Northern Ireland Social Care Council

21 years

Making a difference

Here we share some of the highlights of the Social Care Council's 21-year journey from its inception to where it is today.

2001 — Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001

northern ireland social care council

Did you know?

This established the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. This was the first Act to be passed by the NI Assembly. Paul Martin the Council's current Chair took this piece of legislation through the Assembly and received its approval.

1 October 2001 – Social Care Council started

Did you know?

- The Council began with approximately 15 staff, it now has over 60. Its precursor body was the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW).
- The first Council meeting took place on 26 October 2001. There were 23 Council members plus a Chairman.

2002 — Codes of Practice

Did you know?

This was the first time social workers and social care workers had formal *Codes of Practice*.

2003 — 1 April 2003 – Registration of social workers and social care workers started

Did you know?

When registration started it was voluntary. It included social workers and also social care workers who worked in children's homes, managers of residential homes and day care facilities. NI was the first country to register social care workers in the UK.

2004

September 2004 - Start of the social work degree

Did you know?

The Degree in Social Work replaced the Diploma in Social Work and had two routes: a two-year relevant graduate route and a three-year undergraduate route. It was offered at the University of Ulster (now Ulster University) and Queens University.

Social work students were the first group to be registered on a compulsory basis and had to be registered to participate in the degree course.

Social Care Council Chief Executives

Did you know?

Brendan Johnston: 2001 – 2013

Colum Conway: 2013 – 2018

Patricia Higgins: 2018 to date

2005

1 June 2005 – Social worker becomes a protected title

Did you know?

Across the United Kingdom social worker becomes a protected title under law. This meant registration became compulsory for all social workers.

2006

Start of the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) and new Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework approved

Did you know?

First new graduates from the Degree commence the AYE. The Council is the only body across the UK to have introduced a compulsory assessed year in employment as a condition of registration. The Relevant Graduate Route to the Degree in Social Work meant that the first graduates were starting as newly qualified social workers – with an AYE condition on their registration.

Northern Ireland was the first country in the UK to introduce the UK Post Qualifying Framework for Social Workers (now known as the Professional in Practice Framework (PIP)) and was the only country to establish its own Professional Awards with the NI PQ Framework.

2007

First conduct hearing took place

Did you know?

The first conduct hearing was held in 2007 – now called fitness to practise hearings. There were six hearings held during 2007/08.

Council changes

Did you know?

The Council (the Social Care Council's Board) is reformed and reduced in size to 12 Council members plus a Chair.

2008

First period of registration renewal and review of the social work degree

Did you know?

First registration renewal period on 1 June 2008 for social workers. In the Autumn, the Council celebrated its 10.000th registrant. During this period the Registrants Committee was formed – another UK first.

2008 was the first formal review of the new Degree in Social Work.

2009 / 2010

Further growth for the Council

Did you know?

The Post Qualifying Partnership and its staff was integrated into the Council.

The DHSSPS consulted on the introduction of compulsory registration for social care workers. It was to be seven years before the completion of social care workers compulsory registration.

2011

Compulsory registration of social care managers and social care workers

Did you know?

By September 2011, the Council successfully rolled out compulsory registration to social care managers of residential, day care and domiciliary care. Registration was also voluntary for social care workers in residential child care (this became compulsory in January 2018). The register reflected 9,011 social care workers in March 2012.

This year also saw the launch of a new vocational qualifications framework – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which replaced National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's).

Investors in People (IIP) achievements

Did you know?

We have been an IIP organisation since 2005

- 2005 and 2008 – IIP
- 2011 and 2014 – Bronze IIP
- 2018 – Silver IIP
- 2021 – Gold IIP and the Only HSC Organisation with gold status

2014
2015

The beginnings of the learning zone and start of Professional in Practice (PIP)

Did you know?

First online digital learning apps developed on child development, health and safety in a childminding setting and the domiciliary care toolkit – forerunners to the Learning Zone we have today. The Council's lunchtime seminars also began.

PQ becomes PiP. This took place after there was a major review of the Social Work Post Qualification Framework.

Introduction of new standards of conduct and practice

Did you know?

In 2015, the new *Standards of Conduct and Practice for social workers and social care workers* were launched – replacing the *Codes of Practice*.

2016

Legislative amendments: Change to fitness to practise model of regulation

Did you know?

In May 2016, new legislation passed to change from a conduct model of regulation to a fitness to practise model with new rules. This was a more flexible system with a broader range of sanctions.

Growth in registration – then and now

Did you know?

In 2011/12, sustained roll out of registration to social care workers including managers of residential care, day care and domiciliary care and in July 2012 the Council registered its 20,000th registrant. Registration has witnessed an increase of 185% in 10 years. From 15,127 registrants at the end of March 2012 to 43,137 registrants today.

Work commenced in 2016 on registration of all social care workers working in the areas of adult residential care, domiciliary care, day care and supported living – with 17,959 social care registrants in 2016 to 36,123 today. Registration became compulsory for these groups December 2017.

In 2018, we introduced the digital registration certificate and launched the new registrant and employer digital portals. During this period the Council also held its first annual Social Care Managers Forum.

2017 / 2018

Revised standards launched

Did you know?

1n 2017/18, the Council launched the revised Standards for employers of social workers and social care workers along with the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

Award recognition and milestone publications

Did you know?

2017 – Human Services Information Technology Association (HusITa) Best App Award for an Understanding Child Development App series.

2017/18 - We published two important social care reports, *Social Care Matters and Economic Value of Social Care*.

2018/19 - Communications Team won Best NI stand for social media promotion for the Skills NI event.

The Council also published two reports with British Association of Social Workers (BASW) NI, *Voices of Social Workers Through the Troubles and Relationships Matter* – a study of complaints made by service users.

A joint research paper with the University of Ulster on "The Digital Skills, Experiences and Attitudes of the Northern Ireland Social Care Workforce towards Technology for Learning and Development: A Survey" published in the Journal of Medical Education.

The Council also introduced our new branding: **"Working Together making a Difference."**

2020 – Published article in the International Journal of Social Work Education, on *Testing Partnership and Preparedness in NI During Covid-19*, highlighting work to get social work students qualified early and join the workforce.

2021 – Social Care Council received Investors In People *We invest in people Gold*

2021 – Workforce Development Team won European Social Services Award for Covid learning resources.

2022 – Shortlisted for the European Social Services Award for the PiP Framework.

2020 Covid pandemic – our supporting role in health and social care

Did you know?

The Council supported the Department of Health (DoH) through a workforce appeal, opening an emergency register which increased the Register to 52,000 registrants, developing additional learning resources and supporting vaccination campaigns.

Work continued including approving the new Open University route for the Degree in Social Work, an ECHO for domiciliary care managers, delivering a virtual PiP Awards ceremony and lunchtime seminars, and through all of this – winning the European Social Services Award and achieved Gold Investors in People.

1 October 2022 - 21 years of the NI Social Care Council