PROGRESS REPORT

STAGE 2

Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

A Strategy for Social Work

Improving and Safeguarding
Social Wellbeing in
Northern Ireland

IMPROVING AND SAFEGUARDING SOCIAL WELLBEING:
A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL WORK

Engaging Local
Partnerships

Improving Social
Wellbeing

Upholding
Human Rights

Supporting Individuals
and Families

Enabling Civic
Participation

Foreword

Over the years, many factors, including social, political, economic and organisational change, have influenced and impacted on social work and how it is delivered. But one thing that never changes is social workers' commitment to improving people's social wellbeing, upholding human rights and promoting social justice, even when their practice is, at times, diverted by drivers such as performance management and procedures.

Our challenge, as a profession, is to assert and re-establish our purpose in improving people's social wellbeing as the core and legitimate focus of social work practice. One of the ways we can do this is by using data and people's stories to demonstrate how we work with people helping them live purposeful, safe and productive lives and enabling their civic participation and economic activity.

This is one of the key drivers of the social work strategy[1], which was published in 2012. Since 2016 we have been focussing on enabling more social workers and those they work with to be actively involved in strategy delivery.

We are also developing ways of gathering data and feedback to evidence the difference social work makes in people's lives.

This is not an easy task. Many of the reasons why we have been deflected before remain and new challenges are and will continue to emerge. But, I believe, if we come together as a professional community we will stay true to our values and our commitment and continue to support individuals, families and communities to have a good quality of life and social wellbeing.

This report summarises our progress over the past two years and points to where we need to go next.

Sean Holland
Chief Social Work Officer

Contents

1 Introduction

This report summarises progress and learning for next steps of Stage 2 delivery of *'Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing: A Strategy for Social Work'* (SWS)[2] from June 2016 to June 2018. The report was discussed and agreed with the Outcomes Delivery Board (ODB) in June 2018. An Executive Summary of the report is available.[3] Quotes used, unless otherwise stated, are comments from social workers or people with lived experience. Images used throughout are of people with lived experience and social workers in Northern Ireland. (See page 31 for names).

1.1 Background

The SWS was published in 2012. Its aim is to strengthen social work as the means of improving people's social wellbeing.

1.1.1 Stage 1 Achievements

A review of the first four years of delivery found that the SWS has been widely welcomed.

"Best thing the Department has done professionally – it has reinvigorated and put a focus on social work."

"The SWS has provided a mandate for action with social workers."

"Instilling pride and confidence in the profession."

"A clear direction of travel."

There were a number of significant developments during Stage 1 including:

The Social Work Innovation Scheme (2012)

"The Innovation Scheme has generated experimentation and the application of evidence in practice."

The Regional Emergency Social Work Service (2013)

"We've moved from an ad hoc service, to a more accessible, responsive and resourced emergency team."

The Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Strategy (2015)

"Helping improve outcomes by integrating evidence based approaches into practice and service development."

The Annual Social Work Awards

"The Social Work Awards celebrate and honour the positive work done by social workers."

BUT... there was also a clear message that we needed to do some things differently in order to enable more social workers and those they work with to get actively involved in: promoting social wellbeing as the core purpose of social work; strengthening the effectiveness of social work in meeting people's needs: and ensuring social work remains responsive, adaptive and relevant in a continuously changing world.

1.1.2   The Route Map for Stage 2

This led to a number of changes in delivery arrangements which set the Route Map for Stage 2.

Approach to Delivery >

EMPOWERMENT

"Need to move from a project management approach to a whole systems approach to effect lasting and sustainable changes."

Arrangements should empower local decision making and delivery and enable social workers and those they work with to be actively involved.

OUTCOMES

< Evidence of Impact

"A stronger focus on benefits and outcomes."

Outcomes that focus efforts on improving people's social wellbeing and on strengthening social work should be agreed and measured.

IMPROVEMENT

"The Strategy provides an opportunity to future proof and position social work in a continuously changing world."

Improvement should become an integral part of every social worker's job. Social workers and people with lived experience should be equipped and enabled to co-produce improvements in practice and services.

Focus of Delivery >

1.1.3   Mandate for Stage 2
The Route Map was approved by the SWS Steering Group in March 2016 and its successor, the ODB, in September 2016 and subsequently endorsed by the former Health Minister, Michelle O'Neill, in October 2016[4].

[4] https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/health-and-wellbeing-2026-delivering-together.pdf – 10 year strategy to transform health and social care.

2 Empowerment

"The SWS doesn't need to be involved in everything that is going on to say that it is making a difference."
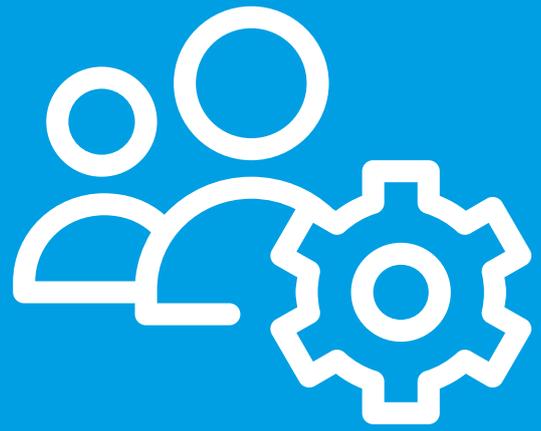
A new governance system[5] (Diagram 1) for the delivery of the SWS was co-designed by social workers and people with experience.

GOVERNANCE SYSTEM STAGE 2 DELIVERY.

6: Monitoring, Measurement, Evidence of Strategy Impact.

5: DoH Outcomes Delivery Board.

1: Local Engagement Partnership.

1: Local Engagement Partnership.

