

Introduction

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Over 160,000¹ people are registered with the SSSC and 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 social service workers, 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 also have a responsibility for workforce data and intelligence. We produce workforce data, information and intelligence for employers and other customers to support the development of the sector. We develop and publish Official Statistics and National Statistics on the social service workforce.

Comments from the Scottish Social Services Council

We note the scope of the petition and our comments focus on the issues raised under volunteer panel members. We have also outlined how our work more broadly links with the additional points the petitioner raises via the Independent Care Review.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) was established in 2001 through the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 as an executive government agency that would independently regulate the social service workforce. We are governed by a Council the majority of whom are not social workers or from the sector. A core element of regulation is to ensure professional standards are upheld and protect the public. In addition to this, we are also responsible for setting the standards for social work education and quality assure delivery of the programmes. The voice and rights of the child are central to the standards.

We operate a fitness to practise model of regulation. Fitness to practise is about protecting and enhancing the safety and welfare of people who use services. We must be sure that people on our Register meet the standards of character, conduct and competence necessary for them to do their job safely and effectively in line with the SSSC Codes of Practice. If a registrant's behaviour falls below the standard expected, a complaint, or referral, can be made to us by anyone and we can investigate.

We operate a fair and transparent investigation process that frequently requires input from adults, including carers and, on occasion, young people and/or their families, depending on the matters alleged. The factors we consider in decision making are

¹ <https://data.sssc.uk.com/registration-data>

published in our Decisions Guidance, appended to this response, and include seriousness and risk of repetition. If we decide a sanction is necessary, it can be imposed with the consent of the worker or at a public hearing.

During a hearing, allegations about a registrant or applicant are considered by a panel independent of the SSSC to ensure fair decision making. The panel is made up of a legally qualified chair, a member of the social services profession and a lay person. The Decisions Guidance is provided to the panel to ensure that their decision making is consistent and proportionate.

As well as our own role in investigating complaints about social workers, we have collaborated with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to develop model complaints handling guidance. We worked with the SPSO and other key stakeholders in the creation of a single process for all social work departments to follow when handling complaints. Once this complaints process has been exhausted, the SPSO can consider social work service complaints. This system is also operated independently.

We acknowledge the wider points raised by the petitioner. Whilst we have no specific comment to make under the additional headings, it is important to highlight that the findings of the Independent Care Review (the Review) published in February 2020. The findings have significant implications for our future strategic and operational direction.

Children's rights and relationships are central to care that is delivered going forward. The Review highlighted that the SSSC, along with other regulators, is at the forefront of shaping future care culture. Our focus will be on enabling relationships and ensuring meaningful collaboration with stakeholders.

In addition to the changes the Review requires, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) 2014 Act, we also have a legislative duty to make decisions that further the aims and are in the best interests of children and young people. This includes those who are care experienced in line with our corporate parenting duties.

We recognise that safeguarding vulnerable people is a key societal issue and we form part of a regulatory system designed to protect this group and prevent abuse of power.

Appendix 1:

[Decisions Guidance](#)