpinning decision-making with high-quality, authoritative data.

4. Our Approach

We take a strong, evidence-based approach and have worked closely with key stakeholders to set our priorities for the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan and shape this Intelligence Strategy. Our engagement and research have highlighted clear themes, and, building on our previous strategy (2022-2025), we are committed to providing more in-depth analysis, clearer interpretation, and proactive data sharing.

HOW WE'LL DELIVER

1. Keep data quality and trust at the core

We will apply the same rigorous quality checks, standard data models and official statistics principles that underpinned the 2022-2025 strategy and ensure the safety and integrity of our data through strong security, governance, data protection compliance, and ethical handling at every stage.

2. We will continue to follow the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice; ensuring our data is trustworthy, high-quality, and used in ways that maximise



public value. This includes maintaining clear audit trails, applying consistent definitions, and ensuring that our analytical methods are ethical, proportionate, and repeatable.

3. Deliver intelligence, not just data

We will shift from “publishing data” to “providing insight.” That means clear interpretation, context from external sources, and high impact analysis pieces that help leaders act, supported by dashboards and self-service tools.

4. Make access easy and consistent

We will expand internal and external data visualisation and publications, improve the workforce data website, and provide guidance so staff and stakeholders can find and use the right, up to date information.

5. Strengthen collaboration and business partnering

Business Intelligence and Workforce Intelligence will continue business partnering, roadshows, and engagement with sector boards to share data, learnings, and support better decisions across Scotland and the wider UK.

6. Robust governance and consistent reporting

A new Data and Intelligence Board will oversee delivery, standards, and risk management. We will provide routine assurance/governance reports and act on audit findings to keep improving.

7. Plan resources to meet demand

We will monitor incoming requests, prioritise work, and scale capacity where needed (including ethical/open data considerations and accessibility compliance) so we can meet rising demand without compromising quality. We will develop predictive data models that help us anticipate emerging risks and areas of concern, enabling earlier action and more proactive decision making across the sector.

8. Strengthen our intelligence capability

We will continue to invest in developing the skills, tools and support our analytical staff need to make best use of our data and intelligence, supported by an organisational culture and infrastructure that enables high-quality, future-focused analytical work.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

We will use a mix of feedback, monitoring, and outcome measures to track the impact of our Intelligence Strategy:

- we will track the frequency of usage of our data and reports to identify which resources are most beneficial.
- ask users and partners for feedback to learn what works and what needs improvement.
- review our role in key projects and ask partners how we added value.
- outcome measurement: tracking that our strategy is making a positive impact.
- use all feedback and data to keep improving our work.



GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

We will report on progress of the strategy through Data and Intelligence Board and EMT. We will inform Council and SG Sponsor of our progress, as necessary.

The Data and Intelligence Board will strengthen oversight of our data and intelligence work. This board will make sure our strategy fits with our wider organisational goals and that our data practices remain robust and effective.

We are committed to following the Code of Practice for Statistics and the standards of the Office for Statistics Regulation. We will focus on trust, quality, and value by carrying out regular audits.

We will identify, manage, and report on risks such as accessibility and compliance so we can adapt quickly and continue to meet expectations.



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