

SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

**Confirmed minutes of the Scottish Social Services Council held on
Thursday 23 June 2020 at 2:00 pm by video conference.**

Present: Sandra Campbell Convener
Theresa Allison, Council Member
Professor Alan Baird, Council Member
Paul Edie, Council Member
Julie Grace, Council Member
Lynne Huckerby, Council Member
Rona King, Council Member
Linda Lennie, Council Member
Peter Murray, Council Member
Russell Pettigrew, Council Member

In attendance: Lorraine Gray, Chief Executive
Maree Allison, Director of Regulation
Phillip Gillespie, Director of Development and Innovation
Lynn Murray, Interim Director of Finance and Resources
Laura Shepherd, Director of Strategy and Performance
Chris Weir, Head of Legal and Corporate Governance
Audrey Wallace (minute taker)

Observing: The meeting was live streamed, and 11 observers were noted

1. Welcome and quorum

- 1.1 Sandra Campbell welcomed everyone to the meeting. She confirmed that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed to the public, via a link which was available to any members of the public who had requested access.
- 1.2 Chris Weir confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 There were no apologies for absence. All Members were in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Linda Lennie declared an interest in item 3 para graph 2.5, regarding Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) for first year social workers. It was noted that there may be further declarations in relation to the items which would be discussed during the private session.

4. COVID-19 Impact Report

- 4.1 Lorraine Gray introduced report 37/2020 which provided an overview of the measures the SSSC has implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this included references to the recovery process, lessons learned, the new normal and business as usual for the future.
- 4.2 Lorraine Gray highlighted some of the areas covered in the report including action taken in relation to work of the Regulation department as well as the Development and Innovation department. She spoke about looking to the future to phase three of the Scottish Government's Routemap. This will include:
- how and which fitness to practise referrals will be progressed
 - recovery of fees where they are due or removal from the register if the person no longer works in the sector
 - reviewing the recruitment portal and what can be learned from this exercise
 - looking at the numbers of people in the sector workforce, will there be a change in emphasis and types of workers needed
 - changes to the way in which training and development is delivered - what has worked well and what has been less well received.
- We had a number of clear successes during the period, namely the paperless hearings and remote hearings which have seen an increase in engagement by workers, the recruitment portal and development of online training opportunities.
- 4.3 Additionally, the Executive Management Team (EMT) will look at changes to the internal working of the SSSC including talking to staff and other stakeholders about the use of flexible working and the use of space within the current office building. This would include how to implement different choices for flexible working, more use of broadcasting briefings from EMT members and the Convener. Members were referred to the information contained in the report and appendices covering the budget and the recovery plan which was broken down into sections for people, infrastructure and environment.
- 4.4 Members asked for further information and clarification on points referred to in the report.
- 4.5 Alan Baird asked about internal changes including online meetings which although bringing benefits, some situations were best served by face to face sessions and interaction; he was pleased to hear that staff were being consulted on their views. He also asked about the interface with other bodies that share the building such as Office of the Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Care Inspectorate.
- 4.6 Lorraine Gray confirmed that the size of the building was under consideration, the lease being due in 2023 and that consideration is being given to utilising the space differently, with perhaps more collaborative space rather than being used as desk space for staff. Additionally, although remote hearings work well for many fitness to practise cases, some do require a venue.
- 4.7 With regard to timescales for reporting future plans to Council, she advised that some of the digital projects would be later than first forecast but that a lot

of work had been done with the SSSC workforce so the concentration would be on the digital aspects for the wider sector workforce.

- 4.8 Lorraine Gray also assured Members that internal staff were still collaborating well with each other including virtual 'tea breaks' and had many opportunities to virtually call one another for peer support. While not the same as actual face to face conversations, there were opportunities available.
- 4.9 Lynne Huckerby reminded officers that the digital strategy should be aligned with the COVID recovery programme.
- 4.10 Peter Murray asked a question about the reduction in cases taken to fitness to practise hearings and whether there was any feedback or concern as to whether this was the correct decision at the time. Maree Allison responded to say there had been no feedback to suggest it had caused any issues adding that only approximately 12% of cases referred resulted in a hearing, so these were very low numbers in relation to the numbers of investigations. She continued by advising that the department was carrying out more research and she would present a report to Council in August. She also clarified that the main driver for cutting back on referrals to hearings was due to the intensity of the investigation process which put added pressure on the services and workers while dealing with the early stages of the pandemic.
- 4.11 Following a point made by Russell Pettigrew on the number of uncertainties raised by the pandemic, the future consequences and lessons learned, it was agreed that updates should be reported to each meeting of the Audit and Assurance Committee and meetings of the Council.
- 4.12 With reference to the budget, Lynn Murray confirmed that up to the end of May, the projected underspend was due to delays in digital developments and savings in some areas such as travel and subsistence and other costs associated with working in the office. There is also a delay in receipt of registration fees, but reminders have not yet been sent out to workers and figures still forecast that budget would be met by the end of the financial year. This will continue to be kept under review. Maree Allison specifically referred to the possibility of the sector workforce contracting and the implications that would have on the future budget. It was agreed that officers would provide a number of different possible scenarios to Members in order to help identify and plan for future risks that may affect the SSSC.
- 4.13 Asked about the effect of the Job Evaluation process on the budget, Lorraine Gray advised that further information on this should be available by August but would be more applicable to be reported through the Audit and Assurance Committee.
- 4.14 Lorraine Gray also advised on the decision to carry out the sector workforce survey in August and while she expected the responses to be fewer than usual, it was important to receive feedback at that time and she proposed that a second survey be sent out towards the end of the financial year.
- 4.15 Julie Grace asked about the implications for students given the decision of Disclosure Scotland to put a temporary halt on processing student applications

