

2023-24 Business Plan

**Working together.
Making a difference.**

Terms and Definitions Used in this Plan

Board	The Social Care Council Board are appointed by the Minister for Health to make sure that the organisation is managing its work properly and is carrying out the functions that they were set up to do
CPD	Continuous Professional Development – ongoing learning and training
DoH	Department of Health – the government body responsible for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland European Union
FtP	Fitness to Practise – a registrant’s suitability to work in social work or social care Higher Education Institutions – such as Ulster University and Queen’s University
HR	Human Resources – manages staff well-being, development and their employment
HSC	Health and Social Care – the people, systems and facilities that provide medical and personal care and support
ICT	Information and Communications Technology – computers, networks, websites and Apps we use
IiP	Investors in People – an award for good standards in staff and organisation management and development
ISO	Interim Suspension Order – temporary action to stop a registrant working while we investigate a serious complaint
KPI	Key Performance Indicator – standards we use to measure how well we are doing our job
NI	Northern Ireland
PiP	Professional in Practice – a Continuous Professional Development framework that supports and provides professional recognition for social workers’ learning and development
PPI	Personal and Public Involvement is a term to describe how people get involved in the planning, commissioning, development, delivery and evaluation of the services they receive
PRTL	Post Registration Training and Learning – a minimum of 90 hours of learning that all registrants must complete during the cycle of registration
Register	The Social Care Council’s register is an electronic list of social workers and social care workers working in Northern Ireland (and also students studying for the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland).
Registrant	A person approved for registration on the Social Care Council’s Register – social workers, social care workers and social work student
RQIA	Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority – inspects Health and Social Care organisations to ensure standards are being met
Social Care Council	Refers to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.
Social Care Worker	Individuals who provide support and/or personal care for people in their own homes, day care, residential care, or nursing home settings.
Social Worker	Individuals with a recognised social work qualification who improve and safeguard the social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
Stakeholders	People who are involved with our work or who are affected by what we do
United Kingdom	United Kingdom

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Business Plan April 2023-24

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) is a public body, established by the Department of Health to help raise standards in social work and social care services. We are responsible for –

- Maintaining a register of social workers and social care workers in Northern Ireland;
- Setting standards for social workers and social care workers for their conduct, training and practice; and
- Setting standards for and regulating social work education and training in Northern Ireland.

There are 43,000 people working in social work or social care in Northern Ireland, and registered with the Social Care Council. This represents 5% of the working population in Northern Ireland

Our purpose

As a regulator, everything we do is focused on high quality safe and effective care. Our work is designed to support this through standards of social work and social care. We make a difference to the quality of social care services by regulating workforce standards and promoting continuous training and learning.

Through this work, we help support the development of a strong and professional social work and social care workforce. A workforce who provide safe, effective and compassionate care to ensure the best outcomes for people who use services and carers.

Our vision and values

The Social Care Council's Vision is 'To Improve Standards in Social Work and Social Care'. We have four Values which underpin our culture and explain how we will work with those around us –

- We promote respect
- We work with integrity
- We believe in partnership
- We strive for excellence

We work in partnership

The work we do is underpinned by collaboration and partnership. We deliver our business through working with our established partnerships:

- People who use services and carers – Participation Partnership
- Registrants – Registrants Forum
- Social care providers – Leaders in Social Care Partnership
- Social work employers and education institutions – Professional in Practice Partnership



Strategic themes for our business

When we developed our Strategic Plan 2023-27, our stakeholders told us that we needed to focus on four key areas. We called these Strategic Themes.

- Strategic Theme: **Delivering effective regulation**
- Strategic Theme: **Developing the capability of the workforce**
- Strategic Theme: **Leading with influence**
- Strategic Theme: **Innovating and improving**

This Business Plan describes the Strategic Actions (what we will do) and the Strategic Outcomes (the difference we want to see) during 2023-24.

Our Plans

We published a new **Strategic Plan** (for the period April 2023 to March 2027) in April 2023. The four-year Strategic Plan was developed following consultation with registrants, employers, stakeholders, our Partnerships, staff and Board, people who use services and carers. The Strategic Plan is outcomes based – and focused on the difference we want to see from the actions which we take.

The Strategic Plan has four strategic themes and a number of strategic actions and outcomes. To deliver the Strategic Plan, we will detail in our annual Business Plans what we will do and build on each year towards these strategic actions and outcomes.

This Business Plan for 2023-24 is the first annual Business Plan as part of that journey.

We remain committed to –

- Working in partnership
- Bringing together the knowledge, experience and expertise of all our stakeholders
- Encouraging innovation in the development and improvement of social work and social care services
- Engaging with people who are involved with our work, or are affected by it

Connecting | Supporting | Influencing



Delivery of this Business Plan will be reported in our Annual Report for 2023-24 which will be available on our website at www.niscc.info. During the year we also account for our progress through quarterly business performance reports which are provided to the Board of the Social Care Council.