2: Regional Social Work Leadership Forum.

1: Local Engagement Partnership.

1: Local Engagement Partnership.

1: Local Engagement Partnership.

7: Outcomes - Qualitative and Quantitive Impact.

Service users.

Carers.

Social workers.

3: Association of Executive Directors of Social Work.

4: Monitoring, Measurement, Evidence of Social Work Impact.

Diagram 1

5 https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/improving-and-safeguarding-social%20wellbeing.pdf – Governance System for Stage 2 Delivery.

2.1 Decentralised Approach

The system is designed to support a more decentralised approach with:

- greater involvement of social workers and people with lived experience;
- collective leadership effecting local and systems-wide improvements;
- improvement embedded into mainstream social work activity; and
- a strong focus on impact measurement.

The **Outcomes Delivery Board (5)** sets the strategic direction and has oversight of SWS delivery and progress. It is chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) and has met quarterly since September 2016. The Association of Executive Directors of Social Work[6] (AEDSW) in the HSC are core members.

"Key decision-makers are accountable for delivery."

Since March 2018, membership has been extended to include social workers holding Director posts in HSC Adult Services.

The AEDSW (3) – Collectively the AEDSW is responsible for over two thirds of all registered social workers in NI. Their collective leadership is essential to embed improvement as an integral part of social work activity in Trusts.

Local Engagement Partnerships(1) are operating in each Trust area and are involving social workers, those they work and partner agencies to be actively involved in improving social work. Membership includes social workers, people who use services and partner service providers.

"It (the LEP) is energising and is helping develop and build good working relationships and networks between social workers, people with lived experience and partner agencies."[7]

"Service users and carers have a voice as equal partners."

A regional LEP event is planned for October 2018 to share experiences and learning.

Senior Leadership Network for Social Work (the Network) (2). Membership includes the AEDSW and other senior social work leaders from across the system, including Probation and NISCC. The Network is chaired by the Chair of AEDSW and meetings are held quarterly.

This Network provides a forum for senior leaders to work collaboratively to strengthen the profession, act as a 'think tank' and ensure regional reach.

Outcomes - qualitative and quantitative impact measurement (4,6,7) are an integral part of the new governance arrangements.

An Evaluation Framework[8] (E-Framework) has been co-produced to measure progress against four high level outcomes:

- people's social wellbeing
- a skilled, confident and resilient workforce
- high quality, effective services
- a valued and respected profession

A phased development and implementation plan has been agreed. An overview of progress is provided in Section 4.

[6] There is an Executive Director of Social Work in each of the five HSC Trusts and the HSC Board.
[7] LEP Overview Report - Summary of Progress June, 2018.
[8] Evaluation Framework: Social Work Strategy 2017 – 2022.

2.1.1 SO, HOW ARE WE DOING?

The SWS governance arrangements have been revised and are supporting greater local autonomy and involvement.

"The SWS provides an overarching framework for action in Trusts."

The less centralised and more permissive approach has been embraced with Trusts and other social work employers supporting and enabling improvements in social work under the broad umbrella of the Strategy.

The Directors of Social Work are driving local improvements and collaborating regionally to achieve systems-wide improvement.

"The Directors are committed, individually and collectively, to drive and support SWS delivery locally and regionally."

2.1.2 Learning for Next Steps
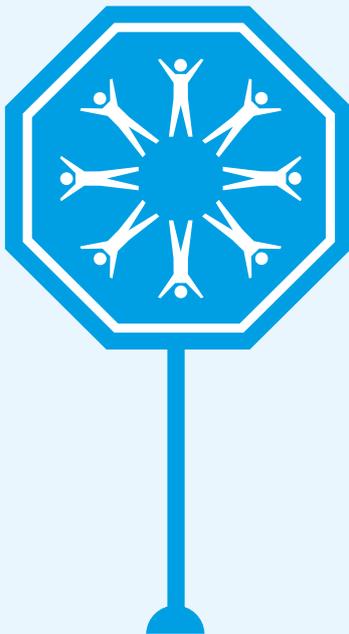
We will support the continued development of the LEPs and the focus on integrating improvement into mainstream social work activity.

3 Improvement

"We need to get social workers and service users engaged in co-designing and implementing improvements otherwise they will not commit to them."

Put Improvement at the Heart of Social Work

Social work is built on the premise of improvement. Social workers improve people's social wellbeing, they are reflective practitioners committed to improving their individual practice for the benefit of those they work with and in making services the best they can be.

In Stage 2 we are focussing on four priorities to put improvement at the heart of social work. (See Diagram 2 overleaf)

OUR VISION
Every person engaged with the social work services will live safely and well within supportive communities

OUR MISSION
Social workers will support communities, families and individuals to enhance their quality of life and social wellbeing.

Improvement
Strengthen the effectiveness of social work in improving people's social wellbeing.

Leadership
Develop social workers at all levels as leaders and ambassadors for the profession, modelling high professional standards and contributing to the development of social work.

OUR GOAL
Put improvement at the heart of social work.

Outcomes
Measure, evidence and communicate the difference social work makes in people's lives.

Co-production
Plan and deliver social work, including improvements in practice and services, in partnership with those who use our services.

SOCIAL WORK VALUES

Human Rights
We will uphold and promote individuals' dignity and wellbeing and respect and support their rights where this does not threaten the rights, safety or legitimate interests of others.

Social Justice
We will challenge discrimination, respect diversity, promote social inclusion and support fair and just policies, practice and decisions.

Professional Integrity
We will act in a reliable, honest and trustworthy manner and uphold the values and reputation of the profession.

Ethical Practice
We will act with integrity and treat people with respect, compassion and empathy and comply with regulatory, employer and professional requirements where these are consistant with professional values.

