

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2025-2029

April 2025



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# Foreword

Our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming report** sets out how we continue to make sure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the centre of our work. This report reviews the progress on our 2021-2025 equality outcomes. It also sets out our outcomes for the next four years.

The two years since the publication of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Progress in April 2023 have been a challenging period for everyone. Social work, social care and children and young people workers continue to provide high quality, critical services every day. They make sure that people's needs are met and rights are upheld in every part of Scotland.

As the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce in Scotland, we protect the public and set standards for practice, conduct, training and we support workforce and professional development. In May 2024 the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise, Natalie Don MSP, launched the revised **SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers** (the Codes). The revised Codes have a greater focus on relationships and help to ensure people's needs and rights are respected. In June we introduced sweeping changes to registration which aim to make our processes easier to understand and help people to see the benefits of registration.

We continue to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within our organisation. This report sets out several steps that we are taking to improve the way we recruit, retain and develop our employees. It also highlights our new People Strategy for 2024-2027.

Our outcomes for the next four years set out challenging priorities for us. As the regulator we are uniquely placed to continue developing high quality information on the diversity of the workforce and to deliver high quality learning resources. We are reviewing the National Occupational Standards which underpin the key qualifications for registered workers. We want to continue improving the way that we consider lived experience throughout our work. We also need to continue promoting an inclusive approach within the SSSC.

This report sets out how we will work towards these critical objectives and continue to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion within our organisation and the wider registered workforce.

Maree Allison  
Chief Executive, Scottish Social Services Council



# 1. Introduction

## About the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and this report

The SSSC is the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

We protect the public by registering this workforce, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social work, social care and children and young people services and their employers
- register this workforce and make sure they adhere to our codes of practice
- promote and regulate their learning and development
- lead workforce development and planning for this workforce in Scotland and provide national statistics.

This report summarises progress since 2023 and our 2025-2029 equality outcomes.

## The Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public body, we comply with the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). We pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not.

## Protected characteristics

The Act introduces [nine protected characteristics](#). It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic.

Age  
Gender reassignment  
Pregnancy and maternity  
Religion or belief  
Sexual orientation

Disability  
Marriage and civil partnership  
Race  
Sex



## **Mainstreaming and Equality outcomes, 2021-2025**

We use this definition of mainstreaming from the [Scottish Government's consultation on an Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy](#).

'.. mainstreaming means putting equality and human rights at the core of your business.'

'In practice, this means that equality and human rights are key to how:

- decisions are made
- policies are designed and developed
- services delivered
- money is allocated and spent.'

## **Data annex**

Alongside this report we publish a separate data annex which has information on:

- our employees' protected characteristics
- the recruitment, retention and development of SSSC employees
- our pay gap and data on grades.

## **Our Strategic Plan 2023-2026**

Our [Strategic Plan for 2023-2026](#) sets out our priorities. We have four strategic themes and outcomes that will have a positive impact on the safety and wellbeing of people using social work, social care and children and young people services.

### **1. Trusted**

People who use services are protected by a regulated workforce that is fit to practise.

### **2. Skilled**

Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice.

### **3. Confident**

Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce.

### **4. Valued**

The social work, social care and children and young people workforce is valued for the difference it makes to people's lives.



## **Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

In August 2023 the Council approved our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#). The policy applies to all employees, secondees, agency staff and anyone else working on behalf of the SSSC. The next scheduled review of our policy is in August 2026.

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. Our work actively promotes human rights and core principles such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect and autonomy.

- We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our varied roles which include being a public body, regulator and an employer.
- We recognise and value the benefits a diverse workforce brings to our work.
- We treat everyone fairly and with respect, including registrants, staff, applicants and all other key stakeholders.
- We will go beyond minimum statutory duties when considering and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for people with characteristics not protected by law.
- We are supporting initiatives to increase the diversity of our workforce and the social service workforce in Scotland.