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Business Plan April 2023 - March 2024

Chief Executive's Introduction

I am pleased to present our first Business Plan arising out of our new Strategic Plan. We consulted on our new Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 earlier this year and we received feedback through our survey with registrants and employers, and also through face to face and online engagement and workshops. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the direction of travel for the Social Care Council over the next four years.

We also heard however about the challenges and pressures facing social workers and social care workers as we work through not only the challenges brought about by COVID but also the financial and other hardship concerns facing individuals, employers and communities.

For these reasons we are focusing on our new four strategic themes which include delivering effective regulation to provide assurance to those in receipt of social work and social care services; developing the capability of the workforce to help build a confident and competent workforce that delivers safe, effective and high quality care; leading with influence to play our role in ensuring the voice of the workforce is heard and that we join up our information including the experiences of the workforce and people who use services to improve those services; and finally to innovate and improve how we deliver our services, maximising the use of technology.

We want to measure the differences we are making across all of these areas – and this Business Plan (for 2023/24) is the start of that journey. We will build on what we have already achieved and delivered in previous years and map out how we achieve our strategic actions and strategic outcomes over the next four years.

We are mindful that our organisation, like so many others, is being challenged to deliver high quality services within funding and resource constraints, while ensuring we invest in our workforce so that they too are capable and able to deliver high quality services in line with our organisational values and meet our Board's ambitions to be a Centre of Excellence in our field; a sector leader for data analysis; an agile and innovative regulator; and an enabler for social care transformation. We have already started work across all of these ambitions and will continue to do so this year and over these next four years.

We are putting in place improvements to our ICT infrastructure this year – including improvements to our Registration and Regulation ICT system that will improve both registrants and staff's experience, we are developing a new Case Management system which will support our Fitness to Practise and Committee teams and improve efficiency and data collection, and we are designing an App that will support registrants in accessing our services.

Our plans for this year extend beyond ICT – and we are committed to ensuring a blended approach in accessing our services and building on our engagement and communication model. We will be engaging people who use services and carers to hear their experiences and views to help shape what we do this year and beyond in delivering our Strategic Plan. We are also improving and building on our foundations to connect with leaders to support social care workers – we have worked in collaboration with the Department of Health to establish a new ‘Social Care Collaborative Forum’ which will help deliver reform for the social care sector.

We start this new business year from our new premises at James House, in Belfast. A move of premises after 21 years – and our 21st anniversary as the Social Care Council. I have been with the Social Care Council in various roles for 21 years and have witnessed first hand the progress in registering the workforce, engagements with registrants and people who use services and the changing pressures, challenges and opportunities for that workforce. The last 3 years in particular brought about significant individual, organisational and community difficulties as a result of the pandemic – and it also enabled a new chapter for social work and social care – as the value and importance of these roles was brought into sharp focus.

We want to build on that focus over the next four years – learning from what we have done before and what we need to do now and for the future. We have changed how our staff work – with staff working in an agile way – redefining the purpose of a physical office for collaborating, connecting, learning and sharing, while creating flexibility to deliver the business remotely. Our principles in doing so remain that business must continue to be delivered professionally and to a high quality at all times.

We will deliver this Business Plan with the support of our staff, Board, Partnerships, registrants and key stakeholders to set us in the right direction for the next four years.

Patricia Higgins
Chief Executive,
Northern Ireland Social Care Council



Strategic Context

We are mindful that the delivery of our business takes place alongside a number of external and operational factors (sometimes called drivers) that have the potential to influence how we deliver our business. These drivers can provide opportunities as well as challenges. It is important that in setting our aims, objectives and outcomes for this year, we consider the strategic context (and environment) in which we operate.

External

COVID-19 Pandemic

We are gradually returning to 'business as normal' however the legacy of the pandemic and the pressures on health and social care can still very much be seen.

Quality, safety and improvement

We are mindful that the social care sector is under strain and that in some cases this has resulted in large scale reviews such as those at Dunmurry Manor Care Home and Muckamore Hospital. It is important that we all learn from these reports to prevent harm and poor care.

Funding and financing

The financial climate is impacting on employers, staff, individuals, families and communities. These pressures can result in poor practice at work due to insufficient staffing or funding for training or equipment, and also in decisions regarding heating and travel.

Operational

Strategic Plan

We have a new Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2027 and it is important that we make every effort to deliver the strategic actions and outcomes to make a visible difference to social workers and social care workers.

Technology and Information

Developments in technology present many opportunities for us to work in a smarter, more flexible and accessible way throughout our business. We will also use the information we hold to inform the systems leadership approach for the social work and social care sectors.