Diagram 2

This section outlines progress against each priority.

3.1   Evidence of Improvement

The drive to enable social workers to engage in innovation and improvement has been developing since 2013.

Since 2016 we have been training and supporting social workers and people with lived experience to co-produce improvements in practice and service delivery using recognised Quality Improvement (QI) tools and methods.

"Small changes can make a big difference."

"People support what they create."

The majority of the QI initiatives are small-scale and specific to a particular setting or service area and do not always lead to systems-wide change, although some have the potential to do so.

We are taking a dual approach to decisions regarding scale up and roll out. Scale up locally within a service area is a Trust decision. Decisions to scale up regionally are made collectively by the ODB.

"The use of the outcomes based approaches and improvement science in social work has increased rigour and consistency in planning and implementation of effective initiatives."

32

32 innovations[9] were supported by the Social Work Innovation Scheme between 2013 and 2016.

5

5 childcare innovative initiatives, 1 in each Trust, were supported by the SWS 2015 and 2016.

[9] http://www.knowledge.hscni.net/Content/Uploads/file/Message%20of%20the%20Week%20SWS/SWS%20Innovation%20Scheme%20Overview%20Report.pdf Overview Innovation Report 2012-2016

70

Over 70 social workers, supported by 16 mentors, have led small scale quality change initiatives as part of their QI training between 2016 and 2017.

12

12 social workers are accredited IHI Improvement Advisers and have the expertise and skills to lead and scale up improvement initiatives.

In 2017/18 the ODB agreed to scale up of Signs of Safety (SoS) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) regionally which had been tested and evaluated as two of the five innovative childcare initiatives supported by the SWS.

"Leadership and direction are needed to get successful initiatives adopted and embedded as 'usual practice' beyond the test site."

The infrastructure to support QI in social work has been developing over the past 3 years, spearheaded and supported by the growing number of QI 'champions' in the system.

A QI Workforce Strategy for Social Work has been developed to ensure social workers are equipped at different stages in their career to lead or support QI initiatives. This includes embedding QI training into professional training.

All Trusts support and resource the delivery of a regional QI training programme and a QI network for social workers.

"The network creates space to talk about and share QI ideas across the Trusts."

The QI network hosted a Dragon's Den in June 2018. Eighteen improvement proposals were submitted with two awarded funding to take forward their improvements.

"People feel valued, empowered and energised."

The growing experience and expertise of social workers in leading QI has been used to develop resources to guide and support other social workers embarking on this journey, including the development of an on-line QI Workbook for Social Work and Social Care, based on case studies from Northern Ireland (NI). Social workers trained in QI have also contributed to the development of the regional HSC QI infrastructure.

A SCIE on-line Improvement in Social Work and Social Care Workbook was launched at the first QI conference for social work in June 2018.

3.1.1. SO, HOW ARE WE DOING?

Significant progress has been made to put improvement at the heart of social work.

Social work is well positioned to lead and co-produce QI improvements in the HSC. The experience and expertise of social workers in QI is recognised and utilised throughout the HSC including the development of a HSC QI infrastructure as part of Delivering Together. The challenge going forward is to maintain momentum and utilise the expertise that has been developed.

"Our ability to develop QI across the region is influenced by the ethos of the profession and our ability to work collectively for the benefit of all."

3.1.2 Learning for Next Steps
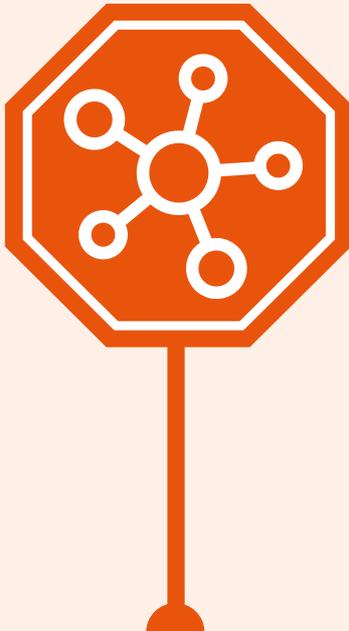
We will continue to invest in QI training as well as enabling and supporting IHI advisors to act as mentors and method guides using existing networks and structures. We will continue to support the QI network as a resource for improvement in social work. Social work leaders will continue to encourage, support and enable improvement and innovation in social work.

3.2 Evidence of Co-production

"We're (service users and social workers) all on the same side. We have a shared agenda but from different perspectives. The resources are there to be tapped into."

Co-production is already well established in many areas of social work practice, including in QI activity. The experience of co-producing improvements has been developed into a toolkit by one Trust.

Service User Stories — Year 15/16

Lead contact: Pat McAuley
Organisation: South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
For further information email: pat.mcauley@setrust.hscni.net
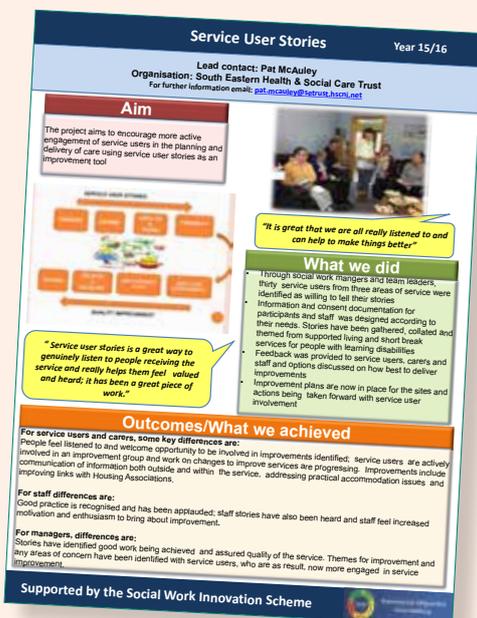
SEHSCT toolkit 'Using Service User Stories to Drive Improvement'

The ethos of co-production in social work is reflected in the operation and work of the LEPs and is helping to raise awareness about what co-production is and how it can work.

