



Updates from our Standing Committees, subgroups and our projects

Justice Standing Committee

Background

The Justice Standing Committee (JSC) is well attended by Justice Social Work (JSW) managers and other partners. Over the course of 2023, there were discussions around restructuring the JSC, supported by the Chair and members. Over a number of months, the focus has changed and the agenda shaped into a more strategic approach. This has included identifying standing items and other issues which link directly to the Scottish Government (SG) Justice Vision, Strategy and Delivery Plan. In consultation with members, five key sub-groups were designed and established as part of the governance arrangements. The five sub-groups are as follows:-

- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Community Sentencing
- Public Protection
- Through-Care
- Performance and Quality Assurance

There are a number of cross-cutting issues which are shared across the work of the groups, including areas such as youth justice, lived experience, substance use and mental health. The work of the JSC and sub-groups are supported by the Policy and Practice Lead (PPL). There is one common “terms of reference” for all of the groups which is in the process of being signed off.

The JSC has a history of having effective stakeholder engagement and collaborative partnership arrangements with a range of Justice and Third sector organisations, including regular contact with SG.

Advice from JSC members is sought regularly and respected. The changes to the structure have

further enhanced the profile of JSW with our partners.

Highlighted Activity

Prison Population

Members are involved in various high level meetings, including the transformational change programme board, addressing the contribution which JSW and partners can make to the ever growing problem of increasing remands and convicted population.

Finances

There are a number of challenges for JSW in being able to deliver statutory and preventative services, in line with the SG CJ delivery plan. There are ongoing workforce issues alongside a flat-cash budget settlement which places further pressure on services. The Funding Review Group has been re-established to consider key budgetary issues. COSLA and SWS provided a pre-budget scrutiny report for the Scottish Parliament's CJ Committee, outlining the various challenges.

Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act- SWS provided oral evidence at stage one of the Bill, highlighting implications for JSW within the Act. This includes increased demand for bail supervision, electronic monitoring and introduction of a new early release licence for long term prisoners.

National Care Service- JSW Research

Members have been involved in the reference group about whether JSW should be included in NCS or not. This has been informed by a literature review and research which was recently completed but has yet to be published.

Prison-based social work

Engagement with SPS and the Care Inspectorate regarding the current thematic review of PBSW. Stage one explores leadership and governance issues. There has also been collaboration with SG, COSLA and SWS in designing a "Near Me" proposal which addresses the use of digital technology for those in custody.

Public Protection

MAPPA/MAPPS: There has been extensive work undertaken in relation to the introduction of MAPPS in Scotland, a UK wide public protection, information-sharing system. The SG led group is considering a number of issues around how the model of operation will work. SOLACE and CSWO's are also considering a number of complex problems in relation to the implementation. Other areas of work include Visor, domestic homicide, domestic abuse and risk assessment/risk management including the review of LSCMI.

Other activity

There has been involvement and consultation with JSW on issues such as dementia in prisons care pathway, proposed legislation, prevention services, equally safe strategy and review of voluntary through-care/mentoring. A strategic training group has been established to ensure priority is given to

JSW workforce learning and development needs. Listening to the voice of “lived experience” and developing improved services based on service user feedback is a priority.

Proposed Future Actions - Three Priority areas

- Further embed the new structure within the JSC and related groups in order to profile JSW and professional identity
- NCS and JSW- what are the implications?
- Prison Population- further action and resource implications

Adults Standing Committee

Background

The Committee workplan was updated in October 2023, with drafting due to be completed for January 2024. Thus far, the Committee has agreed that the Strategic Priorities of the group shall remain as

- Promote the unique role, value and contribution of social work and social care.
- Champion research and evidence informed approaches in our work.
- Support and encourage workforce development (with a focus on celebrating success, promoting standards, achieving practice improvement, and demonstrating continuous learning)
- Influence and shape policy and legislation relating to social work and social care.
- Provide professional leadership and increase leadership capacity across social work and social care.
- Recognise the value of continuous improvement through self-evaluation and performance improvement action.