Recruitment

The recruitment market is challenging for employers to secure the best staff to deliver high quality services and performance. This includes recruiting professional skilled staff and administrative staff – strengthening the importance of good systems and environments to retain existing staff.

Business Planning Assumptions

To develop our Business Plan for 2023-24 we consulted with our staff, our Board, our Partnerships and the DoH. During the consultation, we made the following planning assumptions:

- We need to re-align our business priorities to operate efficiently and effectively within our budget to ensure our resources are targeted to where they are most needed;
- We need to continually seek to improve how we deliver our services and continually drive up quality in support of our business plan; and
- No further responsibilities will be assigned to us without additional resource

Our Ambitions

The Social Care Council's Board developed the following ambitions to help shape the way in which we deliver our business. These are long term ambitions which underpin our Strategic Plan –

Working in partnership with the DoH and our stakeholders, we aim to be

- An Enabler for Social Care Transformation - Supporting and upskilling the workforce
- A Sector Leader for Data Analysis - Informing workforce planning and policy development
- An Agile and Innovative Regulator - Using innovative approaches to improve our services
- A Centre of Excellence for Social Work and Social Care - Supporting evidence based practice in social work and social care

- **Participation Partnership**

Improves participation and engagement with people who use services and carers in line with the principles of Co-production to support the work of the Social Care Council.

- Supports the Social Care Council to raise practice standards of registrants working in social work and social care.

- Hold the Social Care Council to account for their participation and engagement activities with people who use services and carers

Leaders in Social Care Partnership

- Provides a strong, positive voice for social care and promotes its value through improved understanding of its role, contribution to social wellbeing and contribution to the Northern Ireland economy.
- Develop a culture in social care that reflects the shared health and social care values of working together, excellence, compassion, openness and honesty.
- Lead from the edge- supporting people to innovate and to bring new ideas for person centered care from the margins into social care services.

External Perspective



Expert Knowledge

PiP Partnership

- Works collaboratively to develop, deliver and quality assure Professional in Practice – the CPD framework for social work.
- Identified and advises the Social Care Council and its Board on needs, gaps and priorities for development in social work training.
- Supports development of relevant provision to meet identified needs.
- Keeps the PiP Framework under review and brings forward recommendation for development and improvement.

Registrants Forum

- Provides advice and representation on the views of Registrants.
- Acts as a consultative body with the aim of promoting better communication and understanding between the Social Care Council and its Registrants
- Represents the views and expectations of Registrants on key aspects of the Social Care Council's work.

Strategic Theme: Deliver effective regulation

Through our regulatory activity we protect anyone who uses social work and social care services by supporting our registrants to be person-centered, values driven, competent, confident and compassionate. All social workers and social care workers must comply with our Standards of Conduct and Practice

Delivering effective regulation is about protecting the public – it ensures that when people use social work or social care services they can be assured that those individuals are competent and able and will provide safe, effective and quality care. There are 43,000 social workers and social care workers registered with us and working in a diverse range of environments delivering high quality services. We support their registration including new applications or when registration is due for renewal. We are working to improve our processes and systems to support registration – to ensure that the register is fit for purpose and up to date at all times.

We will also ensure that we continue to deliver our model of regulation including supporting and promoting the Standards of Conduct and Practice. A very small percentage of the workforce are referred to us to review their fitness to practise most of whom require additional support or training and a small number of these are suspended or removed from the register. This work is supported by our Fitness to Practise and Committee Services.

We are going to work with registrants and employers this year so that they fully understand and value the importance of maintaining their registration and the value of their Standards of Conduct and Practice. We are also going to engage employers and other key stakeholders to see what more we can do together to improve workforce regulation – and reduce even further the very small number of cases that are referred to us to investigate – and sharing our learning from this.

We are going to work with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and employers to ensure that employers are engaged and using the Standards for Employers to support social workers and social care workers including those newly appointed to that role.

We also really want to hear more from people who use services and carers about the experiences they have when they use social work or social care services – so that these experiences and views inform how we deliver our business over the next four years. We want to hear the voice of people who use services and carers – and we want to embed this in our business.

In our Strategic Plan 2023-27, we said we want to make the following differences in delivering effective regulation:

1. Social work and social care registrants use the Standards of Conduct and Practice to support their practice.
2. Regulation enables people who use services and carers to have confidence in the social work and social care workforce by ensuring that registrants work to their standards and deliver high quality care.
3. Social workers and social care workers are supported by their employers through the Standards for Employers of Social Workers and Social Care Workers.