The SEHSCT LEP produced a short animation on co-production which can be accessed at https://vimeo.com/265182911/780b7a7760

In NI we have a strong tradition in social work of involving people with lived experience in the professional training and CPD of social workers. Service user involvement in qualifying training has been a formal requirement since 2004. In May 2018, the NI Degree Partnership held a conference to celebrate service user and carer involvement in social work education.

In 2016/17, an innovative Research Methods Programme for Service Users and Carers which equips candidates to carry out service user roles in developing social care research was introduced at the University of Ulster with service users learning alongside social workers. Successful completion of modules leads to post-graduate awards at different academic levels with successful completion of all five modules leading to an MSc in Development and Co-production of Social Care Research.

While there are many excellent examples of co-production in social work, feedback highlights the importance of time to engage with people.

"Co-production is about people and relationships, not about ticking boxes or performance targets. The system needs to support this way of working."

Co-production and co-design were agreed as the approach to take forward transformation in the HSC in NI[10] and a practical guide[11] to support co-production across the HSC system has been developed and was launched in August 2018.

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[10]   Health and Wellbeing 2026, Delivering Together, DoH, 2016.
[11]   https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/HSCB-Co-Production-Guide.pdf
      – launched 31 August 2018.

There are many excellent examples of co-production in social work practice, in improvement activity and in service development.

Social work has strong foundations of working in partnership with others and approaches to practice such as relationship-based practice, strengths-based practice, person-centred planning, Self-directed Support, Signs of Safety and Family Group Conferencing support co-production. There is, however, further work to do to make co-production an integral part of every social worker's job, including prioritising and enabling social work time in direct practice.

"Co-production continues to be developed as part of the SWS. As much as social workers care about service users, service users care about social workers – they want them to be supported to do their job."

3.2.2 Learning for Next Steps

Prioritising and enabling social work time in direct practice is needed to support co-production in practice. We will undertake work to establish a baseline of social work time in 'direct work' and seek to improve this.

Further consideration will be given to how co-production can become an integral part of every social worker's work and how the LEPS can support this.

3.3 Evidence of Leadership

"Leaders help create a positive culture and ensure the right conditions and supports are in place to enable social workers to practise effectively as well as to continuously improve social work."

Leadership is an activity, not a position, and there are many good leaders at every level in social work.

The Stage 2 governance arrangements promote a collective leadership approach to strengthening social work. In June 2017, 120 delegates representing people with lived experience, carers, front line practitioners, operational managers and senior leaders came together to prioritise areas to focus on to help strengthen social work.[12]

These include; building capacity, practice leadership, quality improvement, strengthening social work, and communication/engagement. The AEDSW made a commitment to work with social workers to progress these priorities.

Leadership is essential at every level to influence the organisational culture and to challenge the obstacles that get in the way of good social work practice.

There is strong social work leadership in Children's Services.

"There is high quality leadership (in child protection) at all levels in Trusts."[13]

The social work footprint in senior leadership posts in Adult Services has been growing over the past number of years with social workers now holding Director posts in four of the five Trusts.

We have a strong record of developing social workers as leaders in NI through in-service training, specialist practice programmes, coaching, management and leadership training.

The SWS has added to the range of development opportunities with the introduction of Stronger Together, a social work leadership programme, designed to develop social work leadership capacity through two programmes: one at a senior executive level and another at service managers' level. A key feature of this programme is its focus on social work values in leadership.

"I have learned that to be an authentic leader it's important that my values as a person, as a social worker and a leader are the same."

Feedback from Stronger Together has been consistently positive, highlighting the value of the programme for individuals as well as for the collective social work leadership capacity in NI.

"Learning from the programme has helped me reflect on how I can build resilience to meet demands, withstand pressure and improve my performance for others and myself."

Over 65 social workers have completed the Stronger Together programme since its commencement in 2016/17. The majority of participants achieved the NISCC Professional Strategic Leadership Award and 10% achieved promotion to more senior posts during or soon after completing the programme.

Over one third of registered social workers (2000) are aged 50 or over[14] and can be expected to retire at some stage over the next 15 years. Succession planning has been identified as a priority to ensure we have a supply of experienced and capable staff to apply for leadership positions as they become available.

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[12] Moving Forward Together – Priorities to Strengthen Social Work February 2018.
[13] https://rqia.org.uk/RQIA/files/11/114d0d50-eb71-47b5-bc55-ad1518643d44.pdf Review of the Governance Arrangements for Child Protection in the HSC in NI: Phase 1, April 2018.
[14] https://niscc.info/storage/resources/20170901_ann-report_reg-and-dev-sw-and-sc-workforce-2016-17.pdf NISCC workforce data, January 2018.

3.3.1. SO, HOW ARE WE DOING?

We have great talent and leadership in social work in Northern Ireland. Our investment in leadership and improvement training is enhancing the social work leadership capacity and capability at all levels.

We need to support all our leaders, including those in senior positions, to connect with their peers to share learning and enhance their effectiveness as individuals and as a collective in strengthening and leading social work. We also need to develop and support the talent, ambitions and aspirations of social workers throughout their careers.

"It is all of our responsibilities to strengthen social work in our profession and we can assure you that the Directors will lead by example but we look to all social workers to make progress on this because it is through our collective endeavour that we will achieve success."

3.3.2 Learning for Next Steps

We will continue to develop and nurture the wellbeing, talent, capacity and capability of social workers to ensure strong values-based leadership in and for social work.

