NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

QUALITY 2020 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019

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FOREWORD BY PATRICIA HIGGINS, INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I am pleased to present the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's (Social Care Council) Annual Quality 2020 Report for 2018/19. This is the sixth Report produced by the Social Care Council and sets out the many achievements delivered by the Social Care Council as it seeks to ensure quality is embedded throughout all aspects of the organisation.

As the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland, the Social Care Council is responsible for promoting high quality standards of workforce training and practice.

The Q2020 Strategy has been in place in a number of years and has provided us all with an opportunity to reflect on how we deliver and improve quality in all aspects of our work. We all know what quality means to us as individuals and we therefore all can different views about what quality is – and what it is not. It is therefore important as an organisation that we agree, as an organisation, what quality means to the Social Care Council so that every one of us can measure how effective we are in delivering and improving quality.

I was therefore pleased that the Social Care Council developed a Quality Improvement Definition following consultation with all staff –

> ***'Quality improvement in the Social Care Council is the continual efforts of us all to improve our processes and performance to achieve better outcomes.'***

We have also developed a suite of principles to underpin this definition which are detailed in this report.

It has been an interesting step change this year from previous years. We recognise that delivering and improving quality services is not a new direction or initiative – it can happen on a small or individual scale or through larger projects or initiatives. The important learning over these last number of years however is that embedding quality using a recognised definition can help develop a culture where we constantly identify, measure, adjust and improve how quality is delivered across all our services.

We have used a number of existing tools this year to improve quality not just in the workplace for the staff in the Social Care Council but also those to whom we provide services to. We started a Quality Improvement Project this year looking at Registration and how we support Registrants to engage more online for certain services such as paying their registration fee, so that Registrants can do this at a time and place that suits them. There have been very interesting and positive results coming out of the project including how some simple changes can really improve the user experience.

We have also undertaken the five year review of the Degree in Social Work and this provides vital information about how the Degree supports not just students but also the wider workforce to ensure those coming through the Degree have access to high quality learning and support.

We have continued to make significant progress with our Quality Agenda; in particular achieving IIP Silver Status accreditation and being the first public sector employer in Northern Ireland to also achieve the IIP Health and Wellbeing reward. These are major achievements for our workforce recognising their commitment to delivering high quality services to registrants and our wide range of stakeholders.

We have also learnt that it is important to be realistic with our ambitions. We set ourselves a wide range of actions last year and found that by concentrating on a smaller number that have the greatest impact, we focus on resources in a much more constructive and meaningful way.

We set out the various ways in which we have delivered quality improvement in our business throughout this Report which are detailed under the following headings –

- Transforming the Culture;
- Strengthening the Workforce;
- Measuring the Improvement;
- Raising the Standards;
- Integrating with Care.

As in previous years' Annual Quality Reports, we have also added an action plan for 2019/20 to help us measure and report on our improvement plan, using fewer but more qualitative actions.

We continue to ensure quality is part of our annual Business Plan and Operational Plans and that this cascades into individual and team objectives. We are all responsible for quality – it is not one person's sole responsibility. We are also carrying out evaluation of the difference we are making by putting quality into the mainstream of our thinking, processes and planning.

I continue to be impressed by the individual and team commitment to improving quality in the workplace and look forward to how we keep this agenda evolving next year and beyond.

We welcome feedback on this Report and our services generally, to help us ensure we are doing the right things in the right way to provide high quality services to all our customers and stakeholders.

Patricia Higgins

PATRICIA HIGGINS
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

When Quality 2020 was published by the then Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in 2011, it set out a ten year strategy with the guiding principle to protect and improve the quality of services delivered in health and social care. That journey is almost complete and significant progress has been made over the last eight years which is evidenced through each of our annual progress reports. We continued to make progress with our Quality 2020 programme during 2018/19 and this is explained in this year's Q2020 Annual Report.

The ten year strategy identified five strategic themes against which organisations, including the Social Care Council, could monitor progress and set achievable targets. These are –

- Transforming the Culture;
- Strengthening the Workforce;
- Measuring the Improvement;
- Raising the Standards;
- Integrating with Care.

The extent to which the Social Care Council has delivered against each of these themes is detailed throughout this Annual Report.

The Social Care Council is a non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Health (DoH). It is the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland. Its role is to regulate and register social workers, social care workers and those studying for the Degree in Social Work. It also supports professional development across the workforce.

The Social Care Council's vision is to ***'Improve Standards in Social Care'***

To achieve this the Social Care Council delivers its work programme aligned to five strategic themes –

- ***Standards*** – Putting Standards at the heart of social work and social care practice and education and training;
- ***Regulation*** – Regulate the Workforce and Social Work Education and Training;
- ***Workforce Development*** – Develop the Social Work and Social Care Workforce;
- ***Systems Leadership*** – Promote a Systems Leadership Approach across the Social Care Sector; and
- ***Communications and Engagement*** – Communicate, Connect and Engage.

Our Vision - Improved standards in social work and social care

Our Values

There are four key values which underpin our culture that set a foundation for how we work with those around us.

Respect

Integrity

Partnership

Excellence

We promote Respect
We are trusted by the sector to support good social work and social care practice. We respect the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals.

We work with Integrity
We work with integrity and are mindful of our responsibilities and hold ourselves and others to account. We are open, honest and respectful with all our stakeholders.

We believe in Partnership
We are a people focused organisation that is committed to doing what is right. Through genuine partnership, we work to ensure what we do makes a difference.

We strive for Excellence
We take a professional approach in putting standards at the heart of social work and social care. We proactively support the development of the social care workforce and we proactively support the development of our staff.

Our Purpose - To protect the public and safeguard service users through the regulation and development of the social work and social care workforce

The Social Care Council also has a strategic objective to support its corporate function which is to ***'ensure it has the right infrastructure and leadership in place across its people, resources, governance, quality and systems'***.