Our objectives to deliver effective regulation in 2023-24

Strategic Actions (Strategic Plan)	Business Objectives 2023-24	Indicators of Success (for 2023-24)	Strategic Outcomes (Strategic Plan)
Develop our model of regulation to ensure it focuses on improving standards and supporting registrants to be the best they can be.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver a programme of engagement with employers and other key stakeholders by December 2023, that will identify initiatives which promote preventative approaches to workforce regulation; <i>and</i> 2. Deliver a campaign with registrants and their employers during 2023/24 that focuses on supporting registrants (including new registrants) to maintain their registration; <i>and</i> 3. Design how Fitness to Practise hearings will be delivered in the future following the outcome of the review of hybrid/online hearings by December 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of methods/issues will be identified that will enable us to target how we share learning and monitor how this changes practice. • At least 80% of registrants understand and are able to maintain their registration using the registration ICT system. • FTP hearings are held from January 2024 based on the findings from the review. 	<p><i>Social work and social care registrants use the Standards of Conduct and Practice to support their practice.</i></p> <p><i>Regulation enables people who use services and carers to have confidence in the social work and social care workforce.</i></p>
Ensure our standards of conduct and practice are aligned with the changing context of social work and social care.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. During 2023-24 we will raise awareness of the Standards of Conduct and Practice with registrants through targeted engagement and campaign activities with registrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 90% of registrants understand and report using the Standards to inform their practice. 	
Enable social workers and social care workers, through education and training, to put standards at the heart of their practice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. During 2023-24, we will approve and assure standards of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying levels; <i>and</i> 6. During 2023-24 we will promote learning resources to support social care registrants' awareness of the Standards of Conduct and Practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval and Quality Assurance processes will be completed within agreed timescales. • At least 50% of social care registrants report accessing the learning resources to support them in their practice. 	<p><i>Social workers and social care workers are supported by their employers through the Standards for Employers.</i></p>
Ensure employers understand their responsibilities in relation to the Standards for Employers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. During 2023/24 we will raise awareness of the Standards of Conduct and Practice with employers through targeted engagement and campaign activities, in collaboration with RQIA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 90% of employers understand and report using the Employer Standards to support social workers and social care 	

Ensure the experience of people who use services and carers informs the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers and Social Care Workers.

8. We will survey and engage people who use services and carers by December 2023 to understand their experiences so we can use this information to develop our business and support effective regulation.

workers.

- The model of regulation is evidence-based, reflects best practice and meets the needs of a modern workforce

Strategic Theme: Develop the capability of the workforce

Social work and social care services are delivered within diverse communities and multi-professional environments. In order to improve outcomes for people who use services and their families, carers and communities, we will help develop a confident and competent social work and social care workforce that delivers safe, effective and high-quality care.

Continuous learning and development is a requirement of registration and through our Workforce Development function we support registrants to develop the knowledge and skills required to practice safely and to a high standard. We also monitor adherence to maintaining their professional development. By setting and monitoring standards for social work education and training at both qualifying and post qualifying levels we support safe and effective practice across the career spectrum. We regulate the delivery of the Degree in Social Work and Professional in Practice programmes (for which we are the awarding body) through robust annual monitoring and review.

We want to ensure that we use our knowledge of the workforce to shape learning and development in the future. As part of this we will actively promote the Professional in Practice Framework this year to increase uptake and engagement – and will promote our learning resources targeting, in particular, the social care workforce. We will continue to engage the workforce through lunchtime seminars, Social Care Managers Forums and webinars.

We appreciate that the sector and communities are changing with people who use services, carers and registrants having a wide and diverse range of cultural backgrounds. It is essential that in planning and developing the workforce's capability that we are mindful of that diversity to ensure the workforce is equipped to deliver high quality services in a diverse setting.

We will also engage Social Work Leaders to support leadership at all levels of the profession through the implementation of the Social Work Leadership Framework.

In our Strategic Plan 2023-27, we said we want to make the following differences in developing the capability of the workforce:

1. Career choices for the social care workforce are supported by continuous learning and development.
2. There is increased engagement in the Professional in Practice Framework and Digital Learning Resources to support learning and development.
3. Leadership capability is embedded in qualifying and post-qualifying social work education and training.
4. The social work and social care workforce are supported to work effectively with people of various cultural backgrounds and understand how their own cultural beliefs may differ from other cultures.