We will commence work in 2018/19 to plan how to develop the 'talent pool' for the future.

3.4   Evidence of Outcomes

"Results (outcomes) provide a common purpose that brings people together."[15]

As outlined in Section 2, we have co-produced an E-Framework to measure outcomes against four high level outcomes.

The E-Framework is based on the Outcomes Accountability Approach[16] (OBA). It brings together existing reporting and accountability mechanisms about social work into a single integrated system. Where possible, we are using existing data that relates to each of these high level outcomes to establish a baseline against which to monitor progress.

Some of the existing mechanisms, including Delegated Statutory Functions (DSF), need to be revised to be more outcomes-focused. This work has commenced. The Governance Leads in Trusts and the HSCB are pivotal in taking this forward.

All Trusts are testing out different validated tools to measure quality of life outcomes such as STAR and ASCOT. Some are already using the OBA approach. Each Trust has agreed to scope what tools they are using so we can share and learn from each other's experience and findings. One of the challenges going forward will be how to aggregate individual/local outcome data (micro data) into population/regional measures (meta data) that can provide a 'helicopter view' of the state of social work and people's social wellbeing in NI.

Other agencies, such as Community Planning in Local Government, the Early Intervention Transformation Programme, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the Police Authority in NI, already have established systems to aggregate, analyse and present population/meta data about people's social wellbeing and use it for planning purposes.

Moving to an OBA approach requires a different way of thinking as well as new skills and ways of collecting, analysing and presenting evidence. We will need a planned and co-ordinated approach to developing social workers capacity and capability to support evidence-informed decision-making and an OBA approach to outcomes measurement.

Evidence is also important in improving outcomes. The implementation of the Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Strategy (Research Strategy), along with a focus on QI using validated tools and methods and the OBA approach, are promoting evidence-informed practice and putting a stronger emphasis on building and using knowledge and evidence about what works.

[15] Trying Hard is Not Good Enough, Mark Friedman. 2005.
[16] Trying Hard is Not Good Enough, op cit.

We have put in place a number of building blocks to improve and measure outcomes for people who use social work services, including an E-Framework, OBA, QI training and a Research Strategy. Social workers are getting better at using data.

The E-Framework has the potential to provide regional data about key dimensions of social work including outcomes for people, the workforce and the quality of services. The OBA approach supports the focus on data collection and analysis to drive improvement. We are still at an early stage and more work needs to be done to: align existing data collection and reporting mechanisms with an outcomes based approach; agree a regional approach to data collation, analysis and presentation; cull unnecessary data collection; and develop new qualitative measures to measure experiences of those who receive social work services and those who deliver them.

"Social Workers need to be supported to focus on outcomes, to genuinely co-produce solutions with others, including service users, and to provide tangible evidence of the difference they make in people's lives."

3.4.2 Learning for Next Steps

We will continue to develop and implement the E-Framework on a planned and phased basis and review progress and outcomes bi-annually with the ODB to ensure focus, maintain momentum and collectively agree actions.

We will review current data collection and its use in agreed areas with a view to streamlining and culling unnecessary activity.

4 Outcomes

"This is why people took up social work in the first place".
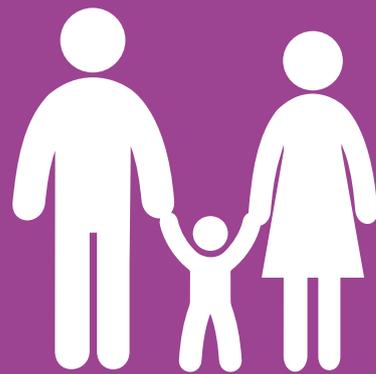
We plan to measure impact and outcomes against four high level outcomes (see para 3.4). This section outlines progress to operationalise the E-Framework in line with the phased implementation plan.

4.1 Outcome 1: Improving social wellbeing

Underpinning measurement of any outcome is an agreed definition of what is to be measured. We have developed a clear statement about the purpose of social work in improving social wellbeing along with a Social Wellbeing Framework for Social Work (SWF)[17].

Having a common purpose is helping to unify the profession and create a stronger sense of professional identity.

We are exploring the use of the SWF as a tool to measure social wellbeing. We are also considering its potential to be used as an overarching outcomes framework for social work and its incorporation into DSF reporting is being explored.

"The concept of social wellbeing has been accepted as the purpose of social work in NI and demonstrates how social work creates value in people's lives and in society. This is a valuable 'legacy' of the SWS."

The SWF is being used to introduce social work students to the purpose and role of social work in NI and as a framework for their practice.

[17] https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/swswb.PDF - The Purpose of Social Work, DoH. 2017.

There are a number of developments to support social workers' practice in improving people's social wellbeing including a Social Work Community Development Programme, an Anti-Poverty Practice Framework and a pilot of a community-oriented social work role in Primary Care. It will be important that the impact of these developments on social work practice and in improving people's social wellbeing is monitored and measured.

4.1.1 Applying the Social Well Being Framework

"When people focus on the wellbeing of communities and customers they reconnect to the reasons they became teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses and police officers."[18]

Work is underway to co-design a practice tool based on the SWF to support peoples' conversations with social workers about their social wellbeing. The tool design will include simple measurement to monitor a person's social wellbeing over time. Initial testing of the feasibility of this tool will be carried out in the autumn. We will also consider how individual measurement of individuals' social wellbeing can be aggregated anonymously to provide data on the social wellbeing of specific populations.

Relationships are central to people's social wellbeing and a core part of effective social work practice. Work is ongoing to develop and pilot a tool[19] to measure the quality of the relationship between young people in care (LAC) and their social workers. This tool has the potential to make visible and measure the 'invisible' part of social work practice and to drive improvements in practice. A reflective tool is also being developed to help social workers reflect on their relationships with young people. These tools are being co-produced by social workers from the statutory and voluntary sectors, young people and academics and will be tested in practice.