The Social Care Council's core values are embedded in its work practices and culture. The four core values are –

- ***Respect – we promote respect***
  We are trusted by the sector to support good social work and social care practice. We respect the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals.

- ***Integrity – we work with integrity***
  We work with integrity and are mindful of our responsibilities and hold ourselves and others to account. We are open, honest and respectful with all our stakeholders.

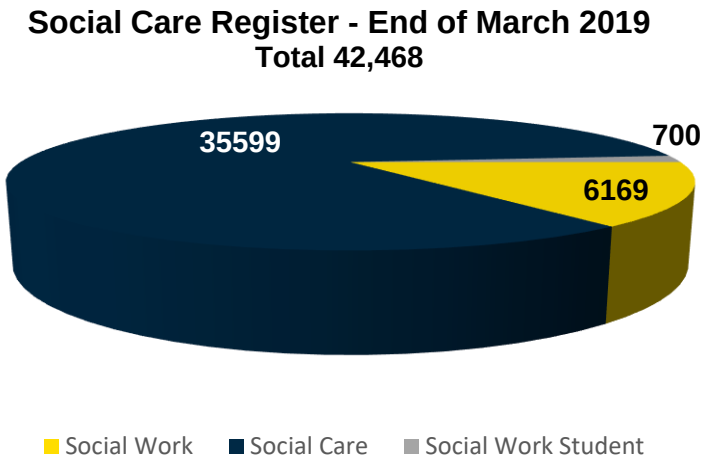
- ***Partnership – we believe in partnership***
  We are a people focused organisation that is committed to doing what is right. Through genuine partnership, we work to ensure what we do makes a difference.

- ***Excellence – we strive for excellence***
  We take a professional approach in putting standards at the heart of social work and social care. We proactively support the development of the social care workforce and we proactively support the development of our staff.

Registered Workforce

The Social Care Council is responsible for the registration and regulation of the social care workforce in Northern Ireland.

The social care register at end March 2019 was 42,468 people registered with the Social Care Council.



TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE

Q2020 states: "We will make achieving high quality the top priority at all levels in health and social care. We will promote and encourage partnerships between staff, patients, clients and carers to support decision making."

This means creating a new and dynamic culture that is even more willing to embrace change, innovation and new thinking that can contribute to a safer and more effective service. It will require strong leadership, widespread involvement and partnership-working by everyone.

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE IN THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council's (Social Care Council) primarily delivers its services to the social care workforce (social workers, social care workers, and those studying for the Degree in Social Work). In addition, the Social Care Council works with and supports a range of partners and stakeholders, including employers in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, universities and colleges, commissioners, regulators and service users and carers.

The Social Care Council has continued to strive to ensure quality improvement is at the heart of its business and is not seen as an 'add on' or initiative that sits outside what we do and how we operate. For this reason the Social Care Council's quality agenda sits across multiple levels of reporting and business operations which is explained below.

Leadership

The Social Care Council is organised into two Directorates, each headed by a Director who is also a member of the Social Care Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, and the Director of Regulation and Standards. ***An organisational structure for the Social Care Council is attached at Annex A.***

As part of its review of what leadership means and moving the management culture towards a leadership culture, the Senior Management Team was restyled 'Senior Leadership Team' (SLT).

The Registration and Corporate Services Directorate is responsible for the registration of the social care workforce, and a number of corporate service functions including Database Development, Finance, HR, Procurement, Administration, and Regulatory Committee Management.

The Regulation and Standards Directorate is responsible for the regulation of the social care workforce including investigating allegations relating to a registered worker's fitness to practise. The Directorate is also responsible for setting the Standards of Conduct and Practice for the workforce, setting the standards for and regulating social work education and training, and ensuring appropriate qualifications and training frameworks are in place to support the continuous development of both the social work and social care workforce.

The Social Care Council accounts for its performance against quality standards in monthly Business Performance Reports to the SLT and to the Social Care Council's Board in quarterly Business Performance Reports. Both types of reports detail how the Social Care Council has been delivering its business, identifies areas of concern and enables SLT and/or the Board to challenge assurances and make policy decisions. The Social Care Council also has an Evaluation Framework in place which details how it ensures the outcomes and impacts detailed in its Corporate and Business Plans are measured.

The Board is responsible for providing the strategic direction for the Social Care Council including approving its Corporate and Business Plans in which the Social Care Council's commitment to quality improvement is clearly set out.

The Social Care Council's Chief Executive and SLT continue to set the quality agenda for the Social Care Council including ensuring there are Key Performance Indicators in place that measure not only business volumes, but also quality standards and impact/outcomes. The Social Care Council continues to review these KPI's to ensure they are meaningful, measurable and inform business design and planning in an effective way.

Securing Involvement

The Social Care Council has continued to ensure that it plans, delivers and assesses its business based on feedback, involvement and participation at all levels – including from registrants, service users and carers, staff and other stakeholders.

Examples of securing involvement in relation to staff during 2018/19 include –

- CEO/SLT meetings with all staff to discuss a range of business matters – during the year it was decided that these events should take place quarterly and a plan to support this was put in place. The feedback from each event is evaluated and positive improvements put in place to support that feedback and learning. An example includes the day and timing of the events to maximise attendance;

- All staff were engaged in the development of the new Business Plan for 2019/20. This included events to bring all staff together to inform the new Business Plan, joint sessions with the Board and the Participation Forum (which comprises service users and carers) and through team meetings;

- CEO/SLT meetings with all staff to congratulate staff's efforts including staff's commitment to promoting online services and delivering team projects. This includes monthly email briefings from the Chief Executive;

- SLT notifications to staff on reaching particular team goals including reaching the peak thresholds on the number of people being registered with the Social Care Council;

- Monthly team meetings take place across all teams in the Social Care Council where all team members can discuss projects which went well and those which have been

a challenge. A review of the team meetings commenced during the year to ensure all teams have a similar approach and experience and this work will continue during 2019/20;

- Registration statistics are shared openly in the office, with staff and team members working fluidly between teams and ensuring resources are continually placed where the pressure most demands it. This includes the sharing of information with all staff on a monthly basis.