Our objectives to develop the capability of the workforce in 2023-24

Strategic Actions (Strategic Plan)	Business Objectives	Indicators of Success (for 2023-24)	Strategic Outcomes (Strategic Plan)
Establish a qualifications and continuous learning framework which can support a career in social care that strengthens the capability of the social care workforce.	1. During 2023-24 we will deliver the year 4 objectives of Social Care Reform to support the Department of Health (DoH)H.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum of 97% of registrants successfully maintain their registration throughout the year. 	<i>Career choices for the social care workforce are supported by continuous learning and development.</i>
Ensure the delivery of high-quality qualifying and post-qualifying social work education and training that is accessible, flexible and equips social workers to meet the needs of the people they work with in an increasingly diverse society.	2. During 2023-24 will approve and assure standards of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social work education meets the required standards. Social work education reflects the diversity of the workforce and the community. 	<i>There is increased engagement in the Professional in Practice Framework and Digital Learning Resources to support learning and development.</i>
Embed the Professional in Practice Framework for social workers as the benchmark for safety, quality, improvement and continued fitness for practice.	3. During 2023-24 we will deliver a programme to engage with social work registrants, employers and other stakeholders to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement through engagement in the PIP Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The redesign of the credit accumulation route will be complete, based on stakeholder engagement and its successor launched for utilization by social workers 	<i>Leadership capability is embedded in qualifying and post-qualifying social work education and training.</i>
Support the development of social work leadership capability using the DoH Leadership Framework.	4. During 2023-24 we will engage with Social Work Leaders to support leadership at all levels of the profession by implementing the Social Work Leadership Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of engagement with social work leaders to support the Social Work Leadership Framework. 	<i>The social work and social care workforce are supported to work effectively with people of various cultural backgrounds and understand how their own cultural beliefs may differ from other cultures</i>
Promote uptake and engagement in continuous learning through the development of a Digital Learning Strategy.	5. Create a promotional plan of activity to support the promotion of the learning zone to include targeted awareness days and responsive proactive communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in engagement in digital learning of 20%. 	

Strategic Theme: Lead with influence

As the workforce regulator, we have a key role to play in empowering social workers and social care workers to effectively contribute to the delivery of high-quality services. In order to support and develop the workforce, we need to understand the environment in which they work. There is a need to build our evidence base, using research, data and intelligence, to inform the provision of sufficient numbers of the right people, with the right knowledge, skills and values, are in the workforce. Our focus will be on supporting them in a way that reflects the value of their work and the contribution they make to the wider health and social care system. This is critical to the improvement and transformation of health and social care services.

Key to our work is the information and intelligence we hold about the social work and social care workforce. We are uniquely placed to collect and use this information and our ambition remains to use our workforce intelligence to inform strategic decisions to support the sector. We will develop our information and analysis capabilities to prepare annual 'State of the Nation' reports on the social work and social care sector to share learning and inform strategic direction and decision making. We will publish the first of these reports this year for the business year 2022/23.

We will improve how we share and access data across the health and social care system to present this to decision makers and leaders so that they are informed when developing policy and responding to the challenges faced by the social work and social care workforce. We are particularly interested in seeing how we can support social care – and are therefore working with the Department of Health (DoH) as part of a new 'Social Care Collaborative Forum' – we will report on progress on this later in the year.

We will also work with employers and education providers to promote careers in social work and social care to help strengthen the capability and diversity of the workforce.

In our Strategic Plan 2023-27, we said we want to make the following differences in leading with influence:

1. Workforce data and intelligence improves understanding of the role and value of social work and social care and informs the development of policy and strategy.
2. The contribution of social work and social care is recognised and valued by those who engage in the services they provide.
3. There is greater diversity in the social work and social care workforce.
4. A more stable and sustainable workforce exists across both social work and social care.

Our objectives to deliver leading with influence in 2023-24

Strategic Actions (Strategic Plan)	Business Objectives	Indicators of Success (for 2023-24)	Strategic Outcomes (Strategic Plan)
Develop our capacity and capability for data analysis and insight to unlock intelligence about the workforce, and the context of social work and social care practice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will produce a 2022/23 State of the Nation Report on the social work and social care workforce by August 2023; and 2. We will work with the DoH and other stakeholders during 2023/24 to build and collaborate our data sets to inform the social care sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a Report by August 2023 and share with key stakeholders and the sector. • Contribution to HSC data sets and reporting to share with leaders. 	<p><i>Workforce data and intelligence improves understanding of the role and value of social work and social care and informs the development of policy and strategy.</i></p>
Work with our partnerships and networks to promote a collaborative working environment to enable transformation and improvement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. During 2023/24 we will support the transformation and development of the social care workforce through the Leaders in Social Care Partnership; and 4. We will work with the DoH during 2023/24 to support the Social Care Collaborative Forum to address service pressures and deliver reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme of work for the Leaders in Social Care Partnership for 2023/24 is delivered. • Actions identified by the Social Care Collaborative Forum are delivered during 2023/24 with progress being made. 	<p><i>The contribution of social work and social care is recognised and valued by those who engage in the services they provide.</i></p>
Work collaboratively with Health and Social Care Workforce regulators and the RQIA, using our data and insights to inform, improve and enhance service user safety and experience of social work and social care workforce and services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. During 2023/24 we will further develop and maintain structures, systems and processes with other regulators, including RQIA to ensure data is converted in to intelligence which promotes the delivery of safe and effective care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with regulators and RQIA to share information in a way that supports safe and effective care. 	<p><i>There is greater diversity in the social work and social care workforce.</i></p>
Influence the recognition of the value and contribution the social work and social care workforce make to society.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. During 2023/24 raise awareness of the Degree in Social Work, and increase the recognition of the value of the social care and social workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using surveys, increase awareness in the Degree in Social Work by 10%. • Using surveys, develop a 	<p><i>A more stable and sustainable workforce exists across both social work and social care.</i></p>

Promote careers in social work and social care that reflects the diversity of our communities.