## **Human rights, children's rights and Corporate parenting**

- It is good practice to consider equality and human rights together when drawing up equality and human rights policies. This report sets out the steps we take to promote a human rights based approach.
- We also report on our steps to promote children's rights and our role as a corporate parent.
  - [SSSC Children's Rights Report 2023](#)
  - [SSSC Care Experience Report 2024-2026](#)



## 2. Equality Forum and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group

### Equality Forum

All employees can attend our Equality Forum. The Forum:

- promotes our approach to mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion
- encourages employees to reflect on how their role contributes to our outcomes
- is a safe space for employees to share best practice, raise concerns or discuss topical issues with colleagues
- learns from guest speakers.

The forum has a charter for inclusion and contributed to development of our equality outcomes. As of February 2025 the forum has had seven sessions. The forum has explored several topics such as taking an anti-racist approach, translating human rights into practice and understanding neuroinclusion at work. The forum has also explored how we can better support disabled students.

An anonymised summary of the group's sessions – along with any suggestions for improvements – is considered at our quarterly Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG) meeting.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG)

The EDIG's membership includes all Heads of Department and it is chaired by a member of our Executive Management Team (EMT). Our EDIG supports the mainstreaming of equalities within the SSSC.

The EDIG has additional roles such as:

- promoting and mainstreaming good practice throughout SSSC
- supporting the development and implementation of our mainstreaming and equality outcomes
- being a source of advice on the development of Impact Assessments (EQIAs) and to track actions
- updating, monitoring and reviewing an action plan which includes the actions in our mainstreaming and care experience reports.



# 3. Registration is changing, June 2024

In June 2024 we made several changes to the Register. We changed:

- the Register to four parts
- the timescales that new workers must apply for, and gain, registration
- the qualifications we accept and timescales for gaining qualifications
- the way registrants update us as they now complete an annual declaration
- how registrants update their account via our registration portal, MySSSC
- [return to practice requirements for social workers](#) who have been off the Register for more than two years
- our approach to [Continuous Professional Learning \(CPL\)](#).

## Registration is changing – mainstreaming equality

- We developed Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) for these changes. These assessments consider the equality needs and the feedback from people with different protected characteristics. We commissioned an independent analysis of the equality and business impact of the changes.
- In May 2024 we published the new [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#). Revising the Codes is a part of our commitment to [Keep the Promise to Scotland’s children and young people](#). The new Codes also reinforce the connection with the [National Health and Social Care Standards](#).
- [As part of our consultation on the Codes](#) we asked respondents whether the new language promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. Over 80% of respondents indicated that they do this ‘well’ or ‘very well.’
- The Codes are available in several languages including Cantonese, French, Polish, Romany and Sinhalese. We have a British Sign Language (BSL), Braille and easy read version. A full list is available from our website and we will provide other languages on request.
- We asked people about proposed changes to the structure of Register, registration periods and the delivery of qualifications. We asked whether these proposals would promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Most respondents said that the proposals would be neutral or that there would not be a negative impact. Some people identified positive impacts. Two examples follow.
  - Most respondents [welcomed a reduction in the number of Register parts](#). These changes aim to help make registration more straightforward and easier to understand.
  - Most respondents [welcomed changes to make it easier for workers to move between adult and children’s roles](#). Our view is that increased flexibility of qualifications can support career pathways and opportunities for workers.



## 4. What we did: reviewing our equality outcomes 2021-2025

### **Outcome one: To promote diversity in the social care workforce, including disabled people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with care experience.**

#### **Context**

We had four activities to support this outcome.

- 1a. Develop an enhanced approach to collecting and using workforce equality data to inform our understanding of the sector.
- 1b. Review and update the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.
- 1c. Continue our work with the Care Inspectorate and other key stakeholders to promote equality within the wider social service sector.
- 1d. Continue our relevant activities to support wider participation in the social service sector.

#### **1a. Develop an enhanced approach to collecting and using workforce equality data to inform our understanding of the sector.**

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 in Scotland.