Each subgroup’s workplan will align with the committees workplan, with their specific lens being applied to the area in question, for example, trauma informed practice, digital approaches, integration, and the National Care Service.

Highlighted Activity

Winter Planning

Membership of joint Scottish Government/COSLA National Resilience Group for social work and social care.

The Adults Policy & Practice Lead submitted significant comment on the subsequent “Hospital Occupancy and Delayed Discharge Action Plan” – this feedback was informed and endorsed by the membership of the Adults Standing Committee and CSWOs.

Engagement between Social Work Scotland’s Deputy Convenor, Director, Adults Policy & Practice Lead, Adult Standing Committee Chair and the Interim Director Social Care and Improvement at Scottish Government and subsequent invitations to national “winter resilience” groups.

ESN Presentation

Social Work Scotland's Adult Policy & Practice Lead was invited by the European Social Network to present at their October seminar "Social Services Leading Care in the Community."

National Care Service (NCS) and National Social Work Agency (NSWA)

The Adults Standing Committee has been and will continue to be actively engaged in discussions shaping the NCS and the NSWA via committee Chairs, members, and the Adults PPL.

Joint Adult Inspection Framework (Care Inspectorate/Health Improvement Scotland)

Representation on Reference Group, ongoing engagement with members to inform the development of the Framework.

Mental Health Officer (MHO) Subgroup

The work of the Sub-group has been varied throughout the year, but particular focus has been on the following:

- MHO Capacity and funding
- Winter planning and the role of the MHO in discharge planning work
- Mental Health Law Review
- Interface between social work/MHO and Police Scotland

The latter is an emerging piece of work that will, most likely, be progressed to the CSWO Meeting for further discussion as it is the view of the group that changes to Police Scotland approaches will potentially impact adversely on vulnerable people and the capacity of social work and MHO services to respond.

Significant work has been undertaken in respect of establishing future funding to support MHO capacity across Scotland. Survey and analysis with MHO subgroup members regarding use of monies and future requirements undertaken. Adults PPL chairs the MHO Capacity Short life Working Group (SLWG)

Learning Disability & Autism Subgroup

Involvement in the Senior Strategy Group, the Dynamic Support Register development, and the Complex Care Support Needs Pathway has been a priority for the Learning Disabilities & Autism subgroup Group. The subgroup has played a critical role in thinking through the complexities of the practical implementation of the measures and the design of robust community-based services to support people with learning disabilities and complex care needs.

Active membership of the Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill Stakeholders Groups – shaping the Bill and undertaking pre-consultation work

Consideration, and engagement with academic research with respect to supports available for parents with a learning disability.

Older People's Subgroup

Membership of the HIS Standards & Indicators - Care of Older People/Ageing and Frailty Development Group. Drafting new standards to replace the previous "Care of older people in hospital standards."

Membership of the Palliative and End of life Strategy Development Group
Membership of the Dementia Strategy Development Group and Implementation Group.
Key partners to “winter planning” discussions, as referenced previously.

Adult Support & Protection (ASP) Subgroup

The Adult Standing Committee is well represented in the implementation of the refreshed ASP guidance. Work is being undertaken in respect of self-evaluation, Inquiries, chronologies, and advocacy. There are connections across this workstream with the Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE) workstream and work being led by Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor (OCSWA), with support from Social Work Scotland (Adults PPL), around the development of an Advanced Practice Framework

Self-Directed Support (SDS) Practice Network

The Practice Network continues to engage with all national workstreams and groups and is supporting work on (but not limited to):

- Personal Assistant (PA) programme Board and measurement of PA workforce (NCS preparation)
- Development of Direct Payment Model Agreement.
- Development of self-evaluation and improvement including current Lens groups
- Community of Practice
- SDS Collaboration

Further work to include:

- How we support implementation of Improvement Plan
- Request to GIRFE Team to speak attend PN to update on GIRFE and SDS

Independent Living Fund (ILF) Practice Network

The Practice Network is supported jointly by Social Work Scotland and ILF Scotland. Work includes:

- Collaborative approach to updates to policies
- Continued support for ILF reviews

Further work to include engagement with ILF Scotland and the ILF Coproduction Group for the reopening of ILF in April 2024.