[18] Trying Hard is Not Enough, Mark Friedman. 2005.
[19] Real, authentic, warm relationships (RAW).

We have an agreed common purpose for social work in NI and have developed a SWF that has the potential to be used as an Outcomes Framework for Social Work and to support outcomes measurement in practice.

The SWF can be used to support social work activities such as assessment, care planning, person-centred practice, preparation for review meetings with a focus on what's important to an individual and their social wellbeing. The development of a practice tool has the potential to inform a stronger outcomes based approach in practice. Further work is needed to promote and embed this framework into everyday practice. There is potential to work more closely and share information with partner agencies about people's social wellbeing at community and population levels. The SWF can also be used to inform public understanding about what social workers do.

"Measurement of social wellbeing can be used to demonstrate the difference social workers make in people's lives."

4.1.3 Learning for Next Steps

✓ **We will test the social wellbeing tool to inform decisions about next steps.**

✓ **We will explore the use of the SWF as an outcomes framework for social work.**

✓ **We will explore how social work can work more closely with partner agencies to improve and measure people's social wellbeing at community and population levels.**

4.2 Outcome 2: Skilled, confident and resilient workforce

We are testing the OBA approach against the workforce outcome. Representatives from the social work system in NI[20] began the process of establishing a baseline about workforce trends using available data at a workshop in March 2018. Data indicated that there has been a 17% rise in the number of social workers (WTE) employed in HSC Trusts between 2007 (3190) and 2017 (3732). The data also highlighted some emerging trends including an increase in spend on agency workers and reduction in employment of NQSW by Trusts.

A number of actions were agreed by workshop attendees to address issues of concern including:

- sickness levels among Band 5 (AYE) and Band 6 social workers;
- increase in Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) registered with recruitment agencies;
- increase in Trust spend on agency workers and reduction in employment of NQSW in the past couple of years; and
- length of time to recruit into posts.

A report[21] of this work has been shared with key stakeholders and will be used to prioritise actions. There will be an annual review of workforce data to monitor workforce trajectories against baseline data.

We are undertaking further work to gain a deeper understanding of some issues including:

- the career and employment aspirations of final year social work students;
- the profile and deployment patterns of social workers in Trusts; and
- social workers views about the quality of supervision which will inform a review of the supervision policy and standards.

Ongoing work to strengthen the workforce includes:

- continued investment in the CPD of social workers;

- development of new practice resources such as APPS, on-line toolkits and practice guides;
- the development of a career progression framework for social work for consultation;
- a focus on career and succession planning; and
- a review of the projected supply and demand for social workers based on demographic and demand profiles over the next five years.

Independent surveys by other organisations, such as 'Above and Beyond: At What Cost'[22], 'Insult and Injury'[23] and 'Ageing and the Wellbeing of UK Social Workers[24] provide additional intelligence and data to inform work in respect of the workforce.

Having enough time to work directly with people remains the top concern for many social workers. While there have been a number of successful small-scale initiatives to address this, their impact on the wider system has been limited.

Increasing social workers time in direct practice remains a strategic priority for the ODB and there are a number of systems-wide initiatives/actions under way (or being planned) which have the potential to increase social workers time in practice. These include:

- regional scale up of Signs of Safety (SoS);
- regional roll-out of Self-directed Support (SDS);
- a review of UNOCINI;
- a review of administrative reporting requirements in child protection;
- a review of DSF reporting;
- testing the scale up of a Carer's Conversation Wheel.

Evaluation and measurement of the impact of these initiatives on both those using and delivering the services is fundamental to evidencing what difference they do, or do not, make for key stakeholders, including increasing time in direct work.

Measuring social workers' time in direct work will require an agreed definition of what this means in practice from social worker and service user perspectives and a baseline against which to measure change.

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[20] Trusts, HSCB, NISCC, RQIA, UU, QUB, BASW(NI), NIPSA, UNISON, BSO, NISCC, DoH and other social work employers.
[21] Skilled, Confident and Resilient Social Workers, Supporting and Strengthening the Workforce, Workforce Workshop, 15th March 2018, Summary Report.
[22] Above and Beyond: At What Cost, NIASW 2016 http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_62154-7.pdf
[23] Insult and Injury. Exploring the impacts of intimidation, threats and violence against social workers, BASW (NI), 2018. https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/insult-injury-social-workers.pdf
[24] Ageing and the Wellbeing of UK Social Workers, UU, QUB, King's College London in collaboration with Community Care. 2018.
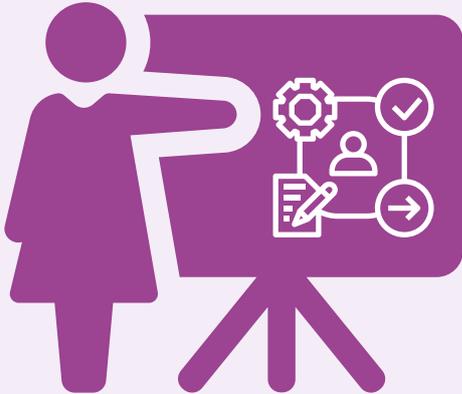
We are testing the OBA approach, have established a baseline regarding workforce trends in the HSC and agreed an action plan.

We are taking a systems approach to understanding the social work workforce, in particular understanding the views of social workers themselves and people who use the services Understanding the 'stories' behind the trends is important if the real problems and not simply the symptoms are to be addressed. 'Turning the curve' on these matters requires a sustained commitment and focus of HR personnel, line managers, social work employers and senior leaders. There is a strong desire to increase social workers time in direct practice and the regional roll out of agreed approaches to practice in both Adult and Children's Services presents an opportunity to make a systems wide impact on doing this.