- In 2023 and 2024 we published reports on Registration and Fitness to Practise data. The reports are available from our [data website](#).
- In November 2024 we published the [Analysis of diversity data and research report](#). This is the first time we have published information on areas such as sexual orientation and religion. The equality report has several key findings. For example, it tells us that at least 88% of registrants define as straight or heterosexual. It also confirms that at least 37% of registrants have no religion.
- We continue to publish official statistics on the Scottish social service sector. The [Workforce Data Reports \(WDRs\)](#) combine our data and administrative data from the Care Inspectorate. The WDRs include data on age, gender, disability and ethnicity. We publish reports on several other areas such as vacancies and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs.) All reports are on our [data website](#).
- We continue to gather qualitative and quantitative data from registrants and employers. In January we launched a survey to develop a better understanding of areas such as health, wellbeing and what it is like to work in social work, social care and children and young people services.



## **1b. Review and update the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers**

- We cover the Codes in section three of this report.

## **1c. Continue our work with the Care Inspectorate and other key stakeholders to promote equality within the wider social service sector and 1d. Continue our relevant activities to support wider participation in the social service sector.**

We continue to work with the Care Inspectorate, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and other key stakeholders to achieve our equality outcomes and priorities.

- We worked with the Scottish Refugee Council to create a guide on [Pre-Employment and Induction for Employers of Overseas workers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#).
- We worked with the Care Inspectorate to create [Safer Recruitment through Better Recruitment](#). The guidance covers several areas such as statutory obligations, equality monitoring and the role of values-based recruitment.
- Our [careers in care website](#) has resources such as [Ten steps to a career in care](#) and a [Careers Toolkit](#).
- We work with others to develop learning resources for people working in social work, social care and children and young people services. We support initiatives which promote equality of opportunity such as [dementia resources](#).

## **Newly Qualified Social Work, Supported Year and the Social Work Education Partnership**

As of October 2024 the supported year for newly qualified social workers (NQSWS) is mandatory for all social workers, as it is for many other professions. The supported year helps social workers to know what support they will receive from employers as they move from education into being a critical part of the workforce. We work with local authorities and partners to support the implementation of the supported year.

Further information is on our [dedicated NQSW website](#). Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is central to the implementation of the NQSW supported year.

- [The core learning elements for social workers: NQSW descriptors and mandatory learning activity \(January 2024\)](#) highlight the importance of understanding intersectionality, anti-discriminatory practice, rights based practice and applying a knowledge of social inequality and systematic oppression. The descriptors and learning activities set out critical priorities for the social work role such as:

'seeking to understand and reflect on people's values and beliefs, diverse backgrounds, cultural characteristics, language requirements, needs, experiences, and presences, understanding how these interact with the societal structures and adjusting my practice as required.'



- The [Definitions of employer support 2023](#) set out the mandatory requirements for all employers and are part of our ambition to create a strategic framework from qualification education through to advanced practice. The definitions reinforce the employers' commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We support the development of an Advanced Practice Framework for Social Workers and the development of a Graduate Apprenticeship route into Social Work.

### **Social Work Education Partnership and National Social Work Agency**

- We are a key partner in the [Social Work Education Partnership](#), the professional leadership body for the social work and social care partnership. We are also supporting the development of a National Social Work Agency.

## **Outcome two: Increasingly demonstrate how our work is shaped by our key stakeholders including people with care experience.**

### **Context**

We developed three activities to support this outcome.

- 2a. Support our staff to engage with and involve people who use services in the development of our approach and resources.
- 2b. Identify and establish a new forum for engaging with people who use services.
- 2c. Continue to promote and build upon our approach to raising awareness and the role of the Equality Impact Assessments.

### **2a. Support our staff to engage with and involve people who use services in the development of our approach and resources and 2b. Identify and establish a new forum for engaging with people who use services.**

In 2023 we published [Involving People: our engagement strategy and framework 2023-2026](#). The framework sets out key principles and a systematic approach to involving people from the outset of our work.

People with lived experience contributed to our review of the [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#). We involve registrants and others in social work, social care and children and young services in several areas, such as:

- developing the new [National Induction Framework for Adult Social Care staff](#)
- revising the [Decisions Guidance for Fitness to Practise Panels and SSSC staff](#)
- supporting the implementation of the [Newly Qualified Social Work \(NQSW\) supported year](#).