Proposed Future Actions

- Continued development of the subgroup workplans, using the priority headings of the Adults Standing Committee.
- Continued engagement in the workstreams noted above, supporting, and encouraging connections at policy level with the purpose of influencing the development of the National Care Service
- Ensure strong and consistent social work perspectives and leadership is visible throughout these discussions and developments.
- Consideration of the positional power of social work in the integrated structure
- Develop a substance use subgroup, reporting into the ASC structure.
- Widen the remit of the mental health group beyond MHO considerations, to include perspectives on social work community mental health services.

Children and Families Standing Committee

Background

Children and Families Standing Committee is the primary group overseeing children and families work. It is supported by six subgroups: historical abuse, child protection, residential care, community placements, early help and family support, and reviewing officers.

2023 saw a return to 6 weekly meetings. While challenging in terms of covering the agenda, this is a more manageable ask of people's time. Attendance remains high, with evidenced commitment to the extensive, cross cutting range of issues impacting on children's services. Our subgroups remain active, each one providing practice and development input on their specialist areas.

At our last AGM, our chair, Joan Tranent, was confirmed in that role with Alison Sutherland as vice chair. In summer 2023 Alison moved to a new role with Promise Scotland. Michelle McCargo and Charles Rocks agreed to share the role of vice chair, though acknowledging their limited availability for wider tasks. Alison remains a SWS and standing committee member providing a useful additional practice link with the Promise.

The intense agenda for children increased over 2023 influenced by the developing awareness of the impact of the pandemic and an increase in policy and legislative change around Promise, children's reform, National Care Service and UNCRC. There has been a particular youth justice focus through the care and justice bill, Reimagining Secure Care, and the review of ACR. The Children's Hearing Redesign working group report also contains extensive proposed changes to a critical part of our childcare system in Scotland.

In addition to the GIRFEC refresh there has been a noted focus on work related to resources:

- a series of roundtable events jointly led by Scottish Government and SWS on the crisis has in recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- Review of Part 13 guidance on kinship care.
- Registration changes in residential care and
- Additional evidence sessions and a new phase in the SCAI.

Perhaps one of the most discussed areas over 2023 has been unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. With an unshakable belief and commitment to those young people, the impact of the number of arrivals via NTS and spontaneously has pervaded all aspects of services, placing unexpected and unplanned for demands on already stretched provision. The disconnect between the Scottish and Home Office approaches to migration creates a particularly complex dynamic.

Across the sector we are seeing increasing workforce pressures with evidence of staff moving from children's social work to other areas due to the demands and public perception of children's social workers. This is in wider context of underlying anxiety resulting from the NCS and implications for children and families work.

Highlighted Activity

2023 has seen an increasingly varied range of children and families work. Of note is:

- Consultation responses related to legislation and policy initiatives e.g. care and justice bill and an increase in more 'informal' consultations.
- Evidence sessions and accompanying briefing papers at Parliamentary committees (UNCRC, care and justice financial memorandum and the bill itself, online child sexual exploitation).
- Extensive contribution to national UASC work, advising Scottish Government and COSLA on the social work role, highlighting pressures and sharing solutions and practice.
- Hard-won involvement in the later stages of the Children's Hearing Re-design work contributing to discussions to inform the government response and future governance of implementation.
- International links with Moldova; with countries where Barnahus is established; and through the international child protection conference held this year in Edinburgh.
- Challenging but important work on access to records.
- Increasing regular liaison with Scottish Government and other bodies to advise, contribute, initiate and challenge.
- Increasing asks of committee members to represent social work in national forums.
- Being the voice of practicality in many spaces, emphasising the importance of attention to implementation, sequencing of change and the capacity of the workforce to ensure the intent of legislative, policy and practice change is achieved.
- Contribution to financial calculations as part of government legislative work.
- Increasing focus on framing and its positive impact in the children's area.
- Involvement in the trauma work as it reaches out into children and families spaces. Utilising the knowledge and skill of our JII team to inform that agenda.

