

# A LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

FOR  
**SOCIAL WORKERS**  
AND  
**SOCIAL CARE WORKERS**  
2019 - 2027



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

*“Rules, standards, regulations and enforcement  
all have a place in pursuit of quality...  
but they pale in potential compared to  
the power of pervasive and constant learning.”*

*“You always have two jobs; you have your job  
and you have the job of improving your job.”*

**Professor Don Berwick**

(A Promise to Learn, a Commitment to Act: Improving Patient Safety in NHS England)

# Chief Social Worker's Foreword

Society in Northern Ireland is changing rapidly. We are living for longer and communities are now much more diverse than ever before.

Developing new models of care and creating co-operation between formal and informal care providers is an important opportunity to be grasped. Having a dynamic, highly skilled and well-motivated workforce that can innovate and adapt to new ways of working will also be essential.

**Delivering Together-Health and Wellbeing 2026** sets the future direction for health and social care by identifying how to meet our existing and emerging needs. The social work and social care workforce is central to achieving its vision of person-centred, compassionate care delivered in communities, with and for service users, families and carers.

The learning and improvement of social workers and social care workers has, for many years, been a key strategic objective for the Department of Health in Northern Ireland.



This **Learning and Improvement Strategy** builds upon that commitment and plots a course for the future development of the social work and social care workforce.

By creating a learning culture in which staff are expected to continuously improve their practice to better meet people's needs, we will establish safer, more sustainable services in the coming years.

I commend the Strategy to you as an important contribution to delivering the changes we need to make, to meet our future social care needs.

**Sean Holland**  
**Chief Social Work Officer**

# Developing the Learning & Improvement Strategy

This is the fourth strategy to be produced in relation to the training and development of the social work and social care workforce in Northern Ireland. It follows-on from the Personal Social Services Training and Development Strategy 2006-16, which was successfully implemented through the concerted efforts of a wide range of individuals and organisations

The implementation of the previous strategy resulted in several notable achievements, including;

- an increase in the number of qualifications achieved by social workers and social care workers,
- significant improvements in the professional leadership and management of social work and social care services. and;
- the development of more flexible approaches to learning.

Above all, the previous strategy, alongside other important developments, created the expectation among social workers, social care workers and their employers that they must continuously develop their knowledge and skills in order to improve outcomes for people who use services, their carers and communities.

**This new Learning and Improvement Strategy** builds upon those successes and is intended to set the direction for the future development of the social work and social care workforces.

It has been informed by extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders who have provided very helpful input. Early planning meetings with key individuals in the sector and responses to consultations on the draft Strategy have contributed greatly to its' contents.



# Who is responsible for the Learning and Improvement of Social Workers and Social Care Workers?

A wide range of individuals and organisations share responsibility for the continuous development of social workers and social care workers.

**Employers** have the primary responsibility to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to competently fulfill their role and function.

**Social workers** and **social care workers** must also seek to improve and add to their skills set, which is a requirement of continued registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. Individual practitioners and teams should **want to** continuously improve their own practice, learn new methods, and demonstrate professional pride in what they do.

All learning and improvement activity should contribute to better outcomes for people who use services, their families and carers.



## The Strategic Context

The Learning & Improvement Strategy has been developed within a much wider strategic context. The projected growth of the Northern Ireland economy is likely to be modest for the foreseeable future, meaning that there will be a continued emphasis on budgetary constraint and achieving best value for money.

The impact of austerity measures will continue to be felt across NI, but most acutely in areas of high deprivation. As a consequence, the demands on public services, including social services, are expected to increase substantially in the coming years.

Northern Ireland has also experienced rapidly-changing racial, ethnic and cultural trends in recent years. The size of the total population is set to grow by around 6% by 2020, and the proportion of people aged 65 years and over will increase by 45% by 2030.

More people are living for longer and as a result, many of us will have long-term health and social care needs. How we deliver and receive our health and social care services will therefore have to fundamentally change in order to meet these growing, more challenging demands.

As part of the response to these changes, it will be necessary to build capacity in individuals, in families and in communities, to reduce inequalities and ensure the next generation is encouraged to stay healthy and well.