We are mindful of the need to avoid over consulting people when there is already a range of evidence on key priorities. Our work on the revised Codes of Practice, the new approach to [Continuous Professional Learning](#), the [Integrated Award](#) and the



review of the [National Occupational Standards \(NOS\) 2024/25](#) are all informed by key reports and studies such as the work of The Promise and our Registrant's survey.

We recognise that there is more to do and we are examining how we better involve people in our work. There are differing views on the strengths and weaknesses of a forum for involving people and we continue to do so on a project by project basis for now. We also had an internal review of how we meet the requirements of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) Scotland Act 2024](#).

We contributed to the [Open University's Witness to Harm research report](#) and we are considering how we can improve our processes and the way we support witnesses. Our screening team considers public referrals and we continue to look at how we can improve the accessibility of our website.

We want to take a trauma informed approach to our work. We did an initial [trauma informed lens](#) assessment of our organisation. Key improvements include the following.

- Some employees have completed the Law Society of Scotland's trauma informed lawyer certification.
- We developed and provided training to our wider legal staff group and our independent fitness to practise members. We continue to raise awareness of a trauma informed approach throughout the organisation.
- We renovated our hearing and witness rooms to provide calm spaces.

## **2c. Continue to promote and build upon our approach to raising awareness and the role of the Equality Impact Assessments.**

Impact Assessments (IA) help us to make sure that we follow legal obligations and other priorities. In April 2024 we introduced a new IA process covering six areas:

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Children's Rights and Care Experience Assessment
- Trauma Informed Assessment
- Islands, Fairer Scotland and vulnerable people Assessment
- Employer Assessment
- Sustainability Assessment

We complete an IA when we create or review policies, procedures, strategies and projects. Our IAs show how we consider these areas and made any changes throughout the development of our approach. For example, our IA on Complaints Handling highlights how we are working towards a child friendly process. We will update the IA to include the new Consumer Duty for public bodies and we will continue to publish assessments on [our website](#).



## **Outcome three: People increasingly view us as an employer of choice which promotes equality, diversity and inclusion in our recruitment processes and our existing staff**

### **Context**

We developed four activities to support this outcome.

- 3a. Improve our approach to recruiting SSSC staff from minority ethnic backgrounds
- 3b. Improve our approach to recruiting SSSC staff from a range of backgrounds.
- 3c. Establish new ways of ensuring our approaches reflect wider perspectives.
- 3d. Maintain our focus on nurturing and developing our staff.

Some of these activities overlap so we report on 3a, 3b and 3c together, before summarising activities under 3d.

### **3a. Improve our approach to recruiting SSSC staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, 3b. Improve our approach to recruiting SSSC staff from a range of backgrounds and 3c. Establish new ways of ensuring our approaches reflect wider perspectives.**

- We need to do more to develop a diverse workforce. The data annex for this report has information on the diversity of our employees, registrants and Census data on the overall population. We need this information to understand our progress. We will continue to encourage applicants and our employees to share their equality information and to look at how we can improve our approach.
- In 2024 we introduced the [Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework \(SCQF\) Inclusive Recruiter scheme](#). Using SCQF helps candidates to identify whether are suitable for a role.
- In 2025 we achieved [Disability Confident Level 3 Leader status](#). We offer a guaranteed interview for anyone who identifies as disabled and meets our essential criteria for a job. We actively identify and make reasonable adjustments to the assessment and interview process.
- In 2024 we introduced a [Care Experience Guaranteed interview scheme](#). The scheme offers care experienced candidates an automatic interview if they meet the essential criteria outlined in the specification. We plan for and make reasonable adjustments to the assessment and interview process as required. Our recruitment team can also offer pre-interview support.
- We worked with a local employability organisation to share our recruitment adverts and help candidates prepare for interviews. We participate in recruitment fairs and events where we share examples of interview questions and share tips and advice.



- We support our employees where possible or appropriate to undertake public duties or undertake voluntary work. This can include local government work, children’s panel or a community council. It also includes school mentoring programmes.