"We need leaders who can help create a positive culture and ensure the right conditions and supports are in place to enable social workers to practice effectively and contribute their fullest potential in their day to day work."

4.2.2 Learning for Next Steps
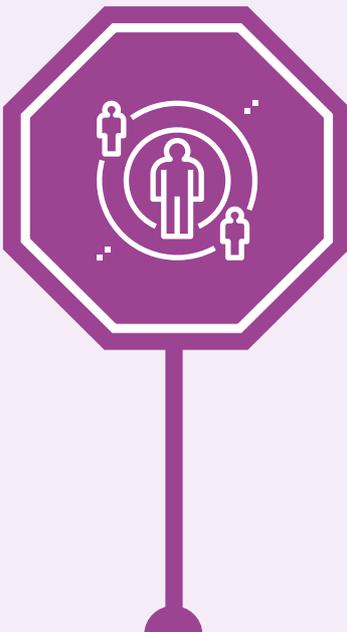
✓ **The agreed workforce action plan should be implemented by agreed leads with oversight by the ODB.**

✓ **The impact of new initiatives to improve practice, including social work time in direct work, should be measured.**

✓ **We will liaise with senior leads responsible for the scale up of SoS and SDS to agree how to integrate measurement of their impact on time in direct work.**

4.3 Outcome 3: Effective Interventions and Services

Evaluating and improving the quality of services is a continuous journey. Improvements and service evaluations are initiated by the Department, the Social Care Directorate at the HSCB and Trusts as well as Programmes of Care and local teams and there are many examples throughout the system.

Trust DSF reports are also a source of information about the standard of some services.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is responsible for inspecting the quality and availability of health and social care services in Northern Ireland and, encouraging improvements in the quality of those services.

Findings from recent RQIA inspections and reviews provides evidence of good standards and/ or improvements in:

(a) the Regional Emergency Social Work Service[25];
(b) Professional Regulation Arrangements for Social Work[26]; and
(c) Governance Arrangements for Child Protection[27].

QI initiatives are also generating data on performance and improvements in interventions and services as well as people's experiences.

[25] https://www.rqia.org.uk/RQIA/files/9c/9c3ad3e9-afc6-466a-a150-01827140d3ff.pdf - RQIA Review of the Regional Emergency Social Work Service, January 2017.
[26] https://www.rqia.org.uk/RQIA/files/a8/a8547025-1073-4ef4-bb02-401bd088d99b.pdf RQIA review of Governance Arrangements in HSC Organisations that Support Professional Regulation, January 2017.
[27] https://www.rqia.org.uk/RQIA/files/11/114d0d50-eb71-47b5-bc55-ad1518643d44.pdf Review of the Governance Arrangements for Child Protection in the HSC in NI: Phase 1, April 2018.

4.3.1. SO, HOW ARE WE DOING?

There is a strong focus on improving the quality of social work services and monitoring, evaluating and improving their effectiveness.

We do not have an agreed system or mechanism to share the intelligence and data about how well our services are performing with social workers. We put a lot of focus on ensuring data is collected, but social workers do not always understand what happens to the data they collect or how it is used. We do not always collate or use the evidence we have to inform planning and decision-making or to communicate how our services are performing.

"Evidence is very valuable. It means you are working to a body of knowledge, not just something you thought up. Evidence informs, stimulates debate and helps promote best practice. Social workers need to be more engaged in this process."

4.3.2 Learning for Next Steps
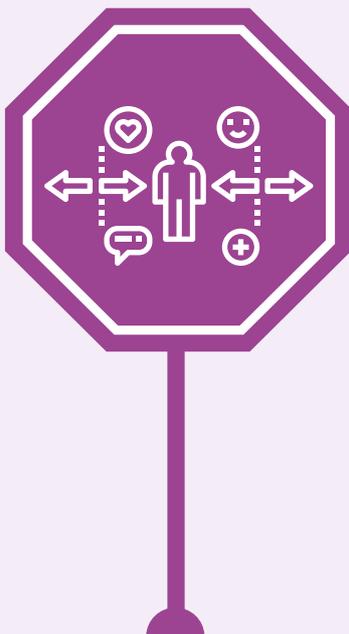
✓ **We will consider how to improve information sharing, feedback and learning loops with social workers to ensure they know how their services are performing and to understand the importance of data collection and how it is used.**

✓ **We will make connections with partner agencies to learn how they use data to inform planning and decision-making.**

4.4   Outcome 4:
A valued and respected profession

> "The Strategy provides a platform to publicise the positive difference social work makes in people's lives."

We have identified four measures against this outcome, three of which will be addressed through measurement in respect of the workforce, leadership and partnership working.

The fourth measure relates to promotional activity on the purpose, role and difference social work makes.

The Raising the Profile group has played a key role in promoting social work over the past number of years particularly in respect of major events such as the Regional Social Work Awards and World Social Work Day celebrations. There are also many local and regional activities that promote and celebrate social work each year.

The NISCC Social Work Ambassador Scheme promotes social work as a positive career choice using volunteers from the social work workforce.

The ground-breaking BBC NI documentary 'Find Me A Family' based on social work in two Trusts profiled the role of social workers in the lives of children and young people. Enquiries about fostering rose significantly after this programme was aired.

People's stories are used to show the difference social workers have made in their lives. While these personal testimonies rarely reach a wider public audience, their impact on those who hear them is significant.

The LEPs are promoting social work in each Trust area.