Proposed Future Actions

As we move in to 2024 we will continue to meet online but with at least one face to face development meeting to consider our priorities and how best to manage the agenda. This may be supplemented by sessions to consider specific matters. There are many developments already underway or on the horizon reflected in our work plan, in addition to wider whole profession matters. As the national agenda progresses, we anticipate the activity becoming more intense and the importance of our role in making those links and sharing learning to become more critical.

We will continue with our current model of a model of updates, discussion on key issues, a focus at each meeting on one subgroup area, and utilising the committee as a space where we can share and approaches and developments. We have developed a model with a chair and sub chair for each subgroup, mirroring our approach to standing committee, allowing responsibility for to be shared as well as facilitating continuity planning.

Despite the very challenging context we close the year incredibly privileged to have an active and committed children and families membership, who provide freely the benefit of their expertise and knowledge to inform a significant national agenda at a time of major challenge. Children and Families Standing Committee and our subgroups, respond to new initiatives, funding complexities and asks to provide their wisdom. As a result we move in to 2024 with confidence in that commitment to the profession, to SWS as an organisation and to ongoing improvement.

Digital Policy and Practice activity

Background

The Digital Policy and Practice Advisor commenced their role in September 2022. This role was created to support priorities within Scottish Government and COSLA's joint Digital Health and Care Strategy.

Original priorities of this role included, supporting Social Work Scotland, Scottish Government, the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor, local authorities and Integrated Joint Boards to:

- Create the conditions for the implementation of technology and digital services/digital working in social work and social care.
- Supporting TEC teams to understand current social work-related issues and contexts, to inform the development of digital solutions.
- Secure relevant development and funding opportunities for social work
- Collaborate with other sector-based digital leads on pieces of work that support the delivery of the TEC programme.
- Support the development of proposals for the National Social Work Agency, ensuring priorities around digital and technology are incorporated.

Highlighted Activity

Near Me in Prisons: Social Work Scotland, in conjunction with COSLA, Scottish Government have developed a project proposal to explore the use Near Me in justice social work in prisons.

Near Me could reduce travel time for social work staff, improve communication with family and support services, and facilitate collaboration among key partners for effective pre-release planning, ultimately helping to improve outcomes for individuals.

While initially the project will be piloted in a small number of prisons (likely 2 or 3), the goal is to develop a process that can be implemented more widely across the prison estate.

This work has already garnered significant interest from MSPs, including the Minister for Social Care and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. It is hoped that work will commence in early 2024.

Near Me in Hospital Discharge Planning: Support is being provided to colleagues from Dumfries and Galloway HSCP to explore and implement use of Near Me in hospital discharge planning.

Near Me in Fife HSCP: Fife HSCP have rolled out use of Near Me across adult social work services. Unfortunately, implementation hit several issues and the project team has been disbanded. However, there is still potential to make this work. An evaluation has been developed, along with recommendations for improvement. Meetings are being arranged with social work leadership in Fife to progress this.

Health and Social Care Data Strategy Implementation: Ongoing work is taking place to support the implementation of the Data Strategy. This includes providing input to the Data Standards Governance Sub-Board and the Data Delivery Sub-Board, as well as supporting SWS participation in the Social Care Data and Intelligence Programme Board.

Digital Front Door Development: SWS are part of the Digital Front Door (DFD) Service Development Framework group. This group aims to develop a structure through which services can

be added to the DFD. Our role is to ensure that the needs of social work are considered and that the DFD is fit for social work services.

Digital Skills and Leadership Programme: We have been providing ongoing feedback to the Digital Skills and Leadership Programme. This is to ensure that all outputs from this programme are tailored to and inclusive of the needs of social work. This has included the development of the MSc in Digital Transformation in Health and Care, the Digital Mindset Masterclass, and the Digital Leadership Programme.