### **3d. Maintain our focus on nurturing and developing our staff.**

- In November 2023 we achieved the Silver Investors in Young People (IYP) award. The IYP’s Feedback Report recognises our work to develop a collaborative and cohesive approach. We are considering how we can implement the recommendations such as developing a Talent Management initiative and extending our coaching and mentoring programmes. In November 2024 we retained our gold Investors in People Award.
- We continue to add to our extensive range of mandatory and optional courses on our employee learning hub. Since 2023 we have introduced essential courses for staff on unconscious bias, protecting people and children’s rights. Employees can also access programmes on areas such as pre-retirement, menopause awareness and neuroinclusion at work.
- In 2025 we introduced a new course for our employees on understanding care experience and the Promise. Many employees complete additional courses or specialist training. For example, Fitness to Practice colleagues completed training on Unconscious Bias and trauma informed approaches.
- We continue to provide several resources for our employees such as a network of Mental Health First Aiders and an Employee Assistant Programme. We encourage and support employees to set up employee networks.
- Our People Strategy 2021-2024 covered areas such as how we recruit people and invest in young people. Key developments include a leadership and management programme on areas such as managing change, remote teams and Effective Communication. It also covers Insights Discovery, focusing on profiling and leadership.



# 5. What we'll do next: our equality outcomes 2025-2029

## 5.1 Developing our equality outcomes 2025-2029

Our new outcomes:

- build on activities where we have aimed to make progress between 2021-2025, such as a better understanding of the profile of our registrants
- are informed by feedback such as our registrant surveys, a consultation on the Codes of Practice, the consultation on the review of registration fees and a small scale survey of registrants on our equality outcomes in December 2024
- are informed by internal engagement with our Equality Forum and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, and feedback and sessions with external organisations as part of events for our Equality Forum
- align with our priorities in our [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) and our plans for [involving people](#), supporting [care experienced people](#), [promoting children's rights](#) and the People Strategy 2024-27 for our employees
- aim to reflect the [three aims of the public equality duty](#), namely eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunities and fostering good relations
- link to priorities in key reports and initiatives such as the Promise's [Plan 24-30](#) and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) Scotland Act 2024](#).

## 5.2 Equality outcomes 2025-2029

This section has our equality outcomes for 2025-2029. We briefly set out the context, what the data tells us and activities for each outcome. A final section sets out how we will demonstrate progress on each outcome.



## **Outcome one: We will improve our understanding of the diversity of the registered social work, social care and children and young people workforce.**

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. This includes data on the diversity of the registered workforce.

### **Why collect information on the diversity of the workforce?**

The data inform activities such as regulation and developing learning resources and help employers to recruit, retain and develop a diverse workforce.

- We will continue to gather data and publish reports which inform our understanding of the challenges for the workforce and the impact on different protected characteristics.
- We will implement updated Fitness to Practise Decisions Guidance, which brings discrimination into the category of behaviours where sanctions are more likely to be appropriate, particularly where the discrimination relates to protected characteristics. A revised version should be in force by Spring 2025.
- We will continue to respond to or participate in Scottish Government or other initiatives as appropriate, including any actions following the Scottish Government's review of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- We continue to explore measures which help us to understand the diversity of the Register, such as the percentage of registrants who provide unpaid care.
- We will continue to develop our understanding of how people move across education and the workforce. This data will help us understand some of the barriers to working in social work, social care and children and young people services.
- We will explore the data that we collect for the approved programmes that we [quality assure](#). This information can help us to develop a better understanding of the diversity of the current and future workforce.

### **How we will measure our progress on Equality Outcome one**

- We particularly want to improve our data on disability, gender reassignment, race, religion and sexual orientation. We will make progress if we:
  - continue to see improvements in the number of registrants sharing their equality data
  - publish more data on the registered workforce
  - continue to improve the data we collect and publish on the Register.
- We will continue to publish information which can help employers to recruit, retain and develop their workforce. Data also inform the development of our own approaches to regulation and workforce development. We develop Impact Assessments for many of our policies, procedures and activities. The data will help us to show we consider evidence and how we to improve our approach.