The Social Care Council has a 'no blame' culture and as part of this, continual learning and training around near miss and data breaches are discussed with relevant staff, procedures amended and improved if possible and learning taken forward from these issues. In addition, all managers encourage an open and honest dialogue with their teams to ensure staff feel they can raise issues.

Looking beyond internal engagement and culture, the Social Care Council also secures the involvement of registrants and others in the course of its business. For example, during 2018/19 the Social Care Council –

- Sought feedback from registrants through surveys and other online means on a regular basis – during the year this included feedback from registrants about the impact of the Standards on professional practice and how best the organisation can support registrants to develop their practice;

- Received reports on feedback and complaints on the Social Care Council's staff and services which were shared with the organisation's Senior Leadership Team (monthly) and with the Board including an explanation of what has been learnt/improved as a result of the feedback;

- Actively sought feedback from participants at each of the events/conferences/information sessions hosted by the Social Care Council. This feedback informs the delivery and planning of future events. A robust system of evaluation of this feedback is now also consolidated into how we evaluate performance and make meaningful improvements where necessary.

Values, Behaviours and Culture

As part of the Social Care Council's commitment to improve its culture for all staff, a series of workshops were held across teams to openly review the culture of those teams and the organisation. The workshops have identified a range of positive behaviours necessary to support the team and corporate values. This work was led by the IIP Culture Improvement Oversight Group. The Values now appear on the organisation's website and are included in all policies and procedures as thee are reviewed.

In March 2019, all staff engaged in a workshop to look at the behaviours which support the organisation's core values. The feedback from this event will be taken forward with all staff during 2019/20.

Engagement

The Social Care Council has a strong track record of engaging with its workforce but also in terms of engaging its registrants, stakeholders, service users and carers, and employers. Examples of this include –

- The Social Care Council led an extensive range of engagement to deliver on our objectives to develop the workforce and the training needed to further their skills and knowledge. As part of this, the Social Care Council continued to deliver its Social Care Managers Forum which has received significant positive feedback from participants about the difference it makes. During 2018/19, 400 Social Care Managers participated at four events held in Belfast, Omagh, Antrim and Carrickfergus.

50 engagement events held involving:
- **900** Registrants
- **190** Social Care Managers
- **27** Employers
- **73** People who use services and Carers

- Lunchtime seminars for social workers and social care workers also continued to prove popular, with a wide range of themes including 'Respectful Sharenting' and 'Three Steps to Positive Practice'. These seminars are an opportunity for our registrants to share their learning and practice with their colleagues. Videos and presentations from the seminars are available from our website for those who want to catch up. A rolling programme of dates and topics is published on the Events section of our website and shared in registrant e-zines.

- The Social Care Council had a focus on supporting and strengthening social work leadership networks. Creating connections for and with the Voluntary sector forms part of this work, in an effort to ensure that voice is heard and reflected in strategic development for social work and social care.

The way in which the Social Care Council structures its engagement with others is through partnership arrangements which are described in the section below.

Partnership Working

The Social Care Council has four partnerships in place which supports its business. These are –

- Participation Forum
- Registrants' Forum
- Workforce Development Partnership
- Professional in Practice Partnership

Participation Forum

One of the ways in which the Social Care Council oversees its engagement with service users and carers is through its Participation Forum which is chaired by a Board Member and comprises a number of service users and carers with wide experience of the social care

system in Northern Ireland. The Participation Forum oversees the quality and quantity of engagement and challenges the way in which the Social Care Council designs and delivers its business, ensuring it is people focused and impactful.

The Participation Forum, has been instrumental during the year in overseeing the quality and quantity of engagement by the Social Care Council, including –

- Working with the Social Care Council to develop its Business Plan for 2019/20;

- Connecting with the Patient Client Council at a regional event promoting the 'What I want from my social care worker' card;

- Connecting with other organisations and visited three organisations to meet other service user and carer groups to share information about workforce standards;

- Connecting directly with social workers and service users and carers at the 'café conversation' events organised by the some of the Trusts;

- Engaged on particular projects including Learning Zone Resources, induction programme for social care worker managers and the review of the NI Social Work Degree.

Registrants' Forum

The Social Care Council's register at the end of March 2019 included almost 43,000 registrants across Northern Ireland. To co-ordinate engagement with this group, the Social Care Council supports a Registrants' Forum, chaired by a registrant and comprising representatives from each part of the register. The Registrants' Forum provides a vehicle through which the views of registrants can be properly and adequately represented.

Workforce Development Partnership

The Social Care Council supports a Workforce Development Partnership which is chaired by a Board Member and consists of employers who employ social care workers across Northern Ireland. It provides a strategic leadership role to support social care workforce policy development and works with the Social Care Council to identify the skill needs of the social care workforce and learning and development strategies to meet these needs.

Professional in Practice Partnership

The Social Care Council supports a Professional in Practice Partnership which is chaired by a Board Member and comprises employers and Higher Education Institutions who are key to successfully supporting the delivery of the Professional in Practice framework for social workers. This enables the Social Care Council to ensure that the arrangements for supporting the professional practice of social workers remain fit for purpose and meaningful for those who extend their development using this route.