Proposed Future Actions

Develop a SWS Digital Sub-Group: Aim is to develop a Digital Sub-Group so social work leadership across Scotland can collaborate, share practice, and provide peer support around digital innovation in social work practice. A chair for this sub-group has been identified, and pending approval, the aim would be for this group to commence in early 2024.

Explore use of Near Me in Other Areas of Practice: Initial discussions have taken place to explore wider use of Near Me within other areas of social work practice to address some of the pressure points in the systems. This includes remote and rural areas as well as in fostering and adoption teams and in residential care settings. The aim is to progress this further.

Support CivTech Challenge: A Scottish Government programme that brings the public, private and third sectors together to create digital solutions to public sector problems. This round there will be a focus on some social work challenges, and there will be a role to support this as it progresses.

Workforce and Resources Standing Committee

Background

The Workforce and Resources Standing Committee is well attended by social work leaders from across all sectors and other key partners. There are two sub-groups that sit within this area:

- The Contracts and Commissioning Subgroup
- The Learning and Development Subgroup

The vision of the Standing Committee

The vision of the Standing Committee is to support the social work profession across Scotland. A profession which is led effectively and creatively; is responsive to the needs of the people we support and protect; is accessible and accountable; and promotes social justice. Where the social care, education, justice, health, and other services, within which social workers work, are adequately funded in relation to need, and are available on an equitable basis across Scotland. The Workforce and Resources Standing Committee and its subgroups, support the global definition of social work as a profession that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people where the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central.

The aim of the Workforce and Resources Standing Committee

The aim of the Workforce and Resources Standing Committee and its sub groups is to drive forward actions that support safe practice and workforce wellbeing for the social work workforce. Actions developed and taken forward, seek to support the professions' ability to influence the development of the workforce (from education, into newly qualified years, and throughout a social work career) and the component areas that affect the commissioning of services to enable the delivery of services reflecting the core values of social work. The Workforce and Resources Standing Committee and its sub groups, work to ensure that the profession has the skilled, qualified, and supported workforce required to deliver a social work service in line with legislation. That the workforce is supported through their training and into their career with effective and accessible training and development opportunities and commissioned services that allow them to carry forward legislative duties and policy initiatives through relationship-based practice, from a human rights perspective.

The cross-cutting issues

There are several cross-cutting issues which are shared across the work of the groups, including areas such as recruitment and retention, social work education, training, and continuous professional development. There are ongoing resource and market challenges impacted by both local, regional, national, and worldwide challenges which have affected the profession. We have been discussing the development of the National Social Work Agency and the on-going negotiations around the National Care Service Bill.

Highlighted Activity

Social Work Education

The Workforce and Resources Standing Committee continue to work closely with SWEP (The Social Work Education Partnership). There is representation from SWEP on our Social Work Scotland Highland and Island Chief Social Work Offices meeting every fortnight. SWEP are also standing members of our Workforce and Resource Standing Committee and Learning and Development sub group. SWEP have supported us to have a conversation with our Higher Education Institutes who are seeking to appoint a member of their group to join our standing committee. This creates an excellent opportunity to share information and collaborate.

University of Stirling SGSSS Collaborative Studentship proposal

Social Work Scotland is taking a lead role in working with Stirling University (Scottish Graduate School of Social Science) (SGSSS) and six local authority partners. We are jointly funding a Social Work PhD to understand the changing nature of office use, agile working, and online communication in Scottish Social Work. The research seeks to understand how changes in the working environment are influencing social work practice in Scotland. What proportion of social work is carried out in offices, practitioners' homes, service users' homes and other spaces. How do different office configurations impact on practice. The impact of agile working and technology on working spaces and engagement with service users. Also, how social workers and service users perceive the impact of changes to working places and spaces. We are looking forward to this research opportunity and the rich knowledge and understanding we anticipate it will provide.

Contracts and Commissioning subgroup

At our recent subgroup we were hearing from North Ayrshire in relation to the innovative work they are engaged in around The Adult Social Care Ethical Commissioning Group. The group's aim is to create an implementation plan. IRISS recently led a session on how best to go about this. The team acknowledged that there is still a lot of good conversation on-going around how they achieve the principles and how these are implemented. One observation is that there's not enough focus on contract management within ethical commissioning. They have circulated a self-assessment to HSCPs to complete. The outcome of the self-assessments should provide a good overview of where HSCPs currently are.

