

## **FAIR WORK FIRST IN PUBLIC BODIES, JANUARY 2021**

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service 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 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.

This paper sets out our response to a letter (dated 17 December 2020) seeking feedback on our approach to implementing Fair Work First.

### **Procurement Strategy**

We have a joint procurement strategy with the Care Inspectorate. 'Delivering sustainable procurement' is one of the seven key priorities in the strategy. We deliver on this commitment in several ways.

1. Where relevant we consider fair work practices such as the living wage as part of the quality and technical evaluation criteria.
2. Where suppliers have staff working on our premises, these employees are being paid the Real Living Wage.
3. We also consider fair work as part of our evaluation of relevant contracts.
4. We maintain a sustainability tracker, where we capture all sustainability benefits and report on this in our Annual Procurement Report. For example, our [Procurement Strategy 2019-2020 report](#) confirms that many of the suppliers for our larger contracts have agreed to pay the real living wage or living wage.
5. Our Procurement Strategy for 2020-2023 also sets out our ongoing commitment to supporting SMEs, local business and the third sector. In 2019/20 our spend with SMEs was £1.6M, representing 29% of our total spend and 44% of our procurement spending. This includes spend of £15k with social enterprises.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our varied roles which include being a public body, regulator and an employer. As part of this process we require staff to use Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) to promote equality in our work. An EQIA should be developed for relevant policies and projects unless there is a clear reason for not doing so. We use EQIAs to consider several factors such as opportunities to tackle inequality and promote children's rights. Our EQIA process encourages internal and external consultation to allow interested parties the chance to effectively share their views. We expect staff to be generally considering opportunities to mainstream equality throughout their

work. All reports for our Executive Management and our Council must specify whether an EQIA has been developed.

We are also taking action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace – Our Gender Pay Gap is 7.4% which is lower than the public sector benchmark of 13.9%. We are currently working with specialist consultants to scope out a review which will ensure that our reward structures, including pay and grading, are inclusive and are matched with the Fair Work Convention.

### **Working in partnership with UNISON**

Our partnership forum agreement with Unison is inclusive of the fair work criteria. This Agreement sets out the Partnership Forum's aim to work in a spirit of co-operation based on mutual trust and respect to maintain a harmonious, productive and fulfilling workplace that proactively engages employees.

All of our staff are paid above the real living wage (£9.50 per hour) as our starting salary is £18,741 (£10.30 per hour) for a Modern Apprentice and £19,647 (£10.80 per hour) for business support staff. We do not employ anyone on a zero hours contract. We have staff who are part time and usually this is at employee request.

### **Investing in our workforce**

We have always been committed to investing in our workforce. In the past we have invested in our employees through initiatives such as modern apprenticeships, continued professional development and our employee-mentoring programme. We also support our staff to achieve further their educational goals through our continuing education policy. This policy allows employees to pursue further formal education with financial support from the SSSC. These initiatives have sought to ensure that our workforce have the skills and knowledge to thrive and to progress their careers with the SSSC. Investing properly in our workforce is one of the ways we put our value, "Work Together" into practice. "Work Together" is one of our core values and means that we treat each other with kindness and respect and value the contribution every member of staff makes.

To further our commitment to investing in our workforce, we have launched an organisational development programme called Evolve. It is about nurturing and developing our staff and managers throughout their SSSC work journey. We want to take an employee centred approach to continuous improvement, quality and development so this programme of activity and improvements is based on feedback from staff about what we need to do to make the SSSC a better place to work. We want everyone to know that we have listened and are acting on what staff have said.

We are measuring perception in this area through staff surveys through annual Investors in People and the Civil Service Survey as well as surveys on healthy working lives and wellbeing.

### **Fair work in wider social service sector**

This response focuses on our role around promoting fair work in the SSSC. We contribute extensively to national priorities around promoting social care as a rewarding career. We have developed career pathways and explored enhanced roles, for example health and social care workers who could provide a wider range of services. The pay, terms and conditions of the social service workforce are outwith our remit although we play a key part in reinforcing the criticality of the sector. The pandemic has continued to shine a powerful light of the vital role of the sector and the high-quality services these staff deliver.

We also actively contribute to and promote fair work across social care. For example, we contributing to the implementation of the Fair Work in Scotland's Social Care Sector 2019 report. The report's recommendations include the need for key stakeholders to apply the Fair Work Framework and commit to improving opportunities for progression for staff.

We have also undertaken research to understand the barriers and enablers to progression and identifying options for improvement. We are happy to provide further information on our wider role if that would be helpful.

**Scottish Social Services Council  
January 2021**