Each of these Partnerships provides a structured means through which the Social Care Council can engage successfully with its stakeholders and review the quality of the service it provides. During 2018/19 each of these Partnerships have, where relevant, informed the work of the Social Care Council, provided feedback on draft policies and plans, informed the culture of the Social Care Council (particularly in relation to communications and the language used to engage with the social care workforce, service users and carers), and contributed to a more effective service through the challenge and assurance function they provide.

STRENGTHENING THE WORKFORCE

Q2020 states: "We will provide the right education, training and support to deliver high quality service. We will develop leadership skills at all levels and empower staff to take decisions and make changes."

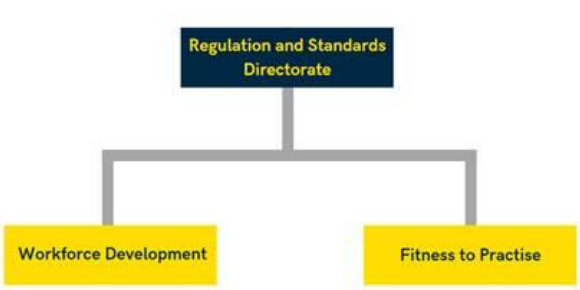
The people who work in health and social care (including volunteers and carers) are its greatest asset. It is vital therefore that every effort is made to equip them with the skills and knowledge they will require, building on existing and emerging HR strategies, to deliver the highest quality.

STRENGTHENING THE WORKFORCE IN THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

The Social Care Council has a staffing complement of 63 staff at end March 2019, in addition to a number of staff employed through an agency and working on a sessional basis[1] –

- Administrative Staff – often providing front line services;
- Managers – including team leaders and heads of function;
- Professional Advisers – professionally qualified social workers;
- Directors – who form part of the Social Care Council's SLT.

Social Care Council staff work using a variety of working patterns including full-time, part-time, job-share and compressed hours. They can also avail of flexi time, special leave (including carers leave), career breaks and unpaid leave. Staff are assigned across two Directorates as demonstrated below –



The Communications and Engagement Team, report directly to the Chief Executive, to ensure communications and engagement is at the heart of every aspect of delivering quality services across the Social Care Council.

[1] Sessional staff (sometimes called bank staff) are staff who are employed for short periods of time to deliver specific pieces of work)

Appraising, Learning and Developing

The Social Care Council promotes a learning culture across all aspects of the organisation, including empowering individuals to take control of their own development and career management. In support of this all staff are required to have a set of SMART[2] objectives in place which reflect an individual's/team's contribution to the Social Care Council's Corporate Plan, Business Plan, Operational Plan and Key Performance Indicators and Standards. Performance against objectives are reviewed twice a year – a mid-year review in October and an end year review in April. Through this process, individuals and managers can be assured of their contribution to the organisation's objectives and their learning and development needs can be assessed.

In 2018/19, 97% of staff had an annual performance appraisal and a learning and development plan agreed by end April 2019.

Learning and Development Plans for all staff in the Social Care Council are reviewed to identify team training needs, essential and developmental needs, and professional learning. This work is carried out by the Social Care Council's Operational Leadership Team (OLT) which comprises each of the Head of Functions across all of the business areas in the Social Care Council (Fitness to Practise, Workforce Development, Corporate, Committee, Communications, Registration, and Database teams). OLT develop and review a Training Needs Analysis and Learning Programme which is costed and prioritised to take account of equality of opportunity, business need and individual/team development.

The Social Care Council implemented a number of initiatives to enhance the learning and development of its staff during 2018/19. This included –

- Collective Leadership awareness for all staff;
- Introduction to Coaching for all staff;
- E-learning module on Q2020 for all staff;
- Senior Leadership Team Briefings on a range of issues including updates on key projects, financial planning and new areas of work;
- Multi-team working on various projects to share and exchange knowledge and information and enhance the overall work experience.

Knowledge and Skills Framework

For the last number of years, the Social Care Council has implemented the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) as part of its annual performance appraisal and learning and development system for all staff. The KSF includes six core dimensions against which all posts were assessed and each member of staff is expected to deliver.

One of the core dimensions is delivering and demonstrating Quality in the Workplace. The Social Care Council has defined this through the KSF as –

[2] SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound

"…maintaining high quality in all areas of work and practice, including the important aspects of effective team working."

During 2019/20 this will be updated to include the Quality Definition agreed by staff (see page 21).

Staff are required to demonstrate this throughout the year using the following typical positive indicators of providing a good quality service –

- People are confident in asking for support where necessary and feel well supported;
- People respond positively when colleagues ask for help and support;
- People feel encouraged to report errors and near misses;
- When errors and quality issues occur, the focus is on resolving the issue and learning from it;
- There is a 'no-blame' culture;
- Resources are used effectively;
- People adapt to changing priorities and changing quality systems; and
- High quality services are delivered and improving.

The system has worked well and is part of how the Social Care Council embeds quality throughout all aspects of its business by holding each other to account for individual and team contributions to the overall quality agenda for the Social Care Council. 97% of staff had an appraisal completed during 2018/19 against this framework.

Investors in People (IIP)

The Social Care Council achieved IIP Silver accreditation status in March 2018 under the new 6th Generation IIP model. This was a significant achievement and is part of the organisation's ongoing improvement agenda in the way it invests in its workforce.

In addition, the Social Care Council was the first public sector organisation to be awarded IIP's Health and Wellbeing Award in recognition of its work to support and improve health and wellbeing for all staff.

The Social Care Council has actively used the IIP Framework to inform its People Strategies in support of its core business by evaluating key components of the Framework which are relevant to its business. For example, by reviewing effective leadership, delivering and embracing organisational change, putting in place quality and continuous improvement, and demonstrating innovative practice.

