**Public Services Reform**

# CSWO/SWS Reform Objectives and Red Lines

***Developed by CSWO/SWS Public Services Reform Reference Group***
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## Purpose

At the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) meeting of 3 October, it was agreed that Social Work Scotland should, on behalf of members, set out objectives and red lines in reference to the reform of Scottish public services. These would provide a framework to inform negotiating positions, and against which to assess reform proposals. The CSWO group agreed that public services reform presents an opportunity to strengthen social work's contribution to Scotland's communities, but that core principles must not be compromised if reform is to command the confidence of social work leaders.

This document sets out reform objectives and red lines identified to date by Scotland's CSWO. Please note that in many instances objectives and red lines are closely interrelated, and there is therefore some duplication between the sections.

## Objectives (for public service reform)

1) The availability and accessibility of support for people is enhanced and extended. (Reform proposals must evidence how they will improve delivery of public services, from the perspective of people and communities across Scotland.)

2) People experience fewer organisational boundaries when seeking support; a more joined-up system.

3) Public services empower individuals, families and communities, giving effect to people's human rights, promoting equality and reducing poverty, and enabling people to have choice and control over the support they receive.

4) Local democratic accountability for public services has been strengthened, not weakened, by reform.

5) The financial and human resources available to support early action (in response to a person or families' needs) must increase, because of public services reform. (This requires there to be a baseline assessment of the allocation of resources between "preventative" and "acute" in current model.)

6) Social care provision and social work services are rooted in a social rather than medical model.

7) Social Work remains a single, integrated profession, incorporating all the disciplines across adults and older people, children and families, and justice.

8) Social Work is recognised (in reform proposals) as a profession spanning all public service functions, including community development and wellbeing, prevention, protection, assessment, and direct provision of support. Social Work practice is relationship-based, and social work services are key to realising social justice in Scotland.

9) Social Workers continue to have access to, and be represented by, organisations independent of central, regional or local government.

10) Reform proposals articulate how they will positively address workforce retention and recruitment challenges associated with social work, and wider social work services.

11) At every level of (public services) governance there are structures of professional leadership and governance for social work, equivalent (i.e. parity) to those of other professions operating in the same space. At a minimum, reform must retain the CSWO role, responsibilities and independence.

12) Social work leaders can see how they have materially influenced the final reform programme.

**Red Lines**

1) **Social Work must remain a distinct profession -** Future arrangements must preserve the integrity of social work as an integrated, single profession. Reform should strengthen, not weaken, professional identity, values, ethics and statutory responsibilities. Adult, children and families, and justice social work are all part of one profession and should not be treated as separate workforces with competing priorities.

2) **Public sector professional leadership must be protected -** The role, influence, authority and independence of Chief Social Work Officers must be maintained and strengthened. Whatever structural changes emerge, there must continue to be clear professional leadership and oversight for social work practice, public protection and statutory responsibilities, and this should be accountable to locally elected representatives / councillors. Professional leadership should be recognised as a critical component of effective public services rather than simply an organisational function.

3) **Social Work must not be reduced to a protection service -** Public services reform must recognise social work as a relationship-based profession, relevant and valuable at all stages of an individual or families' need for support. It is a positive addition to people's lives, and is primarily about making things happen for people (not stopping things from happening). While the protection of individuals and the public is a critical function of social work, it is only part of the profession's contribution. Public service reform should strengthen social work's role across early intervention, therapeutic support, rehabilitation, (non-compulsory) family support, promotion of human rights, community development and wellbeing, enabling independent living, pursing social justice ***and*** public protection. The profession is much more than its crisis response and risk-management functions.

4) **Maintain local democratic accountability for public services -** While there may be opportunities for regional collaboration and shared services, social work and social care services must remain accountable to local communities, and their local elected representatives. Reform should not create further distance between decision-makers and the people and places they serve.

5) **No transfer of social care (adult or child) into the NHS –** While structures matter to the delivery of social care, they are inconsequential in comparison to the availability of financial and human resources, organisational cultures, and levels of demand. Transferring social care into the NHS will not, in itself, resolve or improve any of these aspects. And while the NHS has many strengths, it is not an appropriate structure through which to provide social care; a public service function profoundly different to healthcare. Social care must remain grounded in a social model of public service delivery, giving effect to people's right to choice, control, independence, relationships and community, underpinned by holistic, ecological assessments of best interests.

6) **No national Justice Social Work service -** Reform must not lead, intentionally or inadvertently, to the creation of a national "probation" service in Scotland.

Justice social work should remain an integral part of the wider social work profession, with strong connections to local communities, local leadership and local accountability arrangements.

7) **Reform proposals must evidence how they will improve people's outcomes, or experience of public services -** Structural change should not be pursued for its own sake, considering the disruption (and consequential negative impact) that it will have on public services in the short to medium term. Simplification of the public sector landscape is only relevant if it can be evidenced that it will make things better for the people of Scotland, through the availability, quality and responsiveness of public services. The risks and costs of any change to public services structures are enormous, and so a business case, and accompanying impact assessments, must accompany any set of formal proposals. If the primary objective of reform is financial savings, this should be stated explicitly, enabling grown-up discussions about how to achieve the objective while minimising the impact on people and communities. Reform should be judged by its impact on people's lives rather than by the number of organisations, tiers or governance arrangements it creates or removes.