## **Outcome two: We will improve the way that we involve people in our work and how we consider our impact.**

- We will introduce a new procedure for paying expenses and paying for participants' time, demonstrating our recognition of the vital contribution and making sure that nobody is out of pocket when they support our work.
- We will develop and publish an updated version of our Involving People Engagement Strategy and Framework 2023-2026 which supports our employees to consider how they can involve people in their work.
- We will continue to identify ways of involving a diverse range of registrants' views in our work, building on our use of surveys and other approaches.
- We will look at how we can further improve the accessibility of our resources. A key priority is to develop child friendly or easy read resources.
- We are currently reviewing our Fitness to Practise and hearing process to identify where we can improve our person-centred approach. We also have a short life working group exploring how we can promote a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). We promote the PANEL (Participation, Accountability, Non Discrimination, Empowerment and Legality) principles within our work.
- We will amend our Impact Assessment process to respond to the implementation of the Consumer Duty and – if introduced in future – a Human Rights Bill.
- We will identify further ways of involving people and stakeholders in our work, which may include existing groups such as our Stakeholder Advisory Forum (SAF) and exploring how we can better sustain our approach to support and promote people to participate our work. This also includes organisations which focus on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in Scotland.

### **How we will measure our progress on Equality outcome two**

- We regularly involve people with lived experience in our work. We recognise that we need to do more. We will report on the steps that we have and are taking in our next outcomes and mainstreaming report. An initial priority will be to review our new procedure for paying people to participate in our work.
- We will continue to gather examples of how people with lived experience contribute to our work and feedback on their experiences. We will provide updates in statutory reports such as our next mainstreaming and children's' rights reports.



## Our learning strategy 2024-2027

We promote and regulate learning and development and lead workforce development and planning for people working in social work, social care and children and young people services. Our [Learning Strategy 2024-2027](#) set out the following vision:

'The social work, social care and children and young people's workforce in Scotland is appropriately qualified and engaged in high quality, continuous professional learning (CPL).'

As a result, workers are part of a trusted, skilled, confident and valued workforce, enabled to develop the knowledge and skills required to deliver services of the highest standard and grow as professionals across a rewarding career.'

- We are working with NES to create a National Induction Framework for adult social care staff. The resource covers themes such as respecting rights, delivering person centred care and mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion. We are also working to create a career opportunities tool for adult and children's social care. The resource will set out the skills and knowledge that people need to deliver high quality services.
- We have commissioned the Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW) to create an anti-racism learning resource for social workers. It will promote continuous learning and critical reflection on anti-racism in social work. We are a member of and endorse the [statement of intent by the Social Work Anti-racism Oversight Group](#), which includes the following definition of anti-racism:
- 'By anti-racism, we mean actively standing up against racism, challenging and changing the policies, practices, beliefs and behaviours that unjustly disadvantage people from minority ethnic groups. We also mean being proactive in creating a more inclusive and fair culture in social work'
- The [Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation \(IRISR\)](#) made two recommendations on reviewing the [National Health and Social Care Standards](#) and reviewing the [Care Service definitions](#). We are working with Scottish Government, the Care Inspectorate and others on both actions.
- We are developing practice guidance for workers on relationship-based practice and will publish this in 2025.
- Our Learning Strategy for 2024-2027 also sets out priorities for our learning and development activity over this period. These include supporting the Promise Scotland's Plan 24-30, care reform, the National Social Work Agency and the Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures plan.