7. By January 2024 we will deliver a public information campaign to increase community access to and knowledge of regulation and of when and how to engage with us, including when raising a concern.
8. During 2023/24 we will promote careers in social work and social care across Northern Ireland, including targeting sectors to promote the diversity of the workforce.

benchmark on the recognition of the value of social work and social care.

- Develop a benchmark in relation to the public and their awareness of the Social Care Council and how to engage/raise a concern with us.
- Targeted and generic campaign delivered by the end of March 2024.

Strategic Theme: Innovate and improve

We are an innovative regulator, with a culture that supports inclusion, collaboration and creativity. We will develop our digital systems to deliver efficient and effective workforce regulation, and will support our registrants to engage with digital innovation.

The use of technology has revolutionised the way we work, how we manage our lives and how we communicate. It underpins how we engage and secure services and we expect it to work and deliver what we need quickly and efficiently. The Social Care Council, like many organisations, fast tracked its use of technology in response to the COVID pandemic – and is now harnessing that learning to create hybrid ways of working – where both ICT and traditional face to face communication and engagement are blended.

The Department of Health produced its Digital Strategy this year and we are working to ensure that how we deliver our business is modern, innovative and embraces the Digital Strategy. This year we will carry out an upgrade to our Registration and Regulation ICT system that will improve the experience of both registrants and staff. At the same time we are developing a new electronic case management system to support our Fitness to Practise and Committee functions which will create efficiencies in their processes and improve data reporting.

We know that people increasingly want to access services using Apps which are more accessible, user friendly and mobile. We are therefore designing a new Registration App that will support registrants access their information, carry out a number of transactions and also build a community with their peers and colleagues.

We will continue to support innovation and development in our day to day business supported by our Database Team and Workforce Development Team to ensure that we are continually maximising the use of the technology that is available to us.

In our Strategic Plan 2023-27, we said we want to make the following differences in innovating and improving:

1. Stakeholders' experience of engaging with us is positive and our services fulfil their needs.
2. Registrants are able to engage effectively and easily with our systems and processes.
3. The Social Care Council maximises the use of digital innovation to deliver high quality services.

Our objectives to deliver innovating and improving in 2023-24

Strategic Actions (Strategic Plan)	Business Objectives	Indicators of Success (for 2023-24)	Strategic Outcomes (Strategic Plan)
Work in partnership with our registrants and employers to co-produce a future proofed regulation and registration system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By September 2023, develop an engagement strategy for the Social Care Council, which is informed by our existing registrant engagement and supports the growth of community confidence; <i>and</i> 2. By September 2023, carry out a review of the current user experience journey for registrants and produce a workplan on annual improvements to systems and processes including engagement, customer service and plain language communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement strategy in place supporting meaningful engagement. • User data and experiences available and used in designing our business. 	<p><i>Stakeholders' experience of engaging with us is positive and our services fulfil their needs.</i></p> <p><i>Registrants are able to engage effectively and easily with our systems and processes.</i></p> <p><i>The Social Care Council maximises the use of digital innovation to deliver high quality services.</i></p>
Embed a culture and model of continuous improvement to ensure the efficient delivery of Social Care Council services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. By January 2024 complete development work to streamline processes to support the efficient delivery of registration services and improve the integrity and quality of the Register data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration systems and processes are efficient and effective. 	
Improve our digital registration, regulation and development systems to ensure a seamless and efficient service for registrants and all of our stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. By May 2023, we will deliver an improved registration and regulation system that will support an improved end user experience for staff, registrants and employers; <i>and</i> 5. October 2023 we will implement a new case management system for Fitness to Practise that will support the effective and efficient delivery of this statutory function and enhance reporting capability; <i>and</i> 6. By December 2023 we will develop an App to support the regulation and registration system for social workers and social care workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business benefits from upgrade fully realised with a 20% increase in satisfaction levels. • Business benefits from new system fully realised by March 2024. • Uptake of new App by 10% of register by March 2024, with 50%+ satisfaction level 	
Engage the Digital Strategy to inform our digital innovation and system improvement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. During 2023/24 we will work with the DoH to ensure we deliver innovation and digitalisation to our business and its processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of innovation across all business functions 	