The Workforce

There are many issues that continue to impact on this area and therefore the strands involved are extensive. The list below is by no means exhaustive but gives a flavour of some of the items we have been discussing within our standing committee and subgroups.

- Recruitment/retention and succession planning
- The Advance Practice Framework
- Mental Health Officer Capacity
- SSSC Return to Practice Requirements
- SSSC Continuous Professional Development reforms
- The review of SSSC codes of practice
- How Social Work prepare for the workforce from their education experience and opportunities to becoming newly qualified workers and how they are supported.
- The National Social Work Agency and on-going National Care Service Negotiations.
- Self-Directed Support-Choice and Control
- Relationship Based Practice and Human Rights.
- International Recruitment
- Social Work Data-reporting around vacancies and trends.
- Working conditions
- The impact of on-going legislation and policy implementation

Our projects

National Joint Investigative Interviewing Team (JII)

Background

The National Joint Investigative Interview (JII) Team continues as a collaborative partnership between Social Work Scotland, COSLA and Police Scotland to drive forward the changes in practice in joint investigative interviewing in Scotland. The training team of nine are supported by two implementation leads. The team continue to be primarily based at the Scottish Police College, Tulliallan but travel across the country as required to support work in relation to the new model of practice for JII in Scotland.

Highlighted Activity

The introduction of the Scottish Child Interview Model across the country continues to progress well.

Cohort 13 which began training with the team in August includes social workers from Western Isles and police officers from Highland, based both in Western Isles and in mainland Highland. This will be the first of the three Island local authorities to introduce the model.

Beyond the Island authorities, there are two remaining partnerships to introduce the Scottish Child Interview Model: Forth Valley and Tayside. Both partnerships are actively involved in preparing their local system to install the new model.

The National JII Team continue to provide a range of support to all areas across Scotland. This extends from the preparatory work required before installation of the model, right through to continuing professional development support for those interviewers live in practice, plus support in thinking about how learning from implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model can be utilised in considering Bairns' Hoose developments.

The National JII Team has begun work to scope out issues (such as that outlined above) relevant to supporting sustainability of the model and engage with each local partnership individually to gather area specific information to understand what is required to support making the full transition to the Scottish Child Interview Model. This information is increasingly relevant in preparation to move from the current stage of the National JII Project – introducing the Scottish Child Interview Model across the country – to the next stage of the project: full transition to Scottish Child Interview Model and ceasing use of other interview approaches for joint investigative interviews.

Proposed Future Actions

The National JII Team have a critical role beyond training into practice. Work in 2024 will focus on -

- offering ongoing contact and support to live in practice sites with direct case related queries. The team are committed to offering a responsive central point for support with complex cases in what we now recognise as a specialist area of practice.
- Initial individual evaluations and supported peer sessions/ all forms of evaluation of practice.
- Training for managers and those undertaking practice evaluations locally.
- Regular CPD events in response to emerging training and learning needs.
- Expansion of the Speech and Language Specialists group that tutor on the course and work to develop specific CPD.
- Facilitation of themed data workshops with two planned in early 2024. Promotion of structured surveys nationally to gather feedback from children and families. Research by Justice Analytical Services is underway, and it will be a priority area of data capture in their valuable and long-awaited research.
- The team will continue to facilitate quarterly discussion forums, involving all live in practice sites.
- Roll out of bespoke training for staff at the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). Attendance and engagement at each session so far has been high, with Reporter staff feeding back positively about the session content.
- The review of the National Guidance for joint investigative interviewing. The guidance will become statutory. A small co-ordination group will monitor the progress of the revision of the guidance. Content will be drafted largely by the National JII Team and shared on an ongoing basis with interview teams and other colleagues across the country so that it can be primarily

shaped and informed by those who will use it.