## **Outcome three: We promote an inclusive culture within our organisation.**

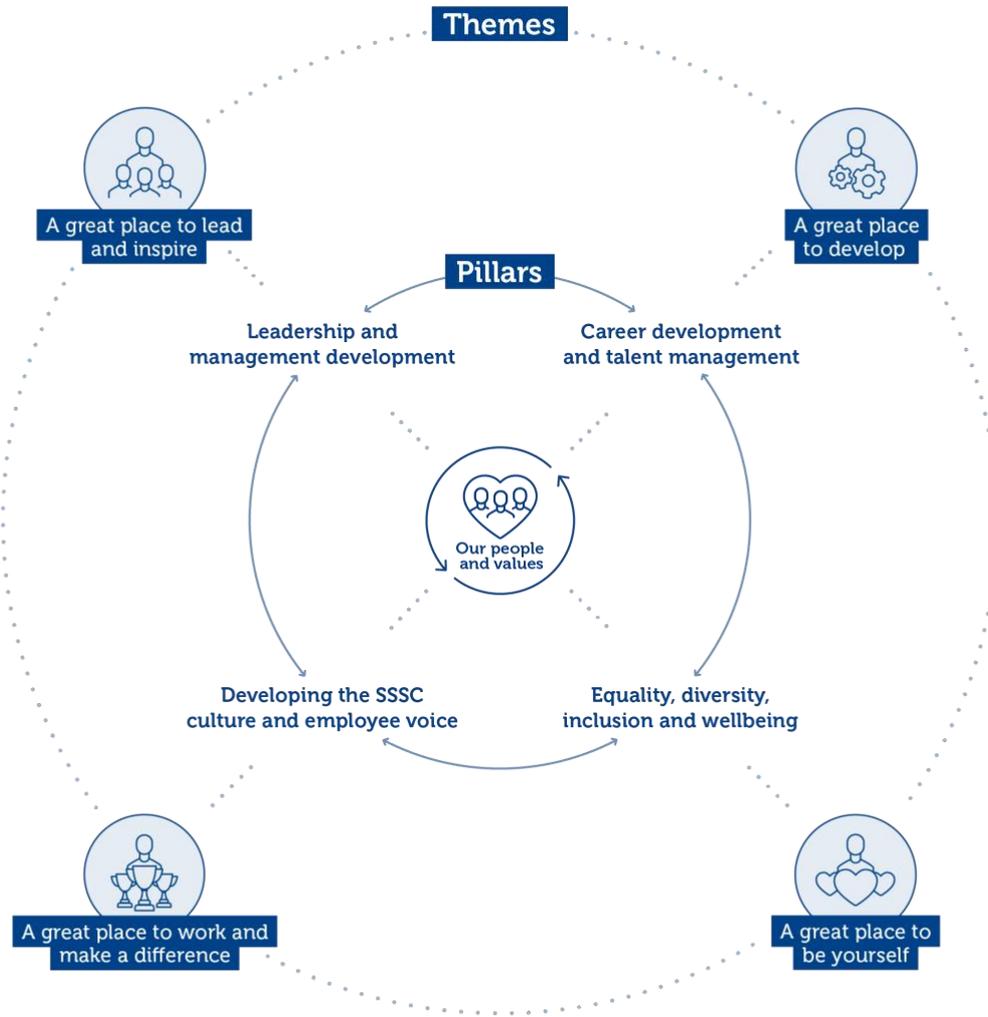
- We will implement our People Strategy 2024-2027, which includes a dedicated pillar on equality, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and wellbeing. We will review our approach to person specification and recruitment policies and procedures to explore how we can remove any barriers to a career with us.
- We will progress and implement initiatives such as our Disability Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), the Care Experienced GIS, the Disability Confident scheme and the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) inclusive recruiter initiative. We continue to build our equality forum for all employees and explore how we can create or support further forums for our staff. We are building a better picture of our existing employees and the diversity of people who apply for our roles. We will use this data to identify how we can make our processes more inclusive. Further information on our approach and a list of our accreditations is available from [the recruitment section of our website](#).
- We will continue to provide regular wellbeing and other courses for our employees on areas such as the menopause and preparing for retirement.
- We will continue to identify and consider recommendations as part of our commitment to Investors in People (IIP) and Investors in Young People (IYP) and findings from other key sources such as our employee survey.
- We continue to make reasonable adjustments at interview and when people begin working with us. We have an agile working policy. We have several ways that we can help people such as occupational health, Mental Health First Aiders and an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP.) We continue to explore how we can do more to support people from the moment they apply for a role with us.

### **How we will measure our progress on Equality outcome three**

- Our People Board monitors the effectiveness of our People Strategy 2024-2027 and provides annual reports to our Council. We get feedback from staff and implement recommendations as part of our Investors in People and Investors in Young People accreditations.
- We review and gather data on the numbers of people who apply for roles at the SSSC. We will explore how we can do more to develop a better understanding of the number of applicants, the number of people who are shortlisted and the number who are successful as part of the recruitment process.
- We monitor data on areas such as the percentage of employees who have completed relevant mandatory training courses. We will report on organisational development data in our equality outcomes and mainstreaming reports.
- We continue to measure our performance against this outcome by asking and reporting on relevant questions within our internal staff surveys.