**Health and Wellbeing 2026 'Delivering Together'** (DoH 2016), sets the future direction for Health and Social Care in NI by identifying the importance of;

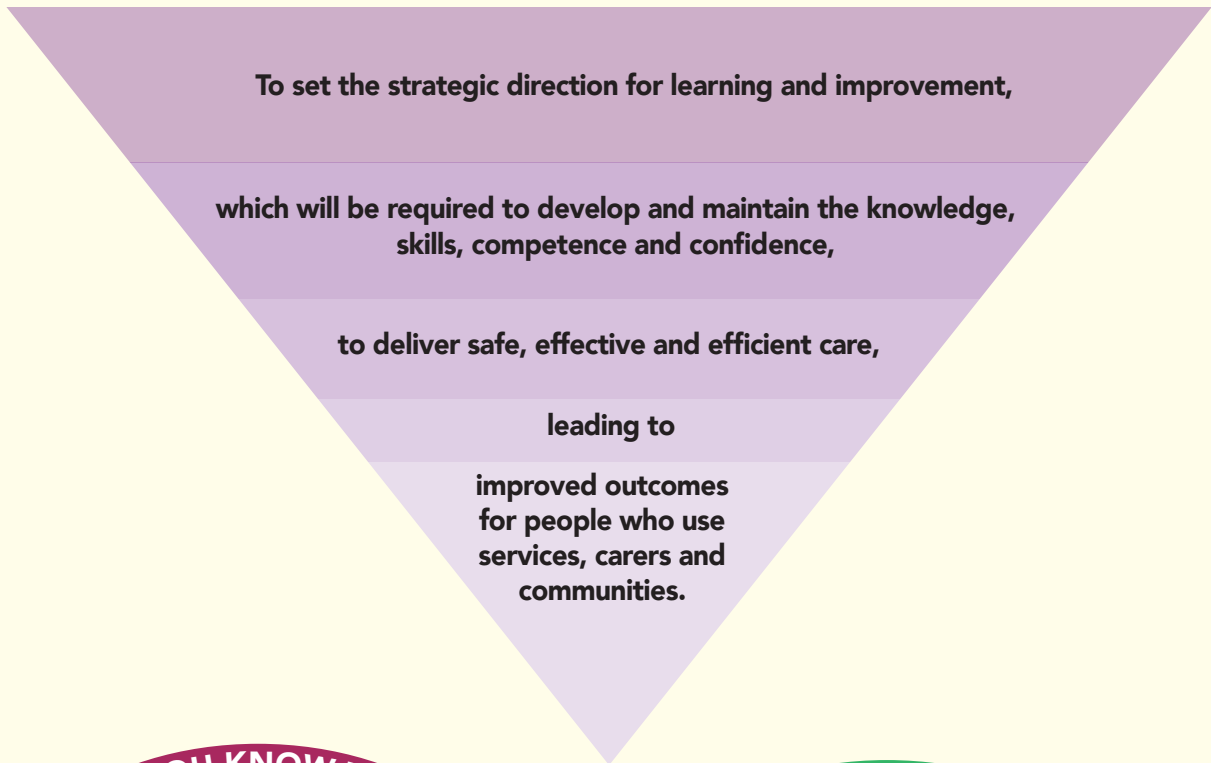
- supporting people to avoid ill-health and stay well in the first place,
- providing access to safe, high quality care when it is needed,
- empowering and supporting health and social care staff to perform their roles to the best of their ability, and
- designing services which are efficient and sustainable.

Alongside societal changes, the Learning & Improvement Strategy must also be informed by and complement existing legislation, policy and strategies – and take account of new and emerging ones.

For example, the Strategy for Social Work, Quality 2020, Making Life Better, A Whole System Framework of Public Health, Power to People, the HSC Collective Leadership strategy, and the Industrial Strategy for NI will all contribute to efforts to ensure that we have a competent and confident health and social care workforce in the future.



# The Aim of the Learning and Improvement Strategy for Social Workers and Social Care Workers is;



## DID YOU KNOW THAT?

....by 2020, the number of people aged 65+ in NI is expected to increase from 290,000 to 471,000.



## DID YOU KNOW THAT?

....61% of the NI population are adults, 23% are children and young people and 16% are older people aged 65+.



# The Social Work Workforce

Social workers often work with some of the most marginalised people in society, by promoting their rights, challenging inequalities and improving the quality of their lives. Social workers share a common purpose, which is to improve and safeguard the social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