- Recent important links have been made and will hopefully be progressed with the Judicial Institute. Aims for shared learning and how children's experiences of the justice system can further be advanced is a priority for the team where their work can inform or support other policies or partners approaches to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and the capture of best evidence.

Social Work Education Partnership

Background

Scottish Government, through the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser (OCSWA) provides funding to **Social Work Scotland** to host the SWEP Programme Office, which consists of five staff members to deliver specific components of the National Strategic Partnership Group agreed work plan, to work with member organisations to enable delivery of agreed actions and to provide secretariat support for the Partnership.

The SWEP Programme Office consists of the Partnership Delivery Manager (PT) , the Depute Partnership Delivery Manager, Two progress Leads (North & East) and a communications and project officer. These posts are currently hosted and for two year rolling contract until March 2025.

The SWEP Programme Office is responsible for, and reports to the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, on the delivery of objectives agreed in an annual Business Plan.

The Scottish Social Services Council has specific responsibility under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 for the approval of social work qualifying programmes. The Social Work Education Partnership does not have responsibility for approval or assurance of social work qualifying programmes, but will support and enable the delivery of consistent, high quality social work education across Scotland.

Highlighted Activity

1st Quarter 2023 (Jan -Mar)

- SWEP NSPG agreed to hold an independent review of all financial costs associated with a practice learning opportunity
- Early discussions with Scot Gov on viability and development of the Trainee Social Work Scheme and progression of Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme
- New manager recruited and appointed in post Feb 2023
- SWEP attended the first NSWA Education and Training Sub Group.
- SSSC/SWEP/OSCWA Development Session in Dundee
- Pilot of a new SSSC Practice Learning Database for PL funding returns was live and SSSC updated the SWEP NSPG.
- Challenges around Student bursaries became a prominent topic, with letters from student Social Workers to Ministers and petitions being considered by Parliamentary committees.

2nd Quarter (Apr-June)

- The SWEP NSPG Terms of Reference were redrafted to better reflect the work of the NSPG, the updated membership and role of SWEP Programme Office. These were agreed by the NSPG and will be reviewed in April 2024.
- Brief developed and procurement starts on the PL Finance review through SSSC portal. Awarded to colleagues from Learning Network West (May 23)
- In partnership with the APF subgroup, a series of consultation events on the core competencies required to build the framework developed.
- Road show of APF events up and down country attended by approx. 200+ social work staff.
- Recruitment package confirmed for the Regional managers posts. Interviews held and appointment made to North and East
- The discussions about a traineeship route engaged with HEI and Local Authority colleagues across Scotland to seek expertise around current routes, needs and further develop an 'options appraisal' for Ministers. Meanwhile ongoing discussions on GA
- The NQSW report was published by SSSC and presented to the SWEP NSPG. Interviews were conducted with all early implementation areas to inform the next stages of this work moving forward to full implementation in 2024.

3rd Quarter (Jul-Sep)

- Communications and Project Coordinator recruited to begin the process of wider, clearer communication structures for the SWEP programme Office and the work of SWEP.
- The PL funding research was underway, expecting to report to SSSC and SWEP Programme Office in August/September 2023.
- A change in chair for SWEP NSPG as Iain Ramsay took over.
- The NSPG received an update on the development of the National Social Work Agency including the Education and Training Workstream which is lead also by IR. Further discussions on where this aligns with the work of the SWEP NSPG
- Productive meeting held between the SWEP Programme Office and COSLA to seek to reengage COSLA representatives in the work of SWEP and attendance at the NSPG.
- Amendments to the SSSC Practice Learning and Teaching Requirements were presented at the SWEP Sep meeting with agreement from the SWEP NSPG to move forward.
- The PL funding research concluded and further discussion will begin on the recommendations at the In Person SWEP meeting Nov 23.
- The SWEP NSPG agreed for a sub-group to be established to support the next stages of the NQSW supported year work and implementation.