# SSSC People Strategy 2024-2027, themes and pillars



## People Strategy 2024-2027: selected themes and actions

Strategic Theme	Pillar	Aims	New initiatives / actions to support aims	Starting measure June 2024	Progress measure
A great place to be yourself	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing	<p>To support our people to better understand equality, diversity and inclusion at work.</p> <p>To support and develop a culture of feedback, openness and challenge.</p> <p>To respond to emerging national policies, legislation and initiatives in this area of our work.</p> <p>To enable employee networks or communities of practice that support our people to connect on topics that matter to them.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support staff and managers to better understand and support equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing at work.</li> <li>2. Further raise awareness of our whistleblowing policy and procedures and support a culture of speaking up.</li> <li>3. Enable employee networks, communities of practice and interest groups, including for our young people.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2023/24: nine separate development sessions on a range of topics offered to all staff.</li> <li>2. 2022 staff survey results of 86% positive rating on inclusion and wellbeing question.</li> <li>3. Two active networks (EDI Forum &amp; PMO Community of Practice)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain or increase our offering of EDI based development initiatives by August 2025.</li> <li>2. Delivery of awareness sessions and increased or maintained staff survey score.</li> <li>3. Increase in number of active employee networks.</li> </ol>

# Appendix 1: Profile of our employees, the Register and the Scottish social service workforce

## Our employees

As of December 2024 we employ 308 people. Further information on the diversity of our employees is in the data annex published alongside this report.

## The registered workforce

We collect and publish a range of data on our registrants and the workforce. An explanation of the differences between registration and workforce data is available from our data website: <https://data.sssc.uk.com/what-we-do/registration-and-workforce-data>. Due to rounding errors some of the figures in these reports do not add up to 100%. Further information on the data including any guidance notes or advisory notes can be found in the individual reports.

## Registration data

In November 2024 we published our [Analysis of registrant equality data report \(the Equality report\)](#). The Equality report is a snapshot as of January 2024. A summary of the findings is contained in the data annex published alongside this report.

The report also includes data on Fitness to Practise and qualifications, although caution is advised due to the small numbers involved in many instances. See the Equality report for further information.

## Social service workforce data

In August 2024 we published [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2023 Workforce Data](#). This is the 16th workforce data report the SSSC has published and the 11th set of official statistics. The report combines administrative data from the Care Inspectorate with data collected by the SSSC directly from local authorities to form a comprehensive picture of the paid workforce employed in the social service workforce in Scotland at the end of 2023.

- The number of social service workers (headcount) increased slightly to 212,780, an increase of 0.6% since 2022. The social service workforce makes up approximately 8.1% of all Scottish employment.
- The whole time equivalent (WTE) measure of the workforce is 161,750, an increase of 0.5% since 2022.
- The stability index of the workforce is 74.4%. This means just under three-quarters of the workforce remained in the same post since last year.
- Approximately 82% of the workforce is employed on permanent contracts.
- The median figure for the typical weekly hours worked by staff is 33.
- Approximately 53% of the workforce work full time, more than 30 hours per week.



## Appendix 2 – Terminology used in the report

The Scottish Government's [2022 guidance on collecting data on ethnic groups notes](#):

- 'Ethnicity is a complex issue. There is no consensus about what constitutes an 'ethnic group'. Research shows that it means different things to different people, which can depend on the context or situation, and understanding of the term evolves over time. It encompasses aspects of identity, race, ancestry, history, culture, and it is very diverse.'

We also recognise that there are significant and complex sensitivities around sex and gender data. Our approach is informed by guidance published by the Scottish Government's Sex and Gender data guidance. We continue to look at how we can improve the way we collect this information.

We use 'people with lived experience' broadly to refer to people who use or have used social services and people who are carers. We recognise that this term is complex and that there is no universal term which capture all experiences. It is critical that we involve people from a range of backgrounds, experiences and needs.





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