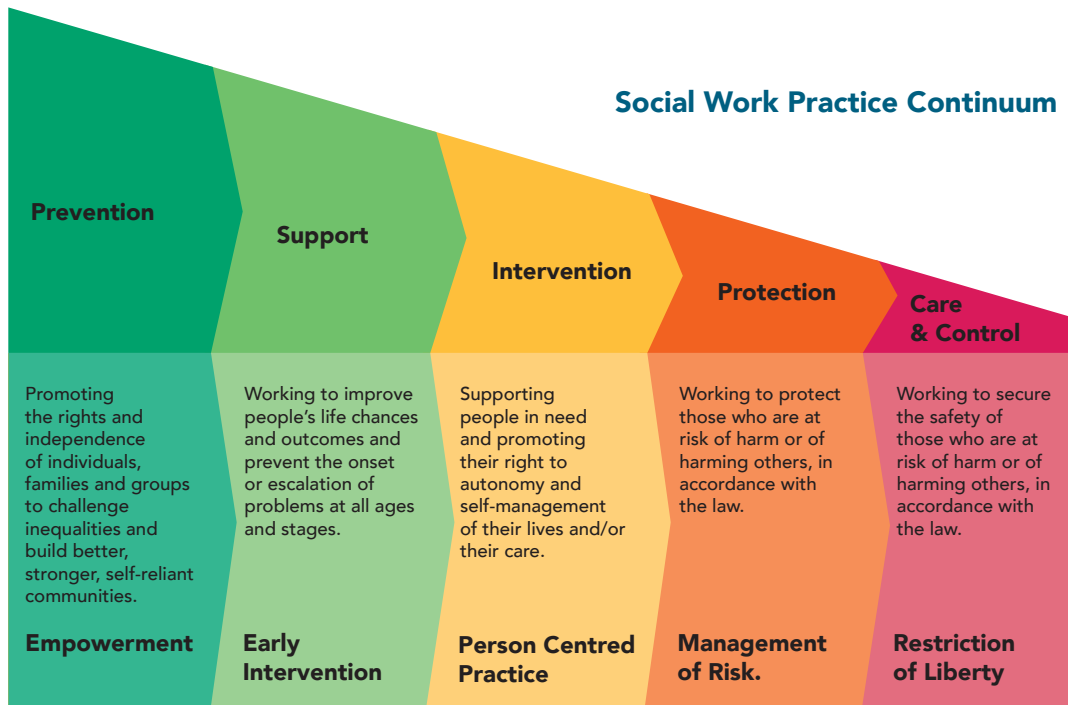
## Improving Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing is a broad concept and applies to many areas in a person's life – for example, how someone feels about themselves, the quality of the relationships they have with others, or the freedom they have to make important decisions which impact on their daily lives.

Social workers improve social wellbeing by empowering people to manage their own lives, by supporting social inclusion and participation in society, and helping people to stay safe and well.

**Central to the effectiveness of all social work practice is the quality of the relationships between a social worker and the people they work with.**

The Social Work Practice Continuum summarizes the range of functions which social workers typically fulfil, depending upon their job role. It reflects the diversity of life circumstances and needs of individuals, families and communities with which social workers work.





Social work practice is also underpinned by a core set of **professional values**;



## Social Work - interesting Facts and Figures

There have been significant changes in the social work workforce in Northern Ireland in recent years. The number of registered social workers has risen substantially from **5,060** in 2007 to **6,100** in 2018, which represents a **17% increase**.

The majority of social workers, around **70%**, are employed within the Health and Social Care sector; in family and child care settings, in adult services, hospitals, mental health teams and helping people with a learning disability.

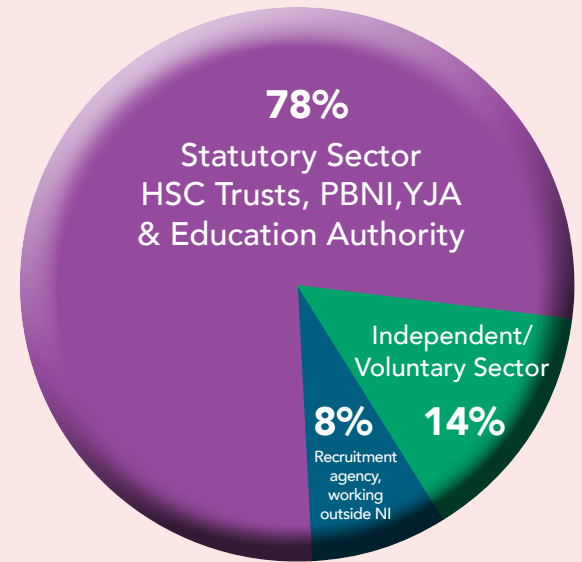
Social workers also work in many different settings and contexts. Within statutory agencies, such as HSC Trusts, Probation or the Education Authority, social workers typically carry out tasks related to legal or statutory requirements.

In total, around **80%** of all social workers are employed in the statutory sector. This often involves working collaboratively with a range of other public services such as the police, health professionals or housing providers.

Northern Ireland also has a rich history of many social work services being delivered by the voluntary and community sectors, often in collaboration with colleagues from statutory services.