Findings from the 2016 DoH annual household health survey found the public's attitude to social workers is better than we think. 8 out of 10 people rated the social workers ability to understand people's needs and provide support as 'fair, good or excellent'.

Social workers want there to be a more proactive and informed public dialogue and debate about social work. This has begun, with more senior leaders speaking publically and honestly about social work, its role and value and the challenges. There are social workers who are willing to be part of a public dialogue but can feel constrained by concerns about organisational reputation.

The work on social work and social wellbeing has provided social workers with a framework and shared language to talk confidently and articulately about what they do to others. Anecdotally, social workers have become more confident in explaining their role and the contribution of social work within an integrated HSC system.

> "Excellent tool to strengthen understanding of the profession."

There is evidence that the skills and expertise of social workers to deal with complex, and at times contentious, systems-wide issues are increasingly being recognised and used as a valuable resource within the HSC system. Anecdotally, social workers are valued as part of multi-agency and inter-professional working.

Over the past few years greater use is being made of social media and technology by individual social workers and organisations. It appeals to busy people, reaches a wide audience and information is shared in real time. It is interactive and can create a sense of community. When co-ordinated, it can create a widespread ripple such as its use to announce the launch of the Anti-Poverty Practice Framework which led to conversations with social workers and others from as far afield as New Zealand.

All of the organisations that employ, regulate or represent social workers in NI have intranets that target staff internally and websites that target external audiences. Many produce their own newsletters and blogs. There is no one website that has emerged as the 'go to' place for social work in NI.

A centralised approach to sharing information about good practice, developments, resources and events has been time-consuming, relying on the goodwill and co-operation of colleagues across the system. The impact and reach of this activity are not known.

There is evidence that the public's opinion of social work is better than we think and many more people who use social work services are satisfied with how they have been helped than those who are not. We need to get better at communicating these messages to the public and to social workers.

There is a lot of promotional and communications activity, much of which is targeted at the profession with some notable exceptions. Social workers and people with lived experience want a better balance between the reactive, often critical, media coverage about social work with a more proactive and informed and public dialogue and debate. The potential for social workers and people with lived experience to be part of a public dialogue has not been harnessed.

There are significant resources invested in communications across the whole system and potential to optimise these through a more collective approach, including the use of social media.

"Social workers and service users have a role in helping promote the positive contributions social work makes in people's lives and in improving public relations. Every social worker, and potentially every service user, is an ambassador for the profession."

4.4.2 Learning for Next Steps
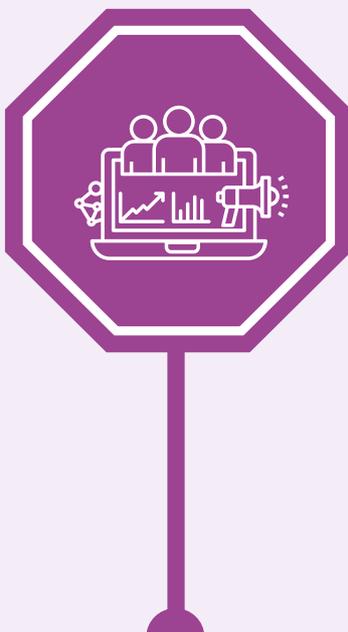
✓ **We will work with Communications and PR staff to develop a more co-ordinated, proactive and outward focussed approach to communications that harnesses the expertise and resources within the system.**

✓ **We will establish a dedicated webpage for Social Work in Northern Ireland on the SCIE platform and set up a general twitter handle and use both as a regional resource to promote social work in NI locally, nationally and internationally and as a 'go to' resource for social workers in NI.**

5 Conclusion

"We will continue to promote social work as a valued and respected profession."

This report charts the progress we have made in the delivery of Stage 2 of the social work strategy.

There is evidence that we have made progress on many fronts and that the changes we made are having a positive impact.

Improvement and co-production are becoming more embedded into mainstream activity with social workers and those they work with involved in making improvements to practice and services provision thereby ensuring social work remains responsive and relevant to both those who use the service and those who deliver it.

One of our biggest challenges as a profession has been, and still is, our ability to demonstrate the difference social work makes in people's lives. We now have building blocks in place to measure impact against agreed outcomes, but there is much still to do before we have a fully functioning system that can generate evidence. Over the next few years there will be a sustained focus on developing social workers' capacity and capability to measure and evidence the difference they make in people's lives.

We will continue to promote social work as a valued and respected profession. This is work in progress and will continue to be, reflecting the dynamic and changing nature of the relationship of the profession with the wider public.

Much has changed since the SWS was first published. We have adapted our approach to delivery to reflect the changes as well as our achievements and learning from experience. As we approach the end of this strategy's life we will begin to plan for the next stage of the journey of social work in NI. We will build on what has been achieved and continue to unify and strengthen the profession in its common purpose of improving people's social wellbeing. We will continue to improve social work to ensure it remains responsive, adaptive and relevant in a continuously changing world and support social workers and those they work with to have a voice in shaping the profession in NI into the 2020s and beyond.

"We will continue to improve social work to ensure it remains responsive, adaptive and relevant in a continuously changing world and support social workers and those they work with to have a voice in shaping the profession in NI into the 2020s and beyond."

Thank you to all our models...

1 Avery Bowser	13 Mandy Cowden
2 Brenda Horgan	14 Sharon McNeill
3 Caolian Field	15 Kathy Lavery
4 Carina Boyle	16 Denise Withers
5 Roisin Doherty	17 Ann Purse
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8 Christopher McMonagle	20 Mervin Garrett
9 Eileen McKay	21 Neill Gillan
10 Tracey McVeigh	22 Orla Watt
11 Dave Milliken	23 Randal McHugh
12 Hamish Stitt	

Prevention

Intervention

Care and Control

Protection

Support