To deliver the report arising from the IIP assessment, the Social Care Council has created five oversight groups; each charged with reviewing key areas of work and identifying actions to improve the experience and impact of these areas. The oversight groups are reflective of all of the functions in the organisation and are – Culture, Quality, Performance, Communication and Making Connections.

The Social Care Council developed an action plan to ensure it delivers on the recommendations arising from the IIP assessment.

Recognising Good Performance

The Social Care Council appreciates the importance of taking time to recognise and acknowledge good performance whether that is on an individual basis, as a team, or for the organisation as a whole. Feedback from IIP Reports indicate that managers in the Social Care Council are well equipped and skilled on giving direct feedback, in a positive and constructive way, while also acknowledging excellent work that stands out whether as a result of an individual/teams commitment, or as a result of the challenge the work presented in the first instance.

This type of feedback manifests itself on a day to day basis, through one to one meetings and through mid-year and end-year performance appraisal reviews. At the same time, the Senior Leadership Team and the Board take the time to email and/or meet staff to personally acknowledge the success of a team/teams and of the organisation.

During 2018/19, examples of this include –

- SLT emails out to staff throughout the year at key points acknowledging work of staff in delivering the roll-out of registration to the extended social care workforce, organising large social work/social care events, and reviewing the processes, systems and structures in the registration function;
- Staff events to inform the development of the new Business Plan;
- Health and wellbeing initiatives to promote health in the workplace and at home;
- Review of the Flexi Time Scheme to provide more flexibility to staff in managing their worklife balance;
- Extension of remote working to more staff – with 83% of staff at end March 2019 having the necessary equipment to work remotely.

This all inclusive approach to one to one feedback through to SLT and the Board providing feedback and acknowledging good performance is part of the Social Care Council's culture of working collectively towards a common purpose and outcome.

Providing an interactive culture which provides time for staff to connect in this way is also underpinned by the SLT's commitment to supporting the Social Care Council's Health and Wellbeing Committee. The Health and Wellbeing Committee organised a number of functions throughout the year including a staff barbeque where individuals and teams had an opportunity to interact, occasionally with teams whom they might not normally have an opportunity to engage with on a day to day basis.

In addition to these 'staff events', the Health and Wellbeing Committee also takes an active role in organising and supporting a number of charities throughout the year, and championed the creation of a wellbeing room.

During 2018/19, the Health and Wellbeing Committee organised and supported –

- An awareness session over tea/coffee on supporting MS awareness;
- Autism awareness day
- Health and Wellbeing promotion;
- Causeway Challenge.

Values and Behaviours

The Social Care Council's Corporate Plan identified four corporate values for the organisation –

- ***Excellence*** – we are committed to excellence in everything we do;
- ***Respect*** – we respect the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals;
- ***Integrity*** – we are honest and work in an open and transparent way;
- ***Partnership*** – we are a listening and learning organisation. Working in partnership to ensure what we do makes a difference.

As indicated earlier, the Social Care Council is also working on developing a list of behaviours that underpin these values.

The Social Care Council is using a number of opportunities to embed and promote its values, including ensuring they are reflected in policies and strategies, and in recruitment and job descriptions.

Senior Leadership Commitment to Quality

Ensuring a quality agenda and culture exists, and can be evidenced throughout the Social Care Council, starts at the top level of the organisation and is led by the senior leadership structure.

The Social Care Council's Senior Leadership Team ensure quality and evidence of quality (business reports, feedback reports, evaluation) is part of their regular agenda. At the same time, and to cascade this approach, the SLT put in place an Operational Leadership Team (OLT) which comprises the heads of function from each of the areas across the organisation (Fitness to Practise, Workforce Development, Corporate, Committee, Communications, Registration and Database). OLT meet monthly and report to SLT; not only on the day to day business (delivery, outcomes, risks), but also issues in relation to quality, service improvement, culture, and learning and development.

As part of this work, OLT required all staff to complete the e-learning module on Q2020 Attributes Framework level 1, which was achieved. The module now also forms part of the induction programme for all new staff appointed to the Social Care Council.

MEASURING THE IMPROVEMENT

Q2020 states: "We will improve outcome measurement and report on progress for safety effectiveness and the patient/client experience. We will promote the use of accredited improvement techniques and ensure that there is sufficient capacity and capability within the HSC to use them effectively."

The delivery of continuous improvement lies at the heart of any system that aspires to excellence, particularly in the rapidly changing world of health and social care. In order to confirm that improvement is taking place we will need more reliable and accurate means to measure, value and report on quality improvement and outcomes.

MEASURING THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

The Social Care Council understands the need to have robust and reliable information to hand to help inform whether it is doing things well – or well enough. To support this the Social Care Council has a number of reporting and feedback mechanisms in place which include –

- Annual business objectives which are reported to the Board/SLT on a quarterly basis;
- Monthly business reporting to SLT;
- Key Performance Indicators and Quality Standards;
- Internal Audit Reviews and compliance reports;
- Data Quality Reports;
- Surveys, reviews and evaluations;
- Customer Feedback Reports;
- Complaints Management and Learning Reports;
- Robust Registration database and reporting.

Staff at all levels are encouraged to challenge processes that are no longer effective. As an example, a number of registration procedures have been improved such as enabling registrants to advise the Social Care Council of changes of contact details and employment over the phone, rather than asking registrants to put their request in writing. This has improved the customer service experience for registrants who can get certain issues resolved quickly in a way that best suits them.

Teams also meet on a monthly basis to review their own performance and suggest ways in which work can be streamlined and improved to the direct benefit of those people we provide a service to.