### Who employs social workers?

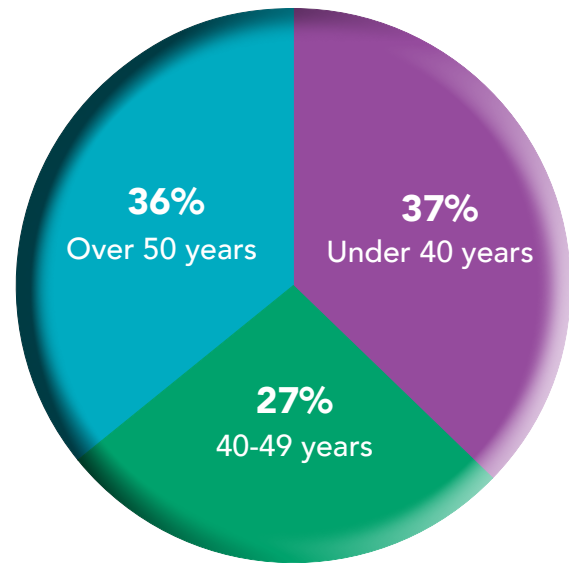
The pie chart below provides details of the sectors in which social workers are currently employed;



**17% increase**  
in registered social workers  
from 2007 to 2018

# Age and Gender of Social Workers

The profile of the social work profession in Northern Ireland is one of a mature, predominantly female (81%) and locally trained workforce which has remained relatively stable over the last ten years. Approximately 250 social workers graduate from Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University each year.



The majority (63%) of registered social workers are over 40 years of age and around one third (36%) are aged 50+. The majority of social workers employed locally are originally from NI and most have received their professional training at Universities here.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT?**

...all Probation Officers and most of the staff employed by the Youth Justice Agency are social workers.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT?**

...the majority of Education Welfare Officers are social workers.

# The Social Care Workforce

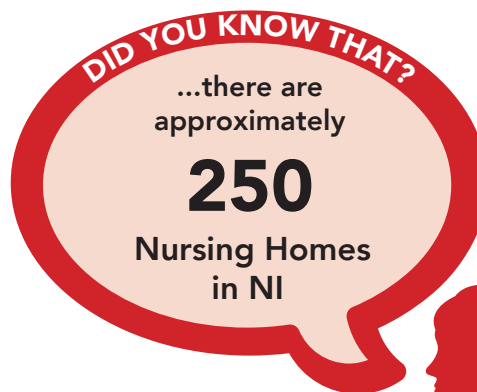
Social care workers help to support, protect and empower people to live as well and as independently as possible. They often deliver a range of practical help and emotional support to individuals, families and communities.

Typically, social care workers provide;

- personal care for individuals who have particular needs associated with ill-health, disability, frailty or aging,
- care for people in day care settings, domiciliary care or reablement services,
- more intensive support, in residential homes or delivering complex home-care packages; and
- informal community support, for example, befriending services or engaging with community groups.

People who work in social care often come from diverse backgrounds. The level of competence or type of qualification required to be a social care worker is determined by the role or job function, the nature of the care and support required by the individual or family, and the level of responsibility vested in the worker.

To become a social care worker, a number of employer criteria and regulatory requirements have to be met. The values, skills and personal qualities demonstrated by staff are key to the delivery of safe and effective, person-centred social care.



## Meeting individual needs

In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on the personalisation of social care to meet individual needs. There has also been a wider societal expectation that, where possible, a person's social care needs should be met within his or her own home or community. This is intended to give an individual or a family, greater choice and control over the kind of care that they wish to receive. The **Co-production** of services and Self Directed Support continue to be embedded in the suite of social care provision in NI.



### DID YOU KNOW THAT?

...the independent social care sector provides all Nursing Home care, 83% of Residential Home care and 68% of domiciliary care in NI.

### DID YOU KNOW?

...there are approximately  
**120**  
Domiciliary care providers in NI

## Social Care Work - interesting Facts and Figures

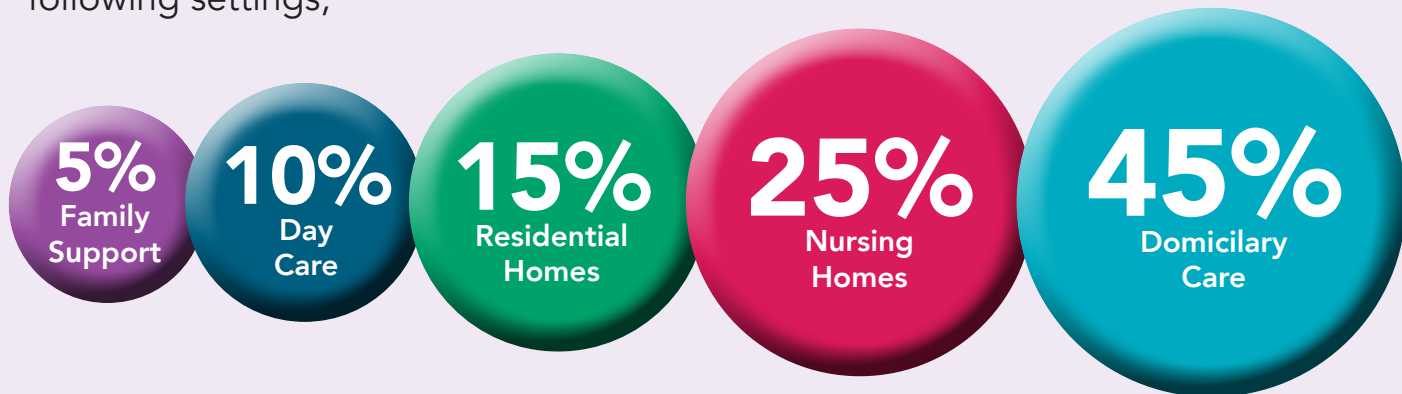
Since 2017, it has been compulsory for all social care workers to register with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) . There are approximately **33,000 registered social care workers**, which is the largest workforce in HSC, and represents 4% of the total workforce in NI.