Delivering our Strategy for 2023-2027

People, Communication & Engagement, Evaluation and Resources

The Social Care Council is an IIP Gold accredited employer and also holds the Gold IIP Health and Wellbeing Award. Staff at the Social Care Council work from the office and remotely in line with the organisation's Agile Working Policy. The Policy enables staff to collaborate and connect within and across teams while delivering high quality services – and also benefit from the flexibility of working remotely from time to time. Our Health and Wellbeing Committee, which is represented by staff from each of the functions, manages our Health and Wellbeing Programme and initiatives, reporting to all staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

There are just over 60 staff employed by the Social Care Council a number of whom work part time or other form of flexible working. The workforce supports a range of front line and back office functions, supporting the overall delivery of the Social Care Council's Business Plan. This includes supporting the organisation's procurement and estate management activity. The Senior Leadership Team has worked with staff to ensure its staffing resource is deployed to support its business priorities.

The organisation moved premises this year – to James House in Belfast and is now co-located with other HSC organisations to generate efficiencies in accommodation related costs and overheads.

The organisation has robust governance and financial systems in place to provide assurance to the Social Care Council's Board that it is delivering its business priorities against best practice and government accounting regulations – this includes managing risks and incidents, producing an Annual Report and Accounts, an Annual Equality Scheme Progress Report, managing complaints, business performance and information and evaluation reporting.

The organisation is also supported by a small Communication and Engagement team who have an extensive remit to support engagement and collaboration, social media, events and surveys, website management and producing online and hard copy products – both for internal and external use and consumption.

Strategic Actions (Strategic Plan)	Business Objectives	Indicators of Success (for 2023-24)
People We will invest in the capacity and capability of our people, empowering creativity, continuous learning and improvement in everything we do.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will successfully deliver an action plan to ensure our continued implementation of the IIP Framework by March 2024, which includes our Health and Wellbeing programme. 2. We will develop a Reward and Recognition framework by October 2023 for all staff that supports our culture, values and People Plan. 3. We will deliver the Social Care Council's Leadership Programme for all managers at all levels in the organisation throughout 23/24 using the M West Compassionate Leadership book as the framework. 4. Working with BSO HR and the HSC Leadership Centre we will develop a People Plan by March 2024 to support the organisation in delivering its Strategic Plan. 5. We will deliver and evaluate the Registration Training Programme with HSC Leadership Centre by December 2023. 6. We will develop and implement campaigns during 2023/24 to support the Social Care Council's regulatory functions, including awareness of the Standards for Conduct and Practice, fitness to practice and registration processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IIP Gold maintained • Action Plan delivered • Strategy co-designed with staff and being used by all staff • 80% of Leaders complete the course by March 2024. • People Plan developed. • Outcomes in the report are realised. • Awareness increases by 20%.
Communications and Engagement We will maximise our ability to inform, connect, engage, support, collaborate and empower registrants, people who use services, careers and stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. We will create a planning tool by September 2023 to embed communications and engagement planning as part of project planning and work planning across all parts of the Social Care Council's business. 8. We will develop and implement an internal communications plan to include digital opportunities such as redeveloping the intranet using SharePoint and investing in the right tools around updating staff by December 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication planner in place and informing business. • Intranet is overhauled and staff satisfaction levels increase by 20%.

Evaluation

We will develop an effective model of evaluation that will measure our progress against our outcomes, demonstrate the impact of our work and use this to inform our annual business and operational plans.

9. We will develop a model that all staff can use to evaluate projects and key areas of business by March 2024.

- All staff understand how evaluation operates and can apply it.

Resources

We will work with the DoH to ensure we have adequate resource for the sustainable growth necessary to realise the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