All of these arrangements do not however operate in isolation; instead they are open to challenge, review and compliance assurance. This includes reviews by Internal Audit to provide relevant assurance, and oversight by the Social Care Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Quality Improvement in Service Delivery

During 2018/19, the Social Care Council delivered the following –

- Changing the way in which risks are managed and reported on in the organisation, making this more meaningful and transparent;
- Identified with the Board the strategic risks facing the organisation so that these could be closely monitored, actions taken and reported on;
- Established a Quality Improvement Project to support registrants to pay their fee online (see below).
- Established a number of improvement oversight groups to deliver the actions arising from the IIP Report –
    - Culture Improvement Group;
    - Quality Improvement Group;
    - Performance Improvement Group;
    - Communications Improvement Group;
    - Making Connections Improvement Group.

Quality Improvement IIP Oversight Group

The work of this group is particularly focused on quality and quality improvement. During the year the Group focused on consulting with staff to agree a definition of Quality Improvement. Following engagement with all staff this was agreed as –

'Quality improvement in the Social Care Council is the continual efforts of us all to improve our processes and performance to achieve better outcomes.'

To underpin this work the Group developed a set of **principles** –

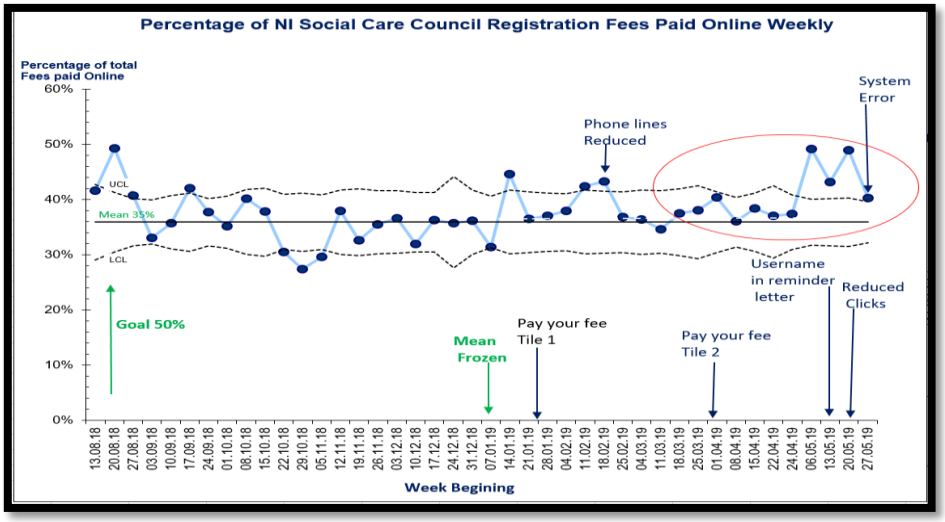
1. We will be a listening and learning organisation.
2. We will adopt a collective leadership approach to improvement.
3. We will be inclusive and ensure that all staff have equal voice.
4. We will recognise and respect each other's expertise and knowledge.
5. We will involve those closest to the issue in identifying and undertaking improvement initiatives.
6. We will follow through on ideas.
7. We will be courageous enough to 'ditch' what is not working.
8. We will ensure that our approach is rigorous, systematic and underpinned by analysis and evaluation.
9. We will be committed to the pursuit of excellence.
10. We will develop and empower our people to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to participate fully in quality improvement.
11. We will be innovative and creative in our approach.

12. We will use our resources efficiently and effectively.
13. We will work in partnership with our stakeholders.
14. We will share best practice.

The Group will now start to see how this is being embedded in the organisation and the difference it is making.

QI Project – Registration

The organisation identified an issue that it needed to do more to support registrants to pay their annual fee online. Paying online means that registrants can carry out this transaction at a time and location that suits them rather than phoning the Social Care Council during opening hours or calling into the Social Care Council's office. While the project was not fully completed at end March 2019 some early findings and feedback have enabled the Social Care Council to make some small but meaningful improvements such as keeping registrants informed of their log in details to enable quicker access online.



The full evaluation of the project will be delivered during 2019/20.

Managing Complaints and Feedback

It is important for any organisation to provide a clear mechanism for dispute resolution, particularly if an individual is concerned about the service they have received, how they were treated by a member of staff or the systems/processes which are in place in the Social Care Council's business.

The Social Care Council encourages its staff that wherever possible, complaints or disputes are managed locally and at source where an immediate resolution can resolve concerns, and reduce the stress or anxiety caused to the individual. The Social Care Council also recognises that, at times, having a mechanism (through the organisation's Complaints Policy) provides a means through which a complaint can be independently reviewed and investigated. The Complaints Policy encourages individuals to raise their complaint with the Social Care Council's Complaints Manager, if the matter cannot be resolved at a local and informal level, and if the individual still remains unsatisfied with their response they may elevate their complaint to the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, and ultimately the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. The purpose of all of this is to ensure that the Social Care Council listens and responds to concerns, and where necessary puts improvements in place, regardless of whether these are on a small or larger scale.

RAISING THE STANDARDS

Q2020 states: "We will establish a framework of a clear evidence-based standards and best practice guidance. We will establish dynamic partnerships between service users, commissioners and providers to develop, monitor and review."

The service requires a coherent framework of robust and meaningful standards against which performance can be assessed. These already exist in some parts, but much more needs to be done, particularly involving service users, carers and families in the development, monitoring and reviewing of standards.

RAISING THE STANDARDS IN THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

The Social Care Council promotes its Standards of Conduct and Practice and launched Easy Read versions of its Standards last year. During the year we continued to work with registrants and employers during to ensure the Standards are embedded and understood across the sector. This is part of an ongoing programme of work to ensure the Standards are at the heart of social care practice.

The Standards of Conduct and Practice explain the standards expected of the social care workforce in Northern Ireland. They set out very clearly what is expected in terms of an individual worker's conduct i.e. values, attitudes and behaviour as well as standards for their Practice which outline the knowledge and skills required for competent practice.