and noting that this applied to all social services students, not only social work students. Maree Allison confirmed that she would set up discussions with Disclosure Scotland to ensure that the agreement to process student applications was still being adhered to.

- 4.16 Philip Gillespie responded to issues raised by Peter Murray regarding the different roles of the Clinical Nurse Directors and the Registered Managers in care homes and the roles, training and development needs of each. He advised that the National Workforce Plan was being reviewed and this would include more investment in qualifications, skills and career pathways for workers in the social services sector. This should match the emphasis put on these areas within the health sector. There would be a significant focus on the benefits that digital training has provided. Alan Baird commented that this review of the plan is vital to the sector and the role that the SSSC plays in it will be critical. The sector, including the SSSC, must capitalise on the importance of the part the social services workforce has played during this pandemic.
- 4.17 Lorraine Gray and Philip Gillespie agreed that this was a critical time to highlight the importance of the sector and commented upon the national campaign being run with the four countries in the UK to highlight and promote the sector. A national focus will bring wider recognition and more resource to the campaign.
- 4.18 Mention was also made of the number of groups and other regulatory bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the General Medical Council with which we were in discussions during the pandemic and the recovery process. There was also ongoing collaboration between the EMT and Senior Team in the Care Inspectorate to share information. Paul Edie agreed that a joint development session with the Board of the Care Inspectorate and the Council should be scheduled in order to enhance sharing of information between the two bodies.
- 4.19 The Convener thanked Lorraine Gray and other EMT members for the comprehensive update.
- 4.20 The Council:
1. endorsed the actions outlined in the paper
 2. agreed that update reports be submitted to both Audit and Assurance Committees and Council
 3. agreed that a joint development session between the Council and Care Inspectorate Board be set up to facilitate sharing of information.

5. Emergency Placement Scheme

- 5.1 Maree Allison presented report 38/2020 which provided information about the Scottish Government request that the SSSC, if required, administer an emergency placement scheme to enable skilled volunteers to be released from their workplace to work in the sector and to receive payment for this from the Government.

- 5.2 Maree Allison advised that it was thought that this scheme would not be required but that a process should be put in place to enable such a service to be set up quickly, if found necessary. The request to the SSSC is built on the success of the recruitment hub which had enabled additional social service workers to be deployed during the pandemic.
- 5.3 Members asked a number of questions and raised concerns about possible reputational damage should any issues be associated with the SSSC through its part in enabling this scheme to go ahead. Maree Allison explained that the scheme enabled the volunteer to be issued with a certificate to authorise them to work. A volunteer who was placed would present the certificate to their current employer and also to the body making payment, to enable them to be employed and paid to work as part of the scheme. She stated that it was the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the volunteer was suitable and competent for the work. She was, as yet, unaware of what the certificate would look like.
- 5.4 Rona King asked for some detail on the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) that had been carried out. She was advised that there may be some issues with people with certain protected characteristics accessing the portal and work is being carried out on accessibility, but this is a longer-term process. The issues could be in relation to accessing the portal from different devices or platforms. There is insufficient information available at present and testing is required.
- 5.5 After some general discussion on content of the EIAs, it was agreed that a summary of information from the EIA should be included in reports where an EIA has been carried out, in particular the actions being taken to mitigate any adverse impact.
- 5.6 The Convener asked how well the recruitment portal had worked as she had heard conflicting accounts. It was acknowledged that the issue the SSSC was aware of was most likely the availability of the skills that were required in any geographical area. It was also noted that the skill set of available workers, the geographical challenges and the media coverage of care homes were likely factors in the use of and measure of the success of the portal. Phillip Gillespie confirmed that a report on lessons learned from setting up the recruitment portal would be brought to Council.
- 5.7 The Council:
1. approved that the SSSC administer the scheme, if its required, subject to clarification from Scottish Government as to
 - a. local authority authorisation and
 - b. certification requirements.

6. Date and time of next meeting

- 6.1 The next Council meeting will be held on 20 August 2020 at 10.00am.

Private Session

Item 7 was discussed in private and minuted separately.

Council 23 June 2020

Start time: 2pm

Finish time: 3.10pm

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S. Campbell', is written above the printed name.

Signed: _____

07 October 2020

Date: _____

**Sandra Campbell
Convener**