A majority of social care workers have achieved qualifications which are relevant to their job role and function. All social care workers are expected to improve their knowledge and skills as a requirement of their continued registration with the NISCC.

There are approximately 900 registered providers of social care services in Northern Ireland. One quarter of the social care workforce is employed directly by the HSC Trusts. The majority (75%) of social care workers are employed in independent, private and voluntary sector organisations.

### Where do social care workers work?

Social care workers are typically employed in one or more of the following settings;



## Age and Gender of Social Care Workers

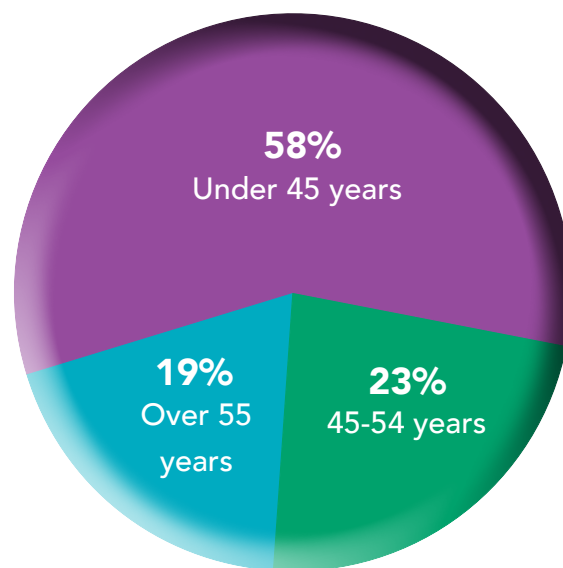
The profile of the social care workforce in NI is very different to that of social workers. As well as the difference in the size of the workforce, almost 19,800 (58%) of social care workers are under 45 years of age.

The social care workforce is also predominantly female (87%) and includes people from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.



For some time, employers have reported difficulties with the recruitment and retention of social care workers. This is a particular problem in rural areas and in the private and voluntary sectors where there can be less favourable terms and conditions of employment.

The co-ordination and implementation of key workforce policies, including those relating to learning and improvement, will help to determine the future recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and highly motivated social care workers.



### DID YOU KNOW THAT?

...most social care workers are employed by private, independent or voluntary sector organisations. Around one quarter are employed by HSC Trusts.

### DID YOU KNOW THAT?

...it is estimated that in NI there are around 33,000 social care workers providing services to the public every day.

# Registration, Regulation and Standards of Practice

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is responsible for approving the professional training for social workers, against a set of regional standards, and for approving post qualification training and learning provision. To maintain their registration with the NISCC, social workers are required to complete and record at least 90 hours of professional development every three years.

Social workers can accumulate Professional in Practice credits for learning achieved through a variety of routes, including formal training events, individual study and academic courses.

All social care workers in Northern Ireland are now registered with the NISCC. To maintain their registration, social care workers must also demonstrate that they have undertaken the requisite learning and improvement activity as prescribed by the NISCC. It is estimated that at present more than half of social care workers have one or more qualification which is relevant to their job role.

Employers of social workers and social care workers are expected to ensure that their staff are appropriately trained to competently fulfil the duties of their job role. This includes mandatory training courses and adherence to relevant minimum standards, which is monitored by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

The NISCC is also required to publish Standards of Conduct and Practice for social workers and social care workers. These provide clear criteria to guide practice and ensure that social workers and social care workers are aware of the standards they are expected to meet. The Standards also provide service users and carers with a clear description of the nature and quality of care they can expect to receive.





To achieve the Aim of the Learning and Improvement Strategy, we have identified **six Strategic Priorities;**



- 1. Relationship-based Practice**
- 2. Highly Skilled, Resilient and Confident Workforce**
- 3. Continuous Learning and Improvement**
- 4. Effective Leadership and Management**
- 5. Collaboration and Partnership**
- 6. Practising in a Digital World**

Each Strategic Priority has a series of associated Policy Statements and Actions which, if completed, will contribute to the achievement of identified Outcomes. An initial Implementation Plan will be developed to help to ensure that the Strategy receives the support needed to secure the delivery of the Strategic Priorities.