During 2018/19 the Social Care Council carried out a survey of witnesses who are engaged with us through our Fitness to Practise (FTP) function. This survey has provided us with valuable information about the experience for witnesses to help us improve how we deliver our services.

In addition to carrying out a review of our FTP Key Performance Indicators, we also engaged an independent audit of the FTP function against the Professional Standards Authority's standards.

Professional in Practice Framework

The Social Care Council's Professional in Practice (PiP) Framework continues to make a positive impact on the professional development of social workers.

During 2018/19, 176 social workers achieved full awards in 2018 and 546 part achievements were also credited. Work continued on widening the range of routes available for social workers to achieve PiP Awards. A pilot for PiP achievement through work-based learning was carried out and the recommendations endorsed by the Board to establish this option. Development continued on the Doctorate level award for PiP which should open for applicants in the next year.

Engagement

The Social Care Council continues to drive up standards through increased engagement for all levels of staff with stakeholders.

Following a detailed review of qualifications for social care, the new Level 4 Certificate in Leadership and Management for Social Care was launched in 2018/19. This new qualification will assist career progression into social care management.

At the opposite end of the career spectrum, the revised Induction Programme and accompanying programme for Managers was launched at the Social Care Managers Forum in May 2018 and has been welcomed by employers in developing new workers and aligning their training with the Standards.

Commitment to development of Social Care Managers as a professional network continued in 2018/19 with four Managers Forum events in May and November. 400 managers took part in the events to discuss registration and practice issues. 90% said that it helped improve their practice.

The lunchtime seminars for social workers and social care workers also proved popular, with a wide range of themes including 'Respectful Sharenting' and 'Three Steps to Positive Practice'. These seminars are an opportunity for our registrants to share their learning and practice with their colleagues.

The project team for the Five Year Review of the Degree completed an extensive series of surveys, interviews and focus groups to review the curriculum and delivery of the Degree. The Review included discussions on 'future-proofing the Degree to ensure it meets service needs. This focused largely on developing digital skills and techniques to manage personal well-being. The feedback will be included in the actions within the Review report.

We also made a concerted effort to ensure the material we produced across all areas of work reflected Plain English standards to make the documents more accessible and meaningful to a wider audience.

Best Practice for the Board

Over the last four years, the Board has carried out an annual Board Self-Assessment to benchmark its performance and governance against best practice and provide assurance that it is conducting its business in accordance with best practice.

The Board carried out its annual self-assessment during 2018/19 to assess to what extent it was efficient in delivering high quality services. As a result of this the Board developed an action plan to raise its standards where it was deemed necessary.

The Board reviews progress against their action plan on a quarterly basis including carrying out a number of case studies at strategic sessions to examine in detail particular strategic challenges facing the organisation. As a result of this process, the Board are able to review the extent to which they are raising standards in their own work to the benefit of the organisation and its stakeholders as a whole.

INTEGRATING THE CARE

Q2020 states: "We will develop integrated pathways of care for individuals. We will make better use of multidisciplinary team working and shared opportunities for learning and development in the HSC and with external providers."

Northern Ireland offers excellent opportunities to provide fully integrated services because of the organisational structure that combines health and social care and the relatively small population that it serves. However, integrated care should cross all sectoral and professional boundaries to benefit patients, clients and families.

INTEGRATING THE CARE IN THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

The Social Care Council is an organisation of the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland. While provided with a specific remit regarding the regulation and registration of the social care workforce, it carries out its functions in close working partnerships with others in the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland.

The Social Care Council is represented on all relevant groups and committees and is active in contributing to and driving forward the agenda to the benefit of the social care workforce. It also integrates its work at a direct level with employers, Trusts, universities, the voluntary and community sectors, and service users and carers.

Shared our experience and knowledge with approx. **800** social work influencers from across 30 different countries including CLEAR Educational conference and IFSW Dublin seminar

Systems Leadership Agenda

During the year, the Social Care Council continued to work to support and inform the systems leadership agenda across the HSC and beyond.

The Board of the Social Care Council identified a key ambition for the organisation to inform leadership at all levels across Health and Social Care. The Social Care Council continues to work to both contribute and influence the development and transformation of the system as well as being a connector for many parts of the system that do not always have a prominent position.

The Social Care Council brings together key interests from across the social care sector to discuss strategic issues and identify opportunities for shared working to improve recruitment and retention, development, profile and positioning of the workforce.

During the year the Social Care Council had a focus on supporting and strengthening social work leadership networks. Creating connections for and with the Voluntary sector forms part of this work, in an effort to ensure that voice is heard and reflected in strategic development for social work and social care.

The Social Care Council led two key projects on behalf of the Health and Social Care Board to support transformation of the social care workforce. A project to support and deliver enhanced training to front line domiciliary care staff on priority learning areas began in

September 2018. This training is being delivered in-house within social care organisations and through regional sessions. In the first six months, over 2,000 people accessed the training.

The Social Care Council also provided engagement with front line social care staff to consult on recommendations within the 'Power to People' report. Jointly with UNISON, 30 social care registrants were engaged in 3 focus groups to share their experiences of front line practice.

The Social Care Council worked closely with education and regulatory partners in NI and in the Republic of Ireland to share best practice, making a significant contribution to the International Federation of Social Work when almost 2,000 social workers from across the world came to Dublin.

The Social Care Council is uniquely placed to develop intelligence about the shape, size and composition of the entire social work and social care workforce. To ensure that it can use the data effectively towards developing the sector, the organisation has invested capabilities to generate reports to maximise the data held in its database and will continue to develop its expertise in information management through into 2019/20.

SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL QUALITY 2020

ACTION PLAN 2019/20

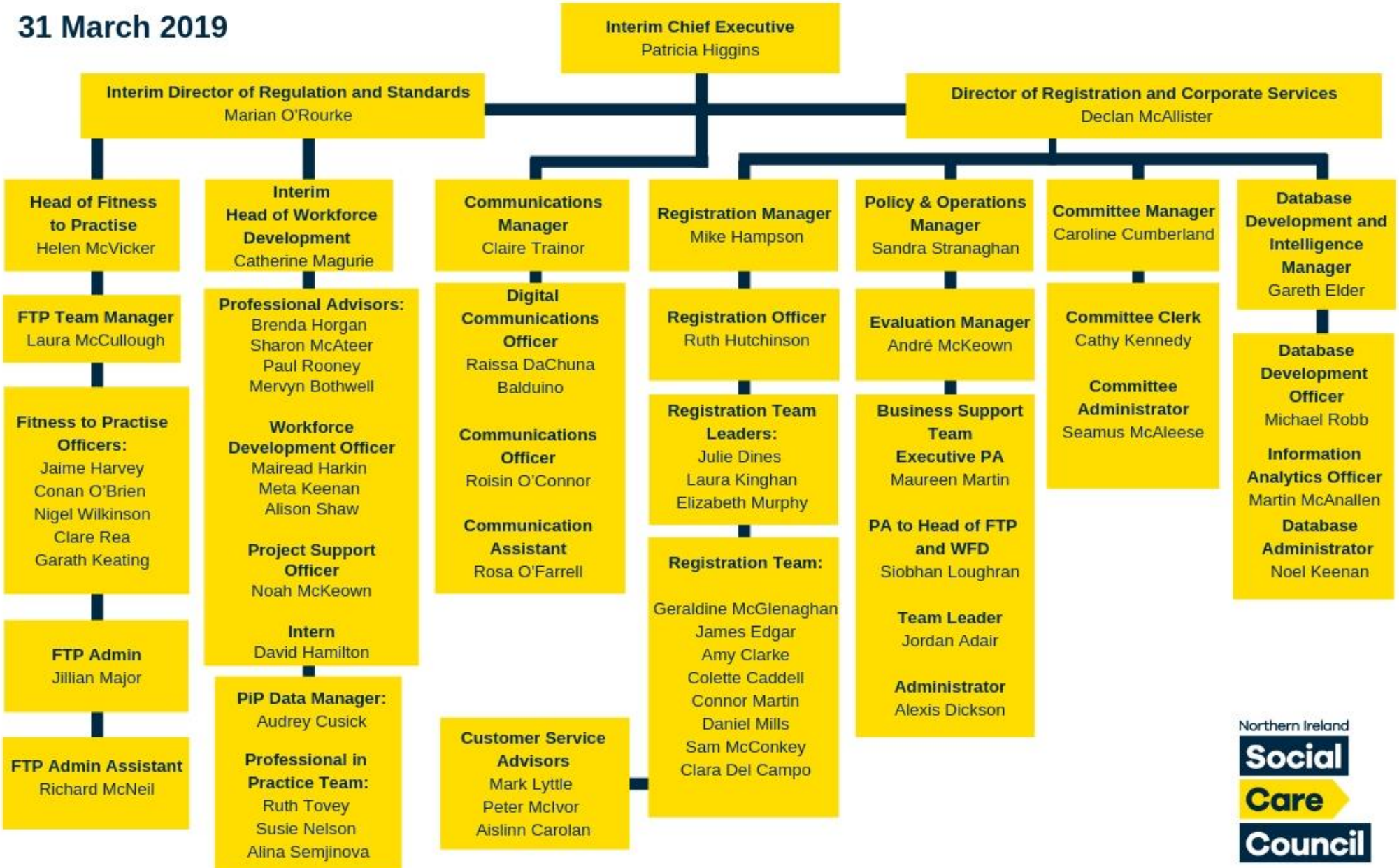
To inform the Social Care Council's continued improvement in relation to embedding quality, demonstrating quality and measuring quality outcomes, it has identified the following areas for delivering during 2019/20 –

	ACTIVITY	***HOW AND WHEN***
1	We will complete the QI Project on Online Fee Payments.	**By December 2019**. This will be shared with the Board, staff and actions identified. We will also share this information with others through our website.
2	We will commence a QI Project reviewing how we deliver Customer Services.	**By January 2020** – we will establish a Project Team **By April 2020** – we will agree the scope and Project timetable.
3	We will create a Quality Improvement Hub on the Intranet.	**By December 2019** – we will create a Quality Improvement Hub on our website including resources, signposting, useful data and an opportunity to share best practice.
4	We will review the effectiveness of our Quality Definition and Principles.	**By March 2020** – we will survey staff on the Quality Definition **During 2020/21** – we will scope how the principles are being used
5	We will agree the behaviours underpinning our core values and embed these across the organisation.	**By March 2020** – we will agree a suite of behaviours for each of our values **During 2020/21** – we will agree how we embed and measure these.

6	We will carry out a review of Data Quality across the organisation.	**By March 2020** – we will use existing resources to carry out a Data Quality review across each of the 8 functions with outline proposals to make meaningful change/progress.

Annex A

Social Care Council
Staff Structure
31 March 2019



Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Annex B

CEO	-	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	-	Continuing Professional Development
DoH	-	Department of Health
HSC	-	Health and Social Care
HR	-	Human Resources
IIP	-	Investors in People
KPI	-	Key Performance Indicator
KSF	-	Knowledge and Skills Framework
PIP	-	Professional in Practice
PLO’s	-	Practice Learning Opportunities
PPI	-	Personal and Public Involvement
QI	-	Quality Improvement
SLT	-	Senior Leadership Team
TNA	-	Training Needs Analysis