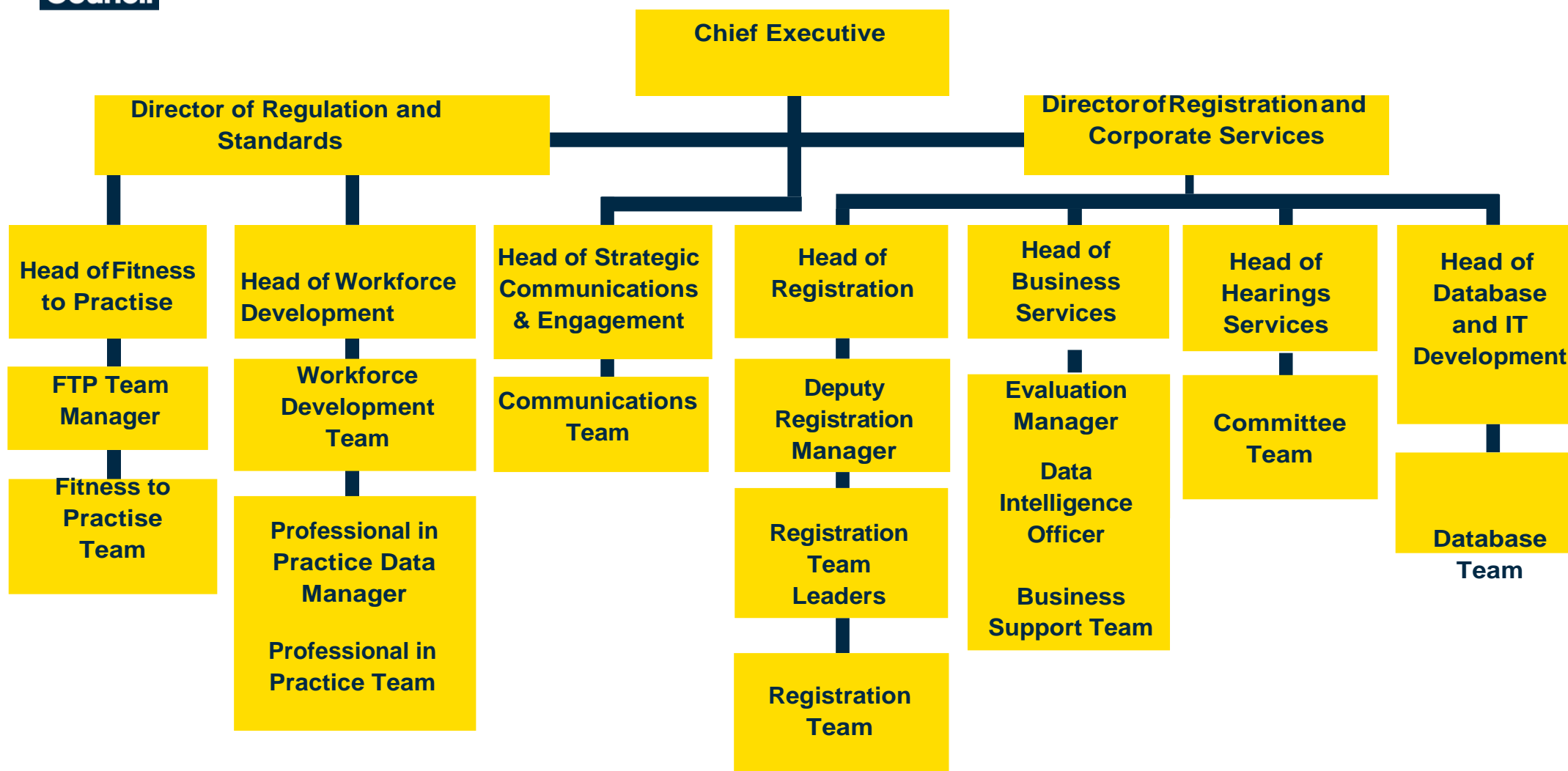
10. We will ensure we break even by March 2024;
11. We will comply to a high standard with all governance related policies, procedures, audits, business performance and risk reporting and related activity during 2023/24;
12. We will seek to maximise use of our SLA's with BSO during 2023/24;
13. We will work with BSO Information Governance Team and ITS to deliver best practice in electronic file management using Share Point by March 2024.

- Break even achieved.
- Audits provide satisfactory assurance. Board satisfied with level of assurance.
- SLA's reviewed and signed off.
- Share Point used to support electronic records management.

Appendix I - Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

	What We Will Measure	KPI's
KPI Description	1. We will provide quality services that achieve a minimum of 85% stakeholder satisfaction throughout the year	85%
	2. We will process 100% of completed applications/renewals within 20 working days of submission.	100% within 20 working days
	3. We will update the register for all Fitness to Practise decisions within 2 working days of receipt of the information.	2 Working days
	4. We will triage all referrals to the Fitness to Practise Team within 3 working days.	3 Working days
	5. We will conclude 100% of Interim Suspension Order (ISO hearings within 4 weeks of referral.	100% within 4 weeks
	6. We will conclude 90% of Fitness to Practise cases within 15 months of opening the case.	95% within 15 months
	7. We will complete 100% of Quality Assurance processes for social work education and training within timeframes agreed with providers and identify recommendations for improvement.	100%
	8. We will ensure our staff absence levels do not exceed 3.5% during the year.	3.5%
	9. We will ensure we achieve the minimum standard of paying 95% of undisputed invoices within 30 days	95% within 30 days
	10. We will ensure we achieve the minimum standard of paying 75% of undisputed invoices within the 10 day prompt payment target.	75% in 10 days
	11. We will manage our finances to achieve financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is greater).	0.25%/£20k
	12. We will ensure the Online Registration Portal is available at least 98% of time during the year.	98%

Organisation Structure 2023-24



Our Values

There are four key values which underpin our culture that set a foundation for how we work together and 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 Vision - Improved standards in social work and social care

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

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April 2023