As before, the energy and commitment of the various stakeholders will be required to ensure that the Learning and Improvement Strategy is successfully implemented in the coming years.



## Strategic Priority 1:

### Relationship-based Practice

**Social work and social care work is about relationships – first and foremost with people who use services and their carers. The ability to build purposeful and trusting relationships to create positive change is the cornerstone of best practice.**

Social workers and social care workers engage with individuals, families, carers, communities and other professions in a concerted effort to produce better outcomes for and with people.

A co-production approach to improving social wellbeing is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those who support them. It allows all parties to work together to determine an outcome that draws on someone's strengths and assets, their knowledge, skills and abilities and those of a wider support network.

Tackling inequalities and promoting social justice using community development approaches can also enhance social work and social care practice by empowering and bringing about positive changes in the lives of individuals and in communities. It encourages people to take personal and collective responsibility and helps them to organise and work together to improve their own and others' health and wellbeing.

#### Policy Statements

1. A relationship-based approach will be an integral part of social workers' and social care workers' practice.
2. Social workers and social care workers will be supported to develop and maintain the values and skills they need to enable and empower individuals, families, carers and communities to improve their social wellbeing.
3. Co-production and use of strengths-based and community development approaches will be promoted as a means of building upon people's capacity to manage their own lives and bring about positive change.

## Strategic Actions

1. Education and training providers will ensure that there is a strong emphasis on relationship-based practice and co-production, in professional and vocational training for social workers and social care workers.
2. Learning and improvement activity will increase social workers' and social care workers' capacity to use strengths-based and community development approaches to their practice.
3. Service users and carers will be encouraged and helped to co-produce learning and improvement activity for social workers and social care workers.



**LEADING  
TO**



## Outcomes

- ✓ A relationship-based approach, based on empathy, reliability and respect will be integral to social workers' and social care workers' practice.
- ✓ There will be evidence of the increased use of strengths-based and community development approaches in social work and social care services.
- ✓ People who use services, their families and carers will be more directly involved in decision making regarding the design and delivery of the care they receive.
- ✓ The knowledge, skills, expertise and experience of service users, their families and communities will help to shape and inform the development of future social work/social care training, policy and practice.



## Strategic Priority 2:

### Highly Skilled, Resilient and Confident Workforce

**Social workers and social care workers play a crucial role in improving and safeguarding the wellbeing of people who use services. Ways of working are changing but values and principles will remain constant. Services of the future will be increasingly dynamic, flexible and responsive and build upon individual, family and community supports.**

Social workers and social care workers will need the energy, confidence and resilience to adapt to continuous change. Learning and improvement activity must focus on developing the knowledge and skills required to provide safe and effective care, which improves the lives of those people who use services.

#### Policy Statements

- 1.** Social workers and social care workers will be skilled, resilient and responsive, and demonstrate enthusiasm, confidence and competence in their practice, whilst upholding highest professional standards.
- 2.** Social workers, social care workers and employers are responsible for developing and maintaining the knowledge and skills needed to be safe, effective and caring practitioners.
- 3.** Social workers and social care workers will be supported to achieve qualifications which are relevant to their job role and function.

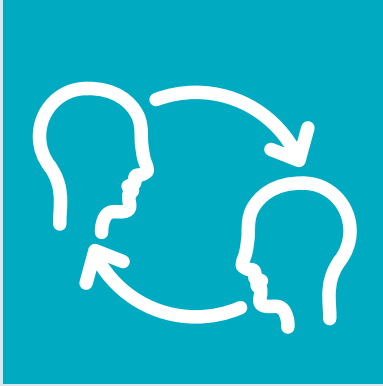
## Strategic Actions

1. An audit of qualification achievement in the social work and social care workforce in HSC will be conducted and appropriate targets set for future attainment.
2. The commissioning and provision of learning and development opportunities for social workers and social care workers will be reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose.
3. A Framework for Career Progression for social workers will be developed, which will link to the achievement of qualifications and/or learning criteria.
4. A Learning and Improvement Framework for social care workers will be developed which will be in keeping with the strategic direction for future social care provision.

→  
**LEADING  
TO**  
→

## Outcomes

- ✓ Social workers and social care workers will be supported in applying and sustaining core knowledge and skills into practice, and in the achievement of more specialist expertise and/or qualifications as their careers progress.
- ✓ There will be a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the commissioning and delivery of learning and improvement opportunities for social workers and social care workers employed in the HSC sector.
- ✓ Learning and improvement activity will focus on developing the knowledge and skills that are essential to the delivery of safe and effective care, leading to improved outcomes for people who use services, their families and carers.
- ✓ There will be an increase in the achievement of qualifications for social workers and social care workers in NI.