4th Quarter (to date)

- The SWEP NSPG held first in person meeting this year in Nov and agreed:
- the timeline for next stage of engagement and consultation events for the regional infrastructure development.
- Priorities and deliverables to be considered in an action plan for PLO Funding based on the research recommendations.
- The SWEP Programme office had a team development day in October.

Proposed Future Actions

- Publish overarching National SWEP Work Plan, integrating series of SWE threads.
- Process next stage developments for the consultation, framework and implementation of the regional infrastructure
- Development of action plan and deliverables on the restructuring of a national schematic for Practice Learning finance.
- Continue to support and create a conduit for the workforce, stakeholders, investors and deliverers of the various social work education policy themes currently in planning i.e NQSW supported year, Trauma Responsive Social Work Services, Advanced Practice Framework, routes into social work education qualification such as trainee and graduate schemes.
- Positioning of SWEP in alignment with the NSW Education and Training workstream actions

Self-Directed Support

Background

Social Work Scotland's SDS project is now in its fifth year, and undertaking a range of project activities linked to the national SDS Improvement Plan coproduced with the National SDS Collaboration, Scottish Government and COSLA and published in June 2023.

The project activities are being taken forward in eight workstreams, with six of these workstreams active in 2023-24. Each workstream follows a project management approach and has a core group of stakeholders from across disciplines and sectors.

In addition, the SDS project supports an SDS Community of Practice with around 150 members.

Highlighted Activity

Workstream 1: Review of SDS standards

A review of the national SDS standards, developed by the project in years 2 and 3, are being reviewed to ensure that they are relevant and sufficient post-pandemic as we move towards new social work and social care arrangements. The project is using equalities impact methodology to examine the standards through different perspectives and lenses. This will result in refined expression of the standards, streamlined core components, and evidence for the development of practice guidance in line with the new SDS statutory guidance. The review is halfway through taking evidence through focus groups and interviews, with the aim of completing the redraft by end March 2024.

Workstream 2: SDS practice resources

This workstream is currently producing an SDS practitioner toolkit and assisting SDSS with an SDS handbook. We continue to support the development of the SDS Library hosted by the Care Inspectorate. Future activities will be determined on the basis of evidence gathered in the review of SDS standards.

Workstream 3: Self-evaluation and improvement

A 100-day test of an approach to self-evaluation and improvement was concluded in September 2023, with three local authorities taking part plus a linked test for independent support organisations, project managed by SDSS. Evidence from the test is being used to refine the approach and develop

practice guidance. We plan to engage with wider stakeholders in early 2024 with a view to a second phase of testing with a larger group of local authorities in 2024-25.

Workstream 4.1: Direct Payment model agreement

Research was undertaken earlier in 2023 to determine the contents of Direct Payment agreements across Scotland. Work is currently underway on developing the components of a set of standards of good practice for DP agreements with employers of personal assistants. Future work will include improving workforce confidence in supporting option 1.

Workstream 4.2: PA wellbeing

This workstream is considering ways to support the wellbeing of the personal assistant (PA) workforce. Additional support has been drawn in from IMPACT to research the effectiveness of wellbeing resources for PAs including the Blue Care social care card.

Workstream 7: Training and practice development

A specification is being developed for research into the provision of SDS training and practice development for the social work workforce across Scotland to support future work to develop a standard for training in line with the Advanced Practice Framework.

Community of Practice

We host quarterly half day events and eight seminar meetings annually. This year, we have had around 40 regular attendees at the events and between 50 – 140 attendees at our seminars.

Updates on all our activities can be found in our regular project bulletins. To be added to our distribution list, contact Calum at sds.team@socialworkscotland.org

Proposed Future Actions

We are awaiting discussion on funding allocations for 2024-25, but our hope is to continue to work on deliverables for the existing projects, and to begin work on the following:

Workstream 5: Relationship-based practice

Identify relevant practice models for assessment, support planning and review, including best practice as defined in the SDS standards.

Review current use of relationship-based practice, and explore the barriers and opportunities to extending RBP in SDS practice.

Workstream 6: Budget approval processes

Work with local authorities on redesigning budget approval processes in line with the refined SDS standard 12.

Get in touch

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