## Strategic Priority 3:

# Continuous Learning and Improvement

**A culture of continuous learning and improvement within any organisation is as important as rules, standards and control strategies in the pursuit of higher quality outputs. Organisations which employ social workers and social care workers must be committed to creating learning communities, in which staff are supported to be professionally curious, share information and expertise, are open-minded and want to do even better.**

The workplace should be exploited as a rich field of learning in which individuals can learn from their own experience, from each other and from planned and unplanned learning opportunities. All staff should be able to identify how any learning activity relates to their job function, and understand how acquiring new knowledge, skills and qualifications will help their employer to better meet the needs of those people who use services.

To ensure the effective transfer of learning to improving practice, new and more meaningful measures for evaluating the benefits of staff learning and development activity will be required.

### Policy Statements

1. Employers will encourage and support social workers and social care workers to engage in the continuous development and improvement of their practice throughout their careers.
2. Social workers and social care workers will be equipped to contribute to continuously improving practice and service provision, in partnership with people who use services.
3. Learning and improvement activity will be expected to deliver better outcomes for those people who use services, and agreed criteria will be developed to assess its impact on improving practice.

## Strategic Actions

1. Social work and social care employers will encourage and develop a culture of continuous learning and improvement at individual, team and organisational levels.
2. The knowledge-base for effective social work and social care practice in NI will be built upon and supported by evidence and validated research.
3. The impact of learning and improvement activity will be evaluated to determine the extent to which it improves practice and leads to better outcomes for people who use services.
4. Social workers and social care workers will build their capacity to lead and contribute to continuous improvement, in partnership with people who use services and their families.

→  
**LEADING  
TO**  
→

## Outcomes

- ✓ A learning culture will be evident at team, organisational and regional levels in social work and social care organisations, where staff experience a commitment to “help to learn” throughout their career.
- ✓ Social workers’ and social care workers’ practice will be evidence-based, underpinned by up to date research and they will be aware of the most effective ways of working within their chosen practice field.
- ✓ New methods will be designed to measure the quality of learning and development practice and its impact upon improving social wellbeing.
- ✓ Social workers and social care workers will demonstrate an expertise in measuring the outcomes and experiences of people who use services, their carers and wider support networks.



## Strategic Priority 4:

# Effective Leadership and Management

**High quality, safe and effective services, and the drive for continuous improvement in organisations comes from what leaders do – through their vision, commitment and modelling of appropriate behaviours. The best leaders and managers support and empower their staff by cultivating a positive organisational climate, promoting staff health and wellbeing and inspiring innovation and change.**

Social work and social care services of the future will require leaders and managers at all levels, who involve staff and people who use services in decision making, provide regular helpful feedback, and recognise achievement and excellence. They address systems problems as they arise and ensure that staff feel supported, respected, empowered and valued at work.

Leaders and managers should also engage in activities which promote a higher, positive public profile for social work and social care, leading to a better understanding of its unique contribution to improving and safeguarding the wellbeing of society.

### Policy Statements

1. Leaders and managers of social workers and social care workers at all levels will be equipped with the skills they need to provide professional leadership and management, coaching, and the development of others.
2. Leaders and managers will work collectively to appropriately influence relevant policy and strategy and the future development of social work and social care.
3. The future leaders of social work and social care organisations will be nurtured, encouraged and assisted to develop the knowledge and skills they require.



## Strategic Actions

1. Leaders and managers at all levels in social work and social care organisations will engage in a range of learning and improvement opportunities aimed at enhancing their leadership capabilities.
2. Leaders and managers will adopt a collective leadership approach to ensuring the development and future strategic direction of social work and social care.
3. Social work and social care providers will be responsible for ensuring that their staff have the knowledge, skills and expertise they need to deliver safe and effective care.

→  
**LEADING  
TO**  
→

## Outcomes

- ✓ Social work and social care organisations will have strong leaders and managers who drive safe and effective practice and are committed to securing the best possible outcomes for people who use services.
- ✓ Leaders and managers will work collegiately to influence policy, to set strategic direction and to promote social work and social care within a wider professional, political and economic context.
- ✓ The leaders of social work and social care organisations will nurture and maintain an ambitious and creative organisational culture which is focussed on learning and continuous improvement.
- ✓ Opportunities will be made available for future managers of social work and social care to gain the expertise and experience they will require to be the most effective leaders of tomorrow.



## Strategic Priority 5:

# Collaboration and Partnership Working

**Collaboration and partnership working is key to improving and safeguarding social wellbeing. Social workers and social care workers must be able to participate fully in existing partnerships, forge new and effective relationships with colleagues and be confident of their role and function within multi-disciplinary teams.**

Social workers and social care workers should continue to develop and enhance their skills in collaborative and multi-disciplinary working.

Effective partnerships in the provision of learning and improvement also offer the best opportunity for achieving higher standards and securing regional consistency. The partnerships in place between social work and social care employers, Further/Higher Education providers and service users, also help to ensure that professional and vocational training courses are of the highest quality and keep pace with changing needs.

### Policy Statements

1. Social workers and social care workers will have the confidence and skills to be effective and respected practitioners who can clearly articulate their role and function, and their contribution to improving and safeguarding social wellbeing will be understood and valued.
2. Social workers and social care workers will actively participate in multi-disciplinary and inter-professional teams, leading to a sharing of experience and expertise and better outcomes for people who use services.
3. The partnerships in place between employers, education providers and service users will be maintained and strengthened in order to maximise the availability of high quality learning opportunities for social workers and social care workers.

## Strategic Actions

1. Social workers and social care workers will be supported to acquire the skills they need to work in multidisciplinary teams, with colleagues from other professions and across different sectors.
2. Key stakeholders, including employers, providers, the NISCC and relevant Government Departments, will work together to maximise the availability of high quality learning opportunities for social workers and social care workers.
3. Partnership arrangements between employers, service users and education providers will be strengthened, to ensure that professional and vocational training courses reflect the changing needs of social workers, social care workers and people who use services.
4. Where appropriate, training and development opportunities for social workers and social care workers will be delivered on a partnership basis to facilitate the sharing of best practice, regional consistency and to make the best use of scarce resources.



## Outcomes

- ✓ Social workers and social care workers will have a clear understanding of their roles and functions within multi-disciplinary settings and be confident of their unique contribution to improving the wellbeing of people who use services.
- ✓ More effective working relationships will be evident between social workers, social care workers and colleagues from other disciplines and professions, in multidisciplinary and interprofessional teams and across different sectors.
- ✓ There will be a better co-ordination of effort and expertise between the relevant stakeholders in the provision of learning opportunities for the social work and social care workforce.
- ✓ Learning and development activity within social work and social care organisations will be strengthened and improved.



## Strategic Priority 6:

### Practising in a Digital World

**Working practices are changing, and social workers and social care workers are expected to use up-to-date assistive technology to help them to provide the most effective and efficient services.**

Greater diversity in the workforce and more flexible working arrangements also mean that new approaches to learning and development will be required. In the future, there will be particular emphasis on improved e-learning methodology, which can allow information to be delivered in different ways, at different times and places, and at a pace which matches individual learning styles.

Digital technology already provides a range of innovative approaches to gaining knowledge and skills. A mixture of e-learning, face-to-face training and work-based experience provides a wider range of improvement opportunities. This 'blended approach' makes it possible to maximise the opportunities to apply new learning to practice, leading to improved outcomes for people who use services, families and communities.

#### Policy Statements

1. Social workers and social care workers will be equipped with the skills they need to make best use of technological advances, leading to more effective and efficient services.
2. Learning and improvement approaches which involve the use of new technology will be accessible, flexible and provide good value for money.
3. Social workers and social care workers will have the knowledge and skills they need to better understand and manage the risks associated with the use of technology in the workplace, and to help to maintain the safety of people who use services within a complex digital world.

## Strategic Actions

1. Social workers and social care workers will become skilled in the use of existing and emerging technology which is aimed at improving outcomes for people who use services.
2. A range of methods to facilitate staff training, which includes high quality e-learning packages, face-to-face training and work-based mentoring, will be developed and made available.
3. Employers will ensure that social workers and social care workers have the knowledge and skills they need to make best use of modern technology to enhance and improve services; that they use it responsibly and help to safeguard people who use services from any associated harm.



**LEADING  
TO**



## Outcomes

- ✓ Social workers and social care workers will use the most effective and up-to-date methods, including appropriate technological advances, which are designed to support working practices and enhance the services they deliver.
- ✓ Access to learning opportunities for the workforce will be improved by being more flexible and available at different times and places, to best suit learners' needs.
- ✓ Using blended-learning approaches to training and improvement activity, social workers and social care workers will maximise the opportunities to transfer newly-acquired knowledge and skills to the workplace.
- ✓ Social workers and social care workers will act responsibly in their use of technology, to improve practice in the delivery of efficient and effective services while assisting people who use services to maintain their safety and wellbeing.

# Setting the direction for the future development of the social work and social care workforce.





**For further information please contact:**

Office of Social Services  
Department of Health  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ  
OSS@health-ni.gov.uk